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# DESK STUDY

Music for Sound Integration in the Creative sector



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# INTRODUCTION

## THE MOSAIC PROJECT

The project **MoSaIC** is led by **Ensemble Amadeus** (IT) & involves 3 partners from Belgium, **Koor&Stem**, Denmark, **Swinging Europe**, and Romania, **Sound Cultural Foundation** for a period of 27 months. It aims at promoting the inclusion of young migrants, refugees & asylum seekers into EU hosting societies through musical cooperation & co-creation at national & EU level. The overall objective is to engage migrant and European young people, both professional musicians and amateurs, into a path of mutual knowledge and collaboration, allowing migrants to share their musical traditions and skills with European peers, while exploring various musical genres in Europe (classical, modern classical, pop, jazz, choir, etc.). The project stems from the necessity to facilitate the integration of migrant communities into social and cultural life, fight discrimination and ignorance about migrants' backgrounds and promote their knowledge of music heritage in Europe so to create a shared cultural heritage, open to diversity.

The project implemented training paths for mixed groups of migrant and European musicians ending up in concert tours and public events at the national level. In parallel, workshops in the schools introduced students to the importance of music as a ground for exploration and blending of genres and cultures. At the transnational level, a joint residency for artistic directors and musicians boosted the creation of a shared music track to be performed by a mixed orchestra of young musicians at the World Music Festival in Milan (IT). A transnational conference & local conferences aimed at attracting the widest audience possible, especially the disadvantaged/underrepresented groups of migrants, to spread the idea that their participation into socio-cultural life is welcome and valuable for all.

Many are the expected results: increase transnational cooperation among music and cultural organizations, music professionals and artists; new and enlarged interest and knowledge towards migrants' traditional music, classical and modern classical music, choir and EU music heritage; improve awareness of the general public concerning migration, integration and positive contribution of migrants to hosting societies; better understanding of music as a universal language; better inclusion of newcomers in the hosting societies; widened and diversified audience with increasing participation of underrepresented groups in the cultural sphere; creation of a concept of a European multicultural orchestra that can potentially evolve and enlarge with further professional and artistic opportunities; dissemination of results and education methodologies beyond project duration.

The project MoSaIC has been conceived to tackle the difficult integration of young migrants and refugees into mainstream cultural and social life in EU and to fight discrimination through young generations' greater knowledge and appreciation of cultures arriving in Europe among using musical expression. The project wants to promote international opportunities for young musicians to improve their skills, start collaborations and co-productions.



This shall lead to the creation of a common music track to be performed at the World Music Festival in Milan, plus various music and awareness raising events. The aim is to create the basis for a European orchestra formed by many ethnic groups promoting music as a tool for global communication and harmony. The project will also include activities aimed at the audience development and the spread of music of cultures hardly known by Europeans. MoSaIC intends to carry out the cultural inclusion of people in a double sense: by providing migrants with knowledge and skills about classic and contemporary music heritage and by providing European people with knowledge about the music heritage of third-countries' cultures now living in the EU.

## DESK STUDY

Through the contact with associations and NGOs working in the field of immigration, each partner organization, under the coordination of Ensemble AMADEUS (IT), conducted a desk study. Each partner concentrated the study on 3 countries of origin of nowadays migrants, that are considered particularly relevant for any reason. For each of the country was carried out bibliographic research about the music traditions of these countries: music history, popular music genres, singing traditions, typical musical instruments, main composers and interpreters.

Objectives of Desk Study are:

- to change the perception of immigrants in people's mind, through a better and increased knowledge of the migrants' cultures;
- to valorise music as the international communication language that can overcome the boarder of different cultures;
- to diffuse the knowledge about the music traditions of the main migrants' countries of origin;
- offering to a broader audience a different way to know more and reflect about the issues of migration, political asylum, discrimination and prejudice towards cultural diversity.

# AUTHORS

## ENSEMBLE AMADEUS

Ensemble Amadeus is a non-profit association born in 1997 with the goals of organizing great concerts in order to spread musical culture, with particular attention to the Italian and European heritage of every period, the introduction and training to concert activity of young people and of people of every age, with particular attention to socially weaker people, the promotion and support of charities and social solidarity.

With the support of associates and volunteers, the association conducts its institutional fullfilments through the Symphonic Orchestra and Choir and the Music Accademy.

**Augusto Gentili** (Legnano Italy 1970). Composer, bassist, and multi-instrumentalist, since the childhood studied the piano with various teachers and the flute with Pier Angelo Prandoni. He then attended music courses at the University of Cremona and the Ruprecht Karls University of Heidelberg. He studied composition with Luca Fabbri and then took courses with Franco Donatoni. He was awarded with a first-class Honours Bachelor of Art in Modern Music by the Middlesex University of London (bass guitar and modern music). For more than thirty years he has dedicated himself to musical education in kindergartens, elementary schools and high schools teaching also guitar, recorder, pennywhistle and percussions. He teaches musical culture at the Università del Melo in Gallarate, and electric bass at different music schools in Northern Italy including his own school: Groove House entirely dedicated to Music Theory, Bass Guitar and Drums.

Selected Discography:

2021 Antiche Pescherie nel Borgo “Si No Sabir... Tasir”

2018 Suspended Land Art Project “The Return Of The Thunderbird”

2017 Odd Strings “Fragile White Silence”

2010 Augusto Gentili “Musica per il Proprio Tempo”

2009 Polverfolk “Sunflowers”

2002 Polverfolk “From the Past to the Present”

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e-mail: [augusto.gentili@gmail.com](mailto:augusto.gentili@gmail.com), LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/augustogentili/>.

## KOOR&STEM

Koor&Stem is a non-profit organisation with a team of professionals and volunteers that work hard to support more than 1000 choirs and more than 35.000 singers and conductors across Flanders, the Dutch-speaking, northern part of Belgium. We bring people together through

song, promote fresh perspectives on the future of choral life, help and inspire, create learning opportunities and performance prospects.

Koor&Stem can rely on a throw team of volunteers. All our board members and committee members are volunteers. Koor&Stem has an organisation in each of the five Flemish provinces that consists solely of volunteers. These provincial organisations are focused on organising choral activities, building networks and providing services to the choirs in their province. Furthermore, they collaborate closely with the professional staff and play an active role in executing Koor&Stem's overall strategy. In total, there are approximately 200 volunteer workers in the five provinces.

Besides that, Koor&Stem has a group of professional employees who are responsible for general management, artistic and organisation advice and services, communication, administration and finance.

**Aurélie Nyirabikali Lierman** was born in Rwanda but grew up in Belgium from the age of two. She's an independent radio producer, vocalist and composer trying new directions by fusing radio art, vocal art and composition. Her main focus is her personal field recordings: a large collection of unique sounds and soundscapes from rural and urban contemporary East-Africa. More about her work and projects can be read in the interview following on the article about Music in Rwanda.

**Vida Razavi** is an Iranian sociologue and researcher in social sciences. As a refugee in Belgium she has combined her personal passion for social justice and professional skills for the integration and inclusion of newcomers in Belgium. Vida has also incorporated her musical instrument (dutar) into her projects, using music as a tool for bringing together diverse cultures and fostering exchange and dialogue among the citizens.

**Liesbeth Segers** works for Koor&Stem, the choral organisation of Flanders, coordinating educational/ participative projects and some of the editions. As a musicologist, she also provides program texts and introductions to concerts in Bozar and operas in La Monnaie Brussels. Liesbeth is a passionate amateur singer and sings in several choirs in Antwerp and Brussels.

**Anna Vermeulen** is musicologist and music journalist, interested in the cultural study of music. As a researcher and writer, she is drawn mainly to transnational musical practices in the 20th and 21st centuries. She completed her master's studies in musicology in 2020 at the KU Leuven, after studying art history, musicology and theatre studies at Ghent University. Throughout her studies she also fostered an interest in anthropology, postcolonial theory and globalization studies. A recipient of a DAAD-scholarship, she was a visiting scholar at Humboldt University Berlin (2020-21) and is currently preparing a doctoral project on the artistic use of ethnography in contemporary experimental radio art. As a music journalist she has published on classical and contemporary music for the Belgian newspaper De Standaard

as well as numerous concert halls and new music organizations, such as Concertgebouw Bruges, Matrix Centre for New Music and Darmstadt Summer Course blog.

## SOUND CULTURAL FOUNDATION

SOUND Cultural Foundation is a non profit, non political and independent entity that aims at promoting artistic, educational, cultural and social projects. It is also affiliated with the International Federation of Choral Music (IFCM) and collaborates with the Romanian National Association of Choral Music (ANCR), Romanian Association of Choral Singing and other related organizations which have a common goal of improving the cultural, artistic, social and educational environment within the Romanian children and youth. SOUND Cultural Foundation has set as main directions to: – promote the Romanian cultural identity by encouraging young people to embrace the artistic fields that keep alive and develop the Romanian national traditions; – stimulate creativity within society by adopting a coherent and organized training system of children and youth between 3 – 18 years old; – use the music, dance, visual arts and theater as tools to increase self awareness and develop communication skills. SOUND Cultural Foundation’s greatest achievements are: THE NATIONAL CHORAL MUSIC SYMPOSIUM and THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF CHORAL SINGING.

## SWINGING EUROPE

The self-governing institution Swinging Europe is a non-profit institution located in Herning Municipality, Denmark. Swinging Europe has worked internationally with art and culture since 1998. With music as one of our primary focus areas, we create artistic and cultural projects and activities through our primary efforts that include culture, music and talent development centred around young people aged 18 - 25.

**Anne Sophie Parsons** is a project manager with years of experience in facilitating, funding and writing cultural projects. From literary festivals to work as a board member, she’s active in volunteer work that concerns both cultural as well as humanitarian initiatives.

# IRAN

by *Swinging Europe*

## GEOGRAPHY

Iran, also called Persia and officially the Islamic Republic of Iran, is a country in Western Asia. It is bordered to the northwest by Armenia and Azerbaijan, to the north by the Caspian Sea, to the northeast by Turkmenistan to the east by Afghanistan to the southeast by Pakistan to the south by the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, and to the west by Turkey and Iraq. Iran covers an area of 1,648,195 km<sup>2</sup>, with a population of 83 million. It is the second largest country in the Middle East and its capital and largest city is Tehran.



## MUSICAL GENRES IN IRAN

Iran is a country of musical exploration; from ancient times to modern times, it has incorporated music into the fabric of its culture in vast ways: Sasanian ruler Khosrow II promoted what is known as the “golden age for Iranian music”, providing tradition and exposure of music, which was honed and emphasised as a part of society’s wealth<sup>1</sup>:

Iranian music has influenced other cultures in West Asia<sup>2</sup>, building up much of the musical terminology of the neighbouring Turkish and Arabic cultures, and reached India through the 16th-century Persianate Mughal Empire, whose court promoted new musical forms by bringing Iranian musicians. One apparent influence the common person might notice is the influence on Spain’s classical Andalusian music.

The musical genres have thus been an assortment<sup>3</sup>, communicating all parts of life through the lyrical world of tunes: from classical music, known as the *dastgah*<sup>4</sup>, a musical modal system in traditional Persian art music, and *maqam*, a technique of improvisation that defines the pitches, patterns, and development of a piece of music, to folk music with a vast variance and

<sup>1</sup> FARAT, HORMOZ, *Persian Traditional Music: Theory and Practice*, <<https://fis-iran.org/sites/fis/files/Noruz%20Lecture.pdf>>.

<sup>2</sup> NASSEHPOUR, NASROLLAH, *Impact of Iranian Music on other Cultures and Vice Versa*, in “Iran Chamber Society”, <[https://www.iranchamber.com/music/articles/iranian\\_music\\_other\\_culture.php](https://www.iranchamber.com/music/articles/iranian_music_other_culture.php)> (last accessed date: 4<sup>th</sup> August 2021).

<sup>3</sup> For a concise introduction to classical Iranian music: <[https://www.iranchamber.com/music/articles/iranian\\_classical\\_music.php](https://www.iranchamber.com/music/articles/iranian_classical_music.php)>.

<sup>4</sup> For a simple introduction to the *dastgah* modal system: <<https://www.britannica.com/art/dastgah>>.

categorised in themes from historical, social, religious<sup>5</sup> and nostalgic contexts, to symphonic music, Iranian music has both focused on the artistic and social aspect of music's impact<sup>6</sup>.

## MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS IN IRAN

Iran appears to be the birthplace of the earliest complex instruments, which date back to the third millennium BC: Trumpets and harps make out the main instruments, with an example being the *karna*, an ancient Iranian musical instrument from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC.

### *Karna*



**Karna**, one of the ancient Persian musical instruments. This Karna is now kept at Persepolis Museum. The instrument which shows the importance of epic and military music in ancient Persia (Iran) was made around 500 BC. Photo by Payam Jahangiri / PDN.

Other well-known instruments to be mentioned are: *tar*, *tanbur*, *setar*, *santur*, *kamanche*, *tonbak*, *daf*, *nay*, *qanun* and *chang*, which are still played till this day.

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<sup>5</sup> DARVISH, MOHAMMAD REZA, *Ritual and Religious Music in Iran*, in "Iran Chamber Society", <[https://www.iranchamber.com/music/articles/ritual\\_religious\\_music.php](https://www.iranchamber.com/music/articles/ritual_religious_music.php)> (last accessed date: 4<sup>th</sup> August 2021).

<sup>6</sup> For a quick overview and introduction to the theories and principles of Persian music, it is worth noting that Persian classical music - like the history of Iran itself - can be divided into two major eras, Pre-Islamic and Post-Islamic: <<http://farabisoft.com/Pages/FarabiSchool/TheoryDetails.aspx?lang=en&PID=6&SID=36>>.

***Tar:***



***Tanbur:***



***Setar:***



***Santur:***



***Kamanche:***



***Tonbak:***



***Daf:***



***Nay:***



**Qanun:**



TAPPersia.com | Travel Around Persia

**Chang:**



TAPPersia.com | Travel Around Persia

## MUSIC IN MODERN TIMES<sup>7</sup>

Pop music<sup>8</sup> ended up being a mixture with Western influence from the 1950s in its combination of indigenous Iranian and European instruments, while the 1979 Revolution resulted in music being prohibited for almost two decades in the country<sup>9</sup>. Rebellious tendencies couldn't be restrained, though: Rock music slowly, but steadily blossomed in Tehran's 1960s nightclubs and Iranian hip hop emerged from the underground scene in the 2000s, also a combination of elements from the indigenous Iranian musical form interlaced in the American-styled hip hop.

## SHOHREH SHAHRZAD - PERCUSSION, DANCE, VJ

Shohreh Shahrzad<sup>10</sup> is an Iranian multi-artist. She plays an Iranian frame drum (*daff*). The instrument has been used in both folk and religious music for millennia in Iran. Shohreh Shahrzad performs, in such a way, where she combines painting, dance and plays the daff with a focus on spirituality. Her paintings on canvas do not depict the superficial world, but explore and experiment according to shape, colour and texture.

The question of freedom of expression has been an element, which has been important for Iranian artist Shohreh Shahrzad since she started her career: not only in the context of herself and what she wants to express through the arts, but also who and what is allowed to be presented in dance, music and multimedia as a visual element:

<sup>7</sup> A thorough look at how Iranian society and popular music are intertwined in a modern setting can be explored in: BREYLEY, GJ AND FATEMI, SASAN, *Iranian Music and Popular Entertainment - From Motrebi to Losanjelesi and Beyond*, first published 2016 by Routledge, 2016 GJ Breyley and Sasan Fatami.

<sup>8</sup> ZARGHAMI, MOHAMMAD, *Pop Music in Iran*, <[https://www.iranchamber.com/music/articles/pop\\_music\\_iran.php](https://www.iranchamber.com/music/articles/pop_music_iran.php)> (last accessed date: 4th August 2021).

<sup>9</sup> Siamdoust, Nahid, *Soundtrack of the Revolution: The Politics of Music in Iran (Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures)*, Stanford University Press, 2017.

<sup>10</sup> The following paragraphs are an extract from an interview to Shohreh Shahrzad made on 12th March 2021. Here are quoted her words.



“My writing abilities are limited, which is probably why I create visual arts, perform or play music.

Art itself should be able to make a connection between me and my audience. I always get annoyed when visitors ask me to explain my paintings.

On the other hand, I believe that we do not each have the same understanding of our surroundings. For example, my left eye sees more yellow than my right eye. So imagine the difference there could be between individuals. I ask myself – does everybody see the same colours that I do or hear the same melodies that I hear? Probably not. So how can I be sure that my art can send my specific message to many different people when each of them have different ways of perceiving the world?

My conclusion is that our individual understanding of a piece of art is the core of it. I think the ability to send a personal message and evoke an emotion in others is the definition of art.”

***When you hear the term 'freedom of expression', what does it mean to you?***

“Many years ago, when I was in Iran, society was very closed to new ideas. When you are an artist you cannot help expressing yourself so you will face a lot of problems from authorities and even conservative people around you. This is also something I experienced and the reason I understand how important it is to have freedom, especially freedom of expression. For me 'freedom of expression' is an absolute necessity. How can you create art without freedom?”

***Do you see a distinction between freedom of expression and freedom to express? How do you understand this sentence - if there is a distinction at all?***

“In my opinion, freedom of expression and freedom to express is almost the same thing. We can say that freedom of expression could concern something external like for instance the laws of society, and freedom to express something internal like the intention of artists to express themselves freely without having to worry about the consequences. Creativity is born in freedom.”

***If one understands the term freedom of expression to mean that everyone has the right to create and show whichever output they want, do you feel we all end up - here understood as both artists and as a society - with more responsibility on our shoulders to navigate and be critical of the output produced? Or would that go against the very idea of freedom of expression? What is your view?***

“This is a very complicated philosophical discussion; I think it is clear that artists can have a big influence on society. In my opinion, we have a responsibility as artists to show different concepts and different ways of thinking. Artists are not here only to entertain people or create beauty but as messengers for humanity. Artists are philosophers with different tools to change the world. But this does not mean that there are no limits, that we should not be critical towards the ideas we bring into the world. This does not go against the idea of freedom of expression,

as this, in my opinion, does in very general terms not include for example the right to hurt others, to make other people suffer.”



Image above: Shohreh Shahrzad – Innin © Shohreh Shahrzad

## WORKS LIST OF INTEREST AND YOUTUBE LINKS

The history of Iranian music spans across a broad spectrum of fields of interests: Here is listed a small selection of works, which serve as the starting point to dive deeper into the world of Iranian music.

BLUM, STEPHEN, *Iran: An Introduction*, in «The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music». Vol. 6, “The Middle East”, edited by Virginia Danielson, Scott Marcus, and Dwight Reynolds, 823–838, New York: Routledge, 2002.

BREYSLEY, GJ and FATEMI, SASAN, *Iranian Music and Popular Entertainment - From Motrebi to Losanjelesi and Beyond*, first published 2016 by Routledge, 2016 GJ Breyley and Sasan Fatami.

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# KURDISTAN

by *Swinging Europe*

## GEOGRAPHY

**Kurdistan**, the literal translation being "land of the Kurds", or **Greater Kurdistan** is a roughly defined geo-cultural territory in Western Asia wherein the Kurdish people form a prominent majority population and the Kurdish culture, languages and national identity have historically been based.

Kurdistan generally comprises the following four areas: southeastern Turkey (Northern Kurdistan), northern Iraq (Southern Kurdistan), northwestern Iran (Eastern Kurdistan) and northern Syria (Western Kurdistan).

The country's existence and claim to land has been a troublesome one throughout history; with censorship and oppression from the surrounding countries of Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria, the Kurds are an ethnic minority that has fought for their right to stand by their cultural background and thus it has become important for people, who view their ethnic heritage as being from Kurdistan, to talk about their nationality, as well as present it through the arts<sup>1</sup>.



## MUSICAL GENRES IN KURDISTAN

Traditionally, Kurdish folk songs are passed down orally, from generation to generation.<sup>2</sup> Kurdish songs range from historical stories to epic tales, and from lyrical poems to literary works.

Although it belongs to the same musical family as Persian music, Kurdish music is based on the use of the pentachord. The music's storytelling quality is another important feature of the tradition, demonstrated through songs portraying unrequited love, heroic adventures, and emotional healing. Kurdish music can be divided into two general, distinctive categories: day and night music. Daytime music is music for festivities, whereas night music allows for moments of withdrawal and reflection.

Traditional Kurdish music is very distinctive from Arabic, Armenian and Turkish music, and mostly composed by people who remain anonymous. Thematically, the music was of melancholic and elegiac character, but has since then incorporated more upbeat and joyous

<sup>1</sup> A starting point to explore the relationship between Kurdish national identity and music is the article: BLUM, STEPHEN – HASSANPOUR, AMIR, 'The Morning of Freedom Rose up': *Kurdish Popular Song and the Exigencies of Cultural Survival*, «Popular Music», vol. 15, no. 3, 1996, in *JSTOR*, <[www.jstor.org/stable/931333](http://www.jstor.org/stable/931333)>, (last accessed date: 20<sup>th</sup> May 2021), pp. 325–343.

<sup>2</sup> ALI AKBAR, MORADI, *Kurdish Music, Ancient Heritage of Iranian Music*, in "Iran Chamber Society", <[https://www.iranchamber.com/music/articles/kurdish\\_music\\_iranian\\_heritage.php](https://www.iranchamber.com/music/articles/kurdish_music_iranian_heritage.php)>.

melodies. Kurdish folklore constitutes three genres: the storytellers (*çîrokbêj*), bards (*dengbêj*) and popular singers (*stranbêj*). Moreover, there are religious-themed songs (*lawje*), seasonal musical topics, for example "*payizok*" that are songs about the return to the summer pastures performed in autumn. Kurdish improvisations are called *teqsîm*.

There are several types of performers in Kurdish culture. Bards, or *dengbêj*, are the most common, and use their musical skills and exceptional memories to bring Kurdish songs from one village to another.

## MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS IN KURDISTAN

The most well-known instruments in a Kurdish tradition<sup>3</sup> are *tembûr* (Kurdish tanbur), *bağlama*, *gernête*, *duduk*, *kaval*, long flute (*simsal*), *kemenche*, oboe (*zirne*) and drum (*dahol*).

The most common musical instruments for dancing are the "*def u zirne*" (drum and oboe), similar to the *tapan* and *zurna* of Macedonia. In some regions, where for religious reasons musical instruments are considered improper, dancing is accompanied by singing, in which a "*stranbêj*" (traditional singer) calls out a verse, which in response is repeated by the other dancers, who then call out a new verse, which is repeated by the leader, and so on, back and forth.

A salient difference between Kurmanji and Sorani singing is the tendency for Kurmanji singers, when improvising, to try to cram as many words as possible into a musical phrase. Among the Sorani, although this trait is also found in Erbil, it is totally absent from the Sorani singing style of Sulaymaniyah and Kirkuk.

*Bağlama:*



*Kemenche:*



*Dahol:*



<sup>3</sup> YOUSEFBEIGI, AHMAD, *Instruments*, in "Kurdish Drum", <<http://www.kurdishdrum.com/englishinstruments.html>>.

**Kaval:**



**Duduk<sup>4</sup>:**



## MUSIC IN MODERN TIMES

Despite its very defined traditional musical output, Kurdish music is in a lot of ways a new musical genre as far as how late it was recorded and studied: The earliest study of Kurdish music was initiated by the renowned Armenian priest and composer Komitas in 1903, when he published his work *"Chansons kurdes transcrites par le pere Komitas"* which consisted of twelve Kurdish melodies which he had collected. In 1909, scholar Isya Joseph published the work *"Yezidi works"* in which he documented the musical practice of the Yazidis including the role of the musician-like qawâl figures and the instruments used by the minority.

In Iraq, the *Kurdish Music and Heritage Establishment* (KMHE) has been taking steps to archive and digitise records of Kurdish music. Based in Erbil, the centre's library has accumulated over 45,000 musical archives since it started recording music in 2004. Kurdish music in Turkey has suffered from long-time censorship, and is still censored in many cities today. Kurdish songs have been banned from being broadcast on radio or television, and some Kurds have been arrested for even singing along to specific Kurdish songs<sup>5</sup>.

A new energetic musical genre, known as *granî* – or *ağır delilo* in a Turkish-Kurdish hybrid expression - is being played at weddings with *elektrobağlamas* and with amped rock resonance, as a new format for Kurdish identity to be expressed through music in festive and social settings.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Insights on Kurdish Music. The Nomadic Influence on Kurdish Music*, in "From My Little Big Eyes", <<http://bigfoot7.blogspot.com/2009/05/updatespart-2-insights-on-kurdish-music.html>>.

<sup>5</sup> For further exploration of the problematic censorship of Kurdish music, read article: KURUOĞLU, ALEV, *The Creation and Transformation of an Illegal Market: Kurdish Music in Turkey*, in «NA - Advances in Consumer Research», 2012, Volume 40, eds. Zeynep Gürhan-Canli, Cele Otnes, and Rui (Juliet) Zhu, Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research, pp. 129-133.

<sup>6</sup> For an informative and personal account on this music genre, read the article: MURER, GEORGE, *The Sonic Craft of Granî: The Evolution of Turbocharged, Transnational Kurdish Music*, in "Ajam Media Collective", 20<sup>th</sup> September 2020, <<https://ajammc.com/2020/09/06/sonic-craft-kurdish-grani/>>.



## MIZGIN OZDEMIR – MUSICIAN (String Instruments and Song)

Mizgin sings and plays Kurdish folk music. With a composition of Danish, Afghan and Balkan musicians, her music and inspiration draw upon the Kurdish and Turkish songbook, deep Sufi music, Dylanesque rock poetry and old Nordic songs.

In addition to having performed at many Danish and international music festivals and venues in the last 10 years, Mizgin has also appeared on stage as a soloist at the Nordic Film Composer's Awards.

The relationship to music started for Kurdish musician Mizgin Ozdemir from a young age, when traveling salesmen would pass through her town with cassette tapes, blaring from transportable recorders. It later led to her venturing into trying her hand at playing music herself – with the string instrument, *baklama*, she started playing songs and singing, which led her to become a musician. Being exposed to music meant that a direct way into expressing feelings was found, but it has also ended up shaping her sense of identity and cultural background, founded in a Kurdish heritage.

Mizgin Ozdemir's relationship to music has been shaped by the memories from youth of how music was bought from traveling salesmen, as well as what the freedom of interpreting songs anew brings to her creativity are of importance.

*How do you remember music playing a part in your life in your younger years?<sup>7</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup> The following paragraphs are an extract from an interview to Mizgin Ozdemir made on 12th March 2021. Here are quoted her words.

“I was 28 years old when I came to Denmark – so, the music from my country has shaped me in a number of ways. It has been songs, which have travelled with me and been brought to a new country, so to speak. Songs can be quite defining – I remember being 14 years old and being quite smitten with the boy that lived next door. Having songs to sing together in that context, was both a cosy thing to be able to do, but also, of course, a way to express your feelings. Whether you were happy or sad, there was always an outlet through music.

I grew up in a village where rich and poor people lived side by side – but with a clear distinction, where the neighbourhoods differed from each other, drawing a line. I remember that we would be able to buy music from the traveling salesman - they would sell cassette tapes with music on them. They’d go into town and ride their bicycle around with the music blaring from a music box – and if you liked the music you heard, you could buy it off of him. They would be like traveling record stores. So, when a person in your family bought one of the cassette tapes, it would be the soundtrack and music that we all listened to for a while – we would all listen to the same thing. It would be many months, where you listened to the same tape.

In this context, it wasn’t Kurdish music that we would be able to listen to. Kurdish music was banned when I grew up. I’m of the opinion: Why should it be banned? I’m entitled to the music that belongs to me as a Kurdish person. It’s my cultural background and heritage – I have a right to it.”



*Image above: an example of the sales cycles travelling through towns and villages, bringing their sales products around by vehicle. They sell food, clothes and other daily household products, but also sold – back in the day – cassette tapes with music. Rather than visiting a music store, the readily-accessible cassettes with music could be bought as soon as the sales man passed through town.*

(Source: © <https://www.ensonhaber.com/> - <https://www.ensonhaber.com/galeri/uc-tekerlekli-tahta-ev>).





*Image above: Dilê Min Bû Behra Belek by Şivan Perwer Lê Dîlberê © Pelrecords. An example of a Kurdish song, which specifically incorporates string instruments, drums, and flutes – the song’s lyrics focus on the national feeling of Kurdistan and describe nature and animals, all as examples of the beauty of a Kurdish cultural background.*

“In connection with the concerts, which the Danish-based MoSaIC band played at the former folk high school HH Herning, the experimentation and improvisation with mixing different musical genres and sounds became apparent in the meeting between Middle Eastern tunes and Danish folk songs.”

***What do you personally feel happens when songs are reinterpreted? That you are able to hear the well-known aspects of a song, but it also has new, unexpected elements to it?***

“During our concerts, we had a session, where we played the Danish well-known song – *Sensommervise* (Late Summer Hymn), but in a reinterpreted version with clear Middle Eastern tunes set to it – together with the other band members, I played my *saz* and did vocals. I knew the song beforehand and had heard it before – the melody is both happy and sad, light and dark, cold and warm, all at the same time. It’s almost like there’s a scent of fall to it.

I think the song fit well with its composition – it opened up the opportunity to draw upon the different nationalities represented in the MoSaIC band and have them come with their creative input. There were different melodies – it was sensitive, but at the same time carried out with full control.

By interpreting a song that is well-known and loved by many people in this version, it was a way to mix different cultural and musical backgrounds, which meant that the different genres were able to merge into a new shape.”



Image above: *Sensommervise* by Det Fynske Kammerkor © 2016 Point Records. A rendition of a Danish song by Kirsten and Finn Jørgensen is one of the most popular songs from *Højskolesangbogen* (*The Folk High School Song Book*), which is sung at various social get-togethers in Denmark and at the folk high schools – the song’s lyrics focus on the seasonal transition from the last days of summer before darker and colder days await ahead.

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The App *Kurdish Musical Instruments*<sup>8</sup> is a Kurdish music simulator with actual instruments sound and Kurdish music tones. This App also has Kurdish rhythms and chords that can be used as accompaniment while you are playing.

To listen to Kurdish traditional music, follow this YouTube link:  
<[Kurdish Traditional and Folk Music Concert – Sarang Seyifzadeh](#)>.

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<sup>8</sup> *Kurdish Musical Instruments*,  
<[https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=masih.vahida.and\\_saz\\_kordi\\_demo&hl=en\\_US&gl=US](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=masih.vahida.and_saz_kordi_demo&hl=en_US&gl=US)>.

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# REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

by Sound Cultural Foundation

## HISTORY OF MOLDOVA

Bessarabia, the name often given to the region of historical Moldavia between the Dniester and Prut rivers, has a long and stormy history. Bessarabia later came marginally under the control of the Roman Empire as part of Dacia. Lying on one of the principal land routes into Europe, it was invaded by successive waves of barbarians. Gradually, under varying influences, the Vlach (or Romanian) nationality developed. From 1241 to the 14th century Moldavia was vassal to the Tatars. Moldova lies in the northeastern corner of the Balkan region of Europe. Its capital city is Chişinău, located in the south-central part of the country.

Bessarabia remained a province of the Russian Empire until after World War I, when it became a part of Greater Romania, and it reverted to Russian control in 1940–41 and again after World War II, when it was joined to a strip of formerly Ukrainian territory, the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, on the left bank of the Dniester River (Moldovan: Nistru) to form the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic. Upon the collapse of the Soviet Union in August 1991, this republic declared its independence and took the name Moldova. It became a member of the United Nations in 1992. Since its independence in 1991, Moldova has been beset with an array of challenges stemming from problematic situations. Finally, the economic transition was further impeded by the fact that much of Moldovan industry was located in the separatist region of Transdniestria, which had proclaimed independence from Moldova in 1990, resulting in a brief civil war. Although a cease-fire was declared in 1992, relations remained tense between Moldova and Transdniestria, and Russian troops are still present in the security zone. Transdniestria is also the source of much of Moldova's electricity, which has been cut off at various times. Thus, Moldova's road to nationhood has remained bumpy—from the first efforts at nation-building to the country's pursuit of peace and prosperity in the 21st century.



## PEOPLE OF MOLDOVA: ETHNIC GROUPS

About three-fourths of Moldova's population consists of ethnic Moldovans. There are smaller populations of Ukrainians, Russians, Gagauz, Roma (Gypsies), and Bulgarians. The Ukrainian population of Moldova, the largest minority group, is divided between those who are native to the country (their ancestors having farmed for centuries in what is now Moldova) and those

who migrated to Moldova during the periods of Russian and Soviet control. The former group makes up the majority of Ukrainians in Moldova.

## LANGUAGES

Moldovan is designated as the country's official language in the constitution. During the Russian imperial and Soviet periods, the Moldavian language (as it was then called) was written in the Cyrillic alphabet. Soviet scholars, mainly for political reasons, insisted that this language was an independent Romance language that was distinct from Daco-Romanian (*see* Romanian). Some of Moldova's ethnic communities have preserved their respective languages, but not without accommodations brought about by urbanization. Those who have been drawn to the cities, especially ethnic Moldovans, often have accepted Russian as a second language.

## CULTURAL LIFE

The historical ties between Bessarabia and Romania and the ethnic kinship of Moldovans and Romanians are still reflected in the culture of Moldova. The development of Moldovan culture after World War II, however, followed the prevailing pattern of the Soviet Union as a whole. The state assumed responsibility for the content and direction of all cultural and intellectual life. The theatre, motion pictures, television, and printed matter were subject to censorship and close ideological scrutiny. Until the waning days of Soviet influence, private initiative in cultural endeavours was rare.

Moldova was known in the Soviet era for the quality of its musical instruction, with many Russian composers and conductors serving on the faculty of Chişinău's Academy of Music. One of the academy's graduates is the internationally known composer Arkady Luxemburg. Moldovans have also embraced contemporary styles such as rock, pop, and hip-hop, and Moldova has participated in the Eurovision Song Contest since 2005.

During the period of Soviet rule, the state gave particular attention to the expansion of cultural opportunities. Numerous amateur theatres and musical and art groups were supported. The state also attempted to preserve the rich heritage of Moldovan folk art and music through such ensembles as the Doina choir and Zhok popular ballet and through local and national museums. Economic changes and urbanization, however, undermined traditional society and curtailed artistic creativity. Moreover, the economic deprivations and hardships since independence have left the average Moldovan little time for cultural interests, and the national budget deficits have left few governmental resources with which to subsidize cultural activities. In 2015 Moldova joined Creative Europe, an EU program designed to support the efforts of creative and cultural organizations with increased access to funding, training, and networking opportunities.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Independent Moldova*, in "Britannica", <<https://www.britannica.com/place/Moldova/Independent-Moldova>>.

## MOLDOVAN MUSIC

Moldovan music<sup>2</sup> is closely related to that of its neighbor and cultural kin, Romania. Moldovan folk is known for swift, complex rhythms (a characteristic shared with many Eastern European traditions), musical improvisation, syncopation and much melodic ornamentation.<sup>3</sup>

During the Soviet era, Moldovan folk culture flourished, and was strongly promoted by the government. However, many elements were altered to obscure the shared history of Romania and Moldova, because the Soviet Union wanted to discourage secession.

The *Miorița* is ancient ballad that is a very important part of Moldovan folk culture.

## TRADITIONAL INSTRUMENTS

### KAVAL

The Moldavian Kaval is a fipple flute and has a similar mouth-piece to the overtone flutes. It has 5 finger-holes. Its tuning has semitones that give it an oriental or balkan character. As Neyval or 7-hole kaval make it with 6 holes on the front and one for the thumb.

The kaval is a chromatic end-blown flute traditionally played throughout the Balkans (in Albania, Romania, Bulgaria, Southern Serbia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Northern Greece and elsewhere) and Anatolia (including Turkey and Armenia). The kaval is primarily associated with mountain shepherds. The kaval is fully open at both ends, and is played by blowing on the sharpened edge of one end. The kaval has eight playing holes (seven in front and one in the back for the thumb) and usually four more unfingered intonation holes near the bottom of the kaval. As a wooden rim-



blown flute, kaval is similar to the *kawala* of the Arab world and *ney* of the Middle East.

The kaval is primarily associated with mountain shepherds throughout the Balkans and Anatolia and in the book *Kaval: Traditional Folk Melodies for Balkan & Anatolian Folk Flute*, musician Pat MacSwyney suggests that the kaval spread with the Yoruks from the Taurus mountains of southern Anatolia into the southern Balkans of southeast Europe.

While in the past it was almost entirely a shepherd's instrument, today it is widely used in folk songs and dances as part of ensembles or solo. When played, the kaval is held with both hands at an angle of approximately 45° from the body, with the four fingers of the one hand covering

<sup>2</sup> *Music of Moldova*, in “Wikipedia”, <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music\\_of\\_Moldova](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_of_Moldova)>.

<sup>3</sup> *Folk Music of Moldova*, in “MSN Encarta”, Archived from the original on 2009-08-29, <[https://web.archive.org/web/20090829083434/http://encarta.msn.com/media\\_681500051/Folk\\_Music\\_of\\_Moldova.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20090829083434/http://encarta.msn.com/media_681500051/Folk_Music_of_Moldova.html)>.

the lower holes; the upper three holes and the thumbhole are covered with the other hand. The mouth covers approximately three quarters of the end. Change of the breath air pressure also changes the pitch.

In Romania there are three types of cavals: cavals from Moldova (with 6 holes), cavals from Oltenia (with 5 holes) and cavals from Dobrogea (similar with Bulgarian cavals). Their fundamental sound may be A, but for some instruments the lowest sound they can perform may vary between G and C. The Romanian cavals are ethnic instruments built by artisans (usually using two pieces, but there are older models made from a single piece) and therefore each instrument is unique in its own way. The Romanian caval in A has a playing range of two octaves (which lacks certain sounds).

*The Moldovan caval* has 5 and sometimes 6 holes and it is frequently used in traditional folk music both in Romania and Moldova.

These 5-holed flutes are the more typical traditional shepherd instruments, easy to play with the finger holes close together playing a 'gypsy scale'.<sup>4</sup>

This flute can be seen in the following video: [Moldavian kaval solo – Flutemaker Winne Clement.](#)

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## SAXOPHONE

The saxophone (referred to colloquially as the sax) is a family of woodwind instruments usually made of brass and played with a single-reed mouthpiece.

Although most saxophones are made from brass, they are categorized as woodwind instruments because sound is produced by an oscillating reed (traditionally made out of woody cane) rather than lips vibrating in a mouthpiece cup as with the brass instrument family. As with the other woodwind instruments, the pitch of the note being played is controlled by covering holes in the body tube to control the resonant frequency of the air column by changing the effective length of the tube. The player covers or uncovers the holes by pressing keys. The saxophone is used in a wide range of musical styles including classical music (such as concert bands, chamber music, solo repertoire, and, occasionally, orchestras), military bands, marching bands, jazz (such as big bands and jazz combos), and contemporary music. The saxophone is also used as a solo and melody instrument or as a member of a horn section in some styles of rock and roll and popular music. Saxophone players are called *saxophonists*. The saxophone was invented by the Belgian instrument maker Adolphe Sax in the early 1840s, and saxophones have since been produced in a variety of models distinguished by transpositions within instrument sets and tuning standard.



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<sup>4</sup> For a better understanding, visit the websites <http://www.fujaraflutes.com/moldavian-kaval-flutes> and <https://www.maxbrumbergflutes.eu/en/floeten/kaval/>.

The rise of the saxophone as a jazz instrument followed its widespread adoption in dance bands during the early 1920s.<sup>5</sup>

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## CIMPOI

Cimpoi is the Romanian and Moldovan bagpipe.

Cimpoi has a single drone called *bâzoi* or *bîzoi* ("buzzer") and straight bore chanter called *carabă* ("whistle"). It is less strident than its Balkan relatives.

There are two types of cimpoi, one with a single drone and one with two. Its repertoire is mainly dance music, usually accompanied by a folk orchestra or played solo to provide music for the traditional dance ensemble. The traditional repertoire of songs is very limited, consisting of about ten different melodies, each one paired with a different rhythm and dance.

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## COBZA

The cobza<sup>6</sup> (also *cobsa*, *cobuz*, *koboz*) is a multi-stringed instrument of the lute family of folk origin popular in Romanian and Moldovan folklore (it is considered the oldest accompaniment instrument in the region). It is also used in the Hungarian Táncház movement (end of the 20th Century). It is said that the Cobza was also played in the 19th Century by Jewish musicians from Moldova region. It seems that Cobza was also used in various music ensembles in the Bukovyna region in the mid-war periods, being replaced totally by the mandolin and 4 stringed domra when this area became incorporated into the Ukrainian SSR. The name of the instrument may come from the Turkic "kopuz". It is distinct from the Ukrainian Kobza, an instrument of different construction and origin.

## TARAF (MUSICAL BAND)



Taraf is a small folk (*lăutărească*) music ensemble from Romania or Moldova, usually consisting of 3-8 musicians.<sup>7</sup> Instruments include the violin, cello, tambourine, accordion, harmonica and cimpoi (Romanian bagpipes). A taraf also often includes an instrument typical to the region: a kobza and cimbalom (Wallachia and Oltenia) a trumpet and flute (Moldova), a Tárogató (near Banat), a clarinet (Transylvania), or a 2-3

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<sup>5</sup> HART HUGH, June 28, 1846: Parisian Inventor Patents Saxophone, in "Wired", 28 June 2010, <<https://www.wired.com/2010/06/0628saxophone-patent/>>.

<sup>6</sup> *Salvgardarea patrimoniului cultural imaterial al Republicii Moldova*, <<http://www.patrimoniuiaterial.md/ro>>.

<sup>7</sup> The image on the left: Taraf of Ochi-Albi, an 1860 painting by Carol Szathmari.



stringed lute (in Maramureş county) sometimes called a "zongora". Players may also use instruments improvised from grass, birch bark, mussel shells, and leaves.

## ALEXANDRU ARCUS

Alexandru Arcus e is a professional saxophone player, born in Cricova, close to Chişinău (Republic of Moldova), living currently in Bucharest.

Alexandru started making music a long time ago, when he received at the age of 5 his first guitar. He started playing the saxophone when he was 8. He studied the saxophone at the School of Music and Arts in his hometown. A year later he transferred to the "Ciprian Porumbescu High School" in Chişinău, and had the privilege of becoming a member of the ethno jazz groups Trigon & Alex Calancea Band at the age of 21. Studying classical and jazz saxophone in school and conservatory, he discovered the fantastic world of folk music. Besides saxophone, he plays flute, Bulgariand and Moldavian kaval, fluier, Akai EWI. In his improvisations you can hear a large range of colours, mixing folklore and jazz. Withe "Trigon" group, in collaboratin with "The



Shin" (Georgia), and "Valts Puce" groups (Latvia) he took part in the "Port of Cultures" project, Roots Revival Maramures, BJO(Bucharest Jazz Orchestra), 3 for Helen, JAVRA, Tzuc&Petzi, FaceToFace. Together with Mark Alban Lotz (Germany / Holland) and Paul Pallessen (Holland) he took part in the project organised by the "Moldova Calls" quartet and octet. Alexandru performed in various countries, including Spain, Portugal, Russia, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Ukraine, Netherlands, Romania.

He played at famous jazz festivals: Bucharest Jazz Festival, Jazz TM, Gărâna Jazz Festival, Jazz in the park), clubs and stages in over 20 countries in Europe.

He likes the idea of communication through music, and according to him "when you put together people from different areas, I mean different geographical and social areas, the result is always a successful fusion. I am always trying to be extremely open through my music. With any possible musical partner or partners, or community, I try to find my own place and float together, to create a twisting whirlwind that goes places." His improvisations are distinguished by a very wide color palette, which combines folklore and jazz.

His active projects are:

*Arcuş Trio* that brings urban folk elements from traditional Romanian and Balkan music with influences from R&B, prog-rock, thus forming its own style, which can be heard on the band's first record, called *Allotropy*.

*A-C Leonte* - Alexandru is the saxophonist, flutist and composer in his collaboration with the singer A-C Leonte, representing the contemporary jazz scene in Romania and the electronic underground movement. Recently they had the project *Artist in Church*, that aims to promote and support musical innovation and also, to value the spiritual culture of the villages in Transylvania. He is also part of *The Jam Community*, *BJO*, *KRiSPER* band.

## MOSAIC INTERVIEW



### **Tell us something about yourself**

We are made of the things and places we come from. Obviously, being from Moldova has had an influence on me, and I still feel this influence. I wouldn't say I feel special one way or another, but I do have a couple of things from there that I brought with me and that I can't get rid of.

### **How and when did you start studying music?**

I started making music a long time ago. I do not come from a family with musical roots per se. I believe I am the first in my family to have approached, or better incorporated this form of art, but I believe my parents and my grandparents had some musical history somehow, through dance, through folklore etc. I first bumped into this when I was five or six years old, when I received my first little guitar, as a gift, and I thought it was very cool to wander in the backyard and make noise with that guitar in my hand, imagining that I was an artist. Whenever I would find pipes, I tried to blow into them, and play something. When I heard music playing, I would try to dance. After that, when I turned seven, I told my father I wanted to play the trumpet. There was something I liked about the trumpet, even if I never managed to play it. There was a professor at the music school in Cricova, the town I come from, who found a very old saxophone, something from the USSR era. He had found it in the basement of the music school and after he had cleaned and fixed it, asked me if I wanted to play it. I said that I did, and that's how I started. I have been playing the saxophone ever since.

### **Do you have a specific target audience in mind you want to reach with your music?**

Whenever I make music, or when I expose my musical ideas, I believe, in fact I know for sure, that I am trying to address myself, first of all, to the truth that lies here, inside. I am trying to be honest with myself, first of all, because I know for a fact that whenever you are honest with yourself and try to address yourself and you look deep down inside for answers, you can always find them. And when you expose this and you express those honest and true feelings, people can feel it. So people can feel the truth. There is something incorporated in our genes that can detect the truth.

### **What do you expect from participating in the MoSaIC project?**

I like the idea of communication through music. And when you put together people from different areas, I mean different geographical and social areas, the result is always a successful fusion. And yes, I am always trying to be extremely open through my music. With any possible musical partner or partners, or community, I try to find my own place and float together, to create a twisting whirlwind that goes places.

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# RUSSIA

by Koor&Stem

## ABOUT THE COUNTRY

Russia, the largest country in the world, is located across northern Asia and eastern Europe, sharing borders with 16 other countries. It is ranked as the ninth most populous country in the world. The large group of Eastern Slavs were the first native inhabitants of Russia sometime during 3 and 8 centuries AD.

Moscow, the capital of Russia, and Saint Petersburg are the largest cities and main cultural centers of Russia. However the most spoken language is Russian, the country counts 35 different official languages such as Bashkir, Ingush, Chechen, Chuvash, Yakut, Komi-Zyrian, Kalmyk, Ossetian, Altai, Adyghe, Ukrainian, Buryat, Tatar and others. Different religions such as Christianity, Islam and Buddhism coexist in harmony. Eastern Orthodox Christians are the majority, followed by Islam.

The Russian population consists of 193 minority ethnic groups and the diversity of cultures is present everywhere. This diversity is due to the vast geographical spread of the country across northern Asia and eastern Europe. Diversity in Russia has manifested itself in architecture, art, culture and literature. This has made Russia a country of great composers, dancers, musicians and writers throughout history.



## ABOUT THE MUSIC

Russia is a very large and diverse country, with many ethnic groups and ethnic minorities who populated the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union and modern-day Russia, each with their own musical traditions.

Russian music has an extensive history, beginning from ritual folk songs and the sacred music of the Russian Orthodox Church. The 19th century saw the rise of highly acclaimed Russian nationalism in classical music and in the 20th century major contributions by various composers such as Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971), Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953) and Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975) while the modern styles of Russian popular music developed (rock, hip hop, pop).

In what follows we choose to briefly focus on Russian traditional music. We do not include the various forms of art music which in Russia often also contain folk melodies and folk elements.

## ROOTS OF RUSSIAN FOLK MUSIC

*“Russian folk songs are a living history of the Russian people, rich, vivid and truthful, revealing their entire life.”<sup>1</sup>*

The roots of Russian folk music date as far back as to the middle of the first millennium B.C., when Slavic tribes settled in the European part of the present territory of Russia. Those tribes were famous for their love and mastery of music, singing and dancing, according to Byzantium and German manuscripts.<sup>2</sup> Their lives centered around the seasonal year and their musical ideas were expressed in the form of songs to accompany the tasks of manual labor and ritualize the basic events of human life such as birth, marriage and death.<sup>3</sup> Besides the Eastern Slavs, Russian folk songs were also influenced by the cultures of other people inhabiting Russian territory, including the Khazars, Pechenegs and the Polovtsian Kipchaks. Other influential elements came from the people along the Volga River, especially the Volgan Bulgars (now extinct).<sup>4</sup>

The majority of currently existent folk songs have pagan roots bearing the impact of Christian rites. In medieval times, the first church singers were the same rural people who created folk music. These original singers inherited their modes and intonations from ritual songs. This is why the modal structure of monophonic church singing is so similar to that of folk tunes.<sup>5</sup>

## MAINLY VOCAL

As noted above, songs are highly present in Russian folk music. Indeed, much of the Russian folk music is vocal, and very diverse. Folk singing traditions of the northern (Archangelsk), southern (districts of Belgorod, Voronezh and Kursk) and central Volga regions have their own distinct features, other regions stand out because of special techniques: in Siberia there are very old and guttural singing traditions, in Tuva overtone singing.<sup>6</sup>

This Russian folk song was an integral part of daily village life. It was sung from morning to night and reflected the changing seasons and significant events in villagers' lives. Its roots are in the orthodox church services where significant parts are sung. Most of the population was illiterate and poverty-stricken, so musical instruments were rare, and notation could not be read. Also, instruments were not allowed in orthodox churches. Other sources assign the rare use of instruments to Czar Alexey (1629-1676). In order to strengthen the state, Alexey decided to

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<sup>1</sup> This is a quote from Nikolai Gogol (1809-1852).

<sup>2</sup> *History of Russian Folk Music*, in “Russia Info Centre”, <[http://russia-ic.com/view/culture\\_art/music/folk\\_music/](http://russia-ic.com/view/culture_art/music/folk_music/)>, (last accessed date: 1<sup>st</sup> May 2021).

<sup>3</sup> BERIYEVA, YELIZAVETA NIKOLAYEVNA, *Russian Musical Elements: An Analysis of Selected Piano Works by Mily Balakirev (1837-1910)*, The University of Arizona, Arizona 2019, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> *ivi*, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> BROUGHTON, SIMON – ELLINGHAM, MARK – LUSK, JON, *The rough guide to World Music, Europe, Asia & Pacific*, New York, 2009, p.338.

<sup>6</sup> *ivi*, pp. 629-630.

infuse his subjects with a new desire for piety, order and tradition. In 1648, he admonished the people to avoid heresy, rebellion, sorcery, immoral games like bear-baiting, the playing of certain musical instruments and mass-bathing. Severe punishments were decreed for disregarding established morals.<sup>7</sup>

The folk song was sung by both men and women, young and old, not to be confused with choral music, as tells Alexander Kresling, in an interview dating 1977:

*«There is, or was anyway, no such thing as a “choir” in the Russian villages. There were men and women, young and old, who in the evenings or on Sundays or holidays came together and sang somewhere, in front of a farmhouse, in the town square, or — especially in northern Russia — in the meadows of the village, before the church or on the riverbank. And they sang with an ever-changing cast of singers, and furthermore with a uniquely changing authenticity in the individual songs.»<sup>8</sup>*

It is clear that folk song does not work with scores nor conductors. It focusses on authentic individual singing and has no polished musical goal. Its original performance practice differs remarkably from that of a choir.

## ARRANGEMENTS AND STATE ENSEMBLES

The authentic folk song served as an inspiration to classical composers through collections of folk songs.<sup>9</sup> They were first published in Russia in the late 18th century by Vasili Trutovsky (1776-1795)<sup>10</sup> and Nikolaj Lvov (1806-1815). Lvov's collection - *Sobranie narodnykh russkikh pesen s ikh golosami* (*Collection of Russian folk songs with their voice parts*), 1790 - served as a source of melodies for foreign composers. The collection also offers a piano accompaniment that transformed the authentic folk song to a song that refers to the European idiom in aristocratic saloons.<sup>11</sup>

When we move to the 1850's, it becomes rather difficult to encounter real Russian traditional music unless you know when and where to find it:

*«In the Soviet palaces of culture, there were huge choirs and dance groups, and the performances were very stylized, it was pretty, but not very authentic,” said Irina agolnova, 24, who teaches music in a kindergarten. “I didn't see the real thing until I went to music school.»<sup>12</sup>*

<sup>7</sup> MAZOUR, A.G., *Russia: Tsar and Communism*, Princeton, 1962, p. 54.

<sup>8</sup> TAYLOR, NOEL (translator), *The Russian Folksong at the University of Freiburg*, in “Golosa”, <<http://www.golosa.org/kresling>>, (last accessed date: 1<sup>st</sup> May 2021).

<sup>9</sup> BROUGHTON, SIMON – ELLINGHAM, MARK – LUSK, JON, *The rough guide to World Music, Europe, Asia & Pacific*, New York, 2009, pp. 338-339.

<sup>10</sup> TRUTOVSKY, VASILII, *Sobranie Russkikh prostykh pesen s notami* (*Collection of simple Russian songs with printed music*) 1776–1779, 1795.

<sup>11</sup> MAES, FRANCIS, *Geschiedenis van de Russische muziek*, Nijmegen, 1996, p. 27.

<sup>12</sup> STANLY, ALESSANDRA, *From Russia, with songs of days long gone to the US*, in “The New York Times”, April 1997, <<https://www.nytimes.com/1997/04/01/arts/from-russia-with-songs-of-days-long-gone-to-the-us.html>>, (last accessed date: 9<sup>th</sup> April 2021).

Indeed, as early as the mid-nineteenth century, Russian folklore came under the guardianship of the state. Vasily Andreyev (1861-1918) founded a professional orchestra of traditional Russian instruments. He had discovered a balalaika and decided to reconstruct it and copy it into different sizes, added frets.<sup>13</sup> In the early 1900s, Mitrofan Pyatnitsky formed the Pyatnitsky choir. It originally only recruited genuine peasant singers in a repertoire that was vibrant and representative, but during the Soviet Union moved to a state ensemble, by the 1940s, pseudo folk music. Traditional folk art was treated as ideologically hostile to the new communist consciousness and an obsolete hindrance in the way of reaching the 'radiant communist future'. Worst of all were the attempts to update folk art and make it serve the state cultural policy. They resulted in the official image of folk art moulded under the pressure of the totalitarian state. This vulgar image, for example, was embodied in the late activity of Pyatnitsky Choir.<sup>14</sup> By that time the country was flooded with many folk music ensembles singing *Kalinka*, *Katyusha* and the *Volga Boatman*, popular Russian songs that were sold as Russian souvenirs.<sup>15</sup>

## REVIVING TRADITIONS

Luckily, the traditional music of the former Soviet Union was preserved through the efforts of vocalist and ethnomusicologist Vyacheslav Shchurov. As a student of influential folk music researcher Anna Rudneva, Shchurov was so moved by field studies conducted with his teacher, that in 1958 he formed a trio to perform the songs they collected. This sparked a revival of interest in traditional Russian music. Producing several concerts at the Composers' House in Moscow during the late '60s, he provided a forum for folk-oriented musicians. He formed a large ensemble of singers, Solovka, in 1968, with graduates of Moscow's Gnesin Musical Institute. Focusing on the unique singing styles of the mountainous region of Tuva, Shchurov produced an album, *Pesni I Instrumental'nye Melodii Tuvi*, that included the first recorded examples of Tuvan vocalizing.<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps the most important group to follow in Shchurov's wake was the Dmitri Pokrovsky Ensemble. The repertoire consisted of Russian peasant songs brought back by its members from field expeditions. By immersing themselves in the authentic scene in this way, they drew upon its wealth and were able to transfer the genuine folk tradition to the professional stage.<sup>17</sup>

Today, many famous musicians perform variations on ethnic music and Russian folk music is no exception. In the UK, singer Peter Gabriel has released CDs by the Pokrovsky Ensemble,

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<sup>13</sup> CHLEBAK, NICOLAS, *The 'Adaptability' of the Balalaika: An Ethnomusicological Investigation of the Russian Traditional Folk Instrument*, in "UVM College of Arts and Sciences College Honors Theses", Vol. 14, 2015, pp. 36-40, <<https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1014&context=castheses>>, (last accessed date: 1<sup>st</sup> May 2021).

<sup>14</sup> *History of Russian Folk Music*, in "Russia Info Centre", <[http://russia-ic.com/view/culture\\_art/music/folk\\_music/](http://russia-ic.com/view/culture_art/music/folk_music/)>, (last accessed date: 1<sup>st</sup> May 2021).

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<sup>17</sup> BROUGHTON, SIMON – ELLINGHAM, MARK – LUSK, JON, *The rough guide to World Music, Europe, Asia & Pacific*, New York 2009, pp.338-339.

the St. Petersburg Terem-Quartet and master of Tuvan throat singing Ondara Kangaroola. Tuvan group Huun-Huur-Tu has been on a tour that Gabriel organized in the U.S., Japan and Europe, which resulted in a huge interest in this kind of ethnic Russian music.<sup>18</sup>

## OVERTONE SINGING

A very strong and distinct musical tradition in one particular part in Russia is the overtone singing in the region of Tuva. As if by magic, a single performer creates melodies above fundamental drones. It includes deep growling sounds above which harmonic melodies are created with precise movements of the lips, tongue and larynx. It is traditionally performed by herders and hunters in Tuva.<sup>19</sup>

*Listen here an example: [FAR OFF SOUNDS – Huun Huur Tu: The Tuvan Masters](#).*

There are five types of overtone-singing according to the parts of the body from which the sound emanates: nasal, labial, palatal, glottal/throat and chest cavity/stomach.<sup>20</sup>

## INSTRUMENTS

As argued before, instrumental music is, traditionally, less important than vocal music, mainly because of the ban on instruments by the Orthodox church. Instrument use began again in the 19th century, but the ban on instruments was only officially lifted when the Russian Orthodox Church was outlawed by the USSR.

Most folk instruments are simple:

- *Gudok*, a three-stringed, pear-shaped fiddle, tuned in fifths, usually held vertically, used from the 12th century, found by archeologists in old Novgorod.

*Listen to [Gudok](#) (activate subtitles for English).*

- *Gusli*, a harp-like wing-shaped instrument; from the 11th century. It was described by the Greeks as early as the 6th century B.C. Many different varieties of this plucked string instrument exist.

*Listen to [Slovisha Gusli](#).*

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<sup>18</sup> GONZALES, DARIA, *Finding musical roots*, in “Rossiyskaya Gazeta”, 21 June 2012, <[https://www.rbth.com/articles/2012/06/21/finding\\_musical\\_roots\\_15938.html](https://www.rbth.com/articles/2012/06/21/finding_musical_roots_15938.html)>, (last accessed date: 10<sup>th</sup> April 2021).

<sup>19</sup> BROUGHTON, SIMON – ELLINGHAM, MARK – LUSK, JON, *The rough guide to World Music, Europe, Asia & Pacific*, New York, 2009, p. 630.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*



- *Domra*, the forerunner to the balalaika, developed in the 1400s. Played with a pick, it has three or four strings and a rounded soundboard, and sounds something like a mandolin, plucked or strummed with a plectrum. It is also made in various orchestral sizes. Originally, they were all three-stringed (E-A-D). The four-string variety was developed by in the early 20th century and became popular in Ukraine.<sup>21</sup>

Listen to "[Babushka playing her domra in St. Petersburg, Russia](#)" (activate subtitles for English).

- A special mention goes to the *balalaika*, a Russian stringed musical instrument with a characteristic triangular wooden, hollow body, fretted neck and three strings. Two strings are usually tuned to the same note and the third string is a perfect fourth higher. The higher-pitched balalaikas are used to play melodies and chords. The instrument generally has a short sustain, necessitating rapid strumming or plucking when it is used to play melodies.<sup>22</sup> It is possible that the emergence and evolution of the balalaika was a product of interaction with Asian-Oriental cultures. Some theories say that the instrument descends from the domra.<sup>23</sup>

Listen to "[Anastasiia Tiurina \(7 years\) 'Valenki' balalaika](#)".

By Liesbeth Segers

## ABOUT OUR ARTIST NATALIA BACHTINA



**Natalia Bachtina**<sup>24</sup> left Russian Federation 22 years ago and came to Belgium. She is an enthusiast and experienced amateur singer and a vocalist in folk music. Natalia pursues music as one of her passions in life.

<sup>21</sup> *Domra*, in "Wikipedia", <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domra>> (last accessed, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021).

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian\\_traditional\\_music](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_traditional_music)

<sup>22</sup> If you are interested to read more about the balalaika, please consult CHLEBAK, NICOLAS, *The 'Adaptability' of the Balalaika: An Ethnomusicological Investigation of the Russian Traditional Folk Instrument*, in "UVM College of Arts and Sciences College Honors Theses", Vol. 14, 2015, <<https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1014&context=cstheses>>, (last accessed date: 1<sup>st</sup> May 2021).

<sup>23</sup> Balalaika, in "Wikipedia", <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balalaika>> (last accessed, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021).

<sup>24</sup> Image on the left: Natalia Bachtina (photos ©Clément Vidal, January 2020).

## THE BEST COUNTRY OF THE WORLD

Natalia<sup>25</sup>: “I was 21 years old when I left Russia. I knew only a little about Belgium and Europe since back then there were not so many people who travelled to Europe. Obviously, I had to adapt to a different mentality and habits. Sometimes I felt homesick. I had a specific nostalgia about collecting mushrooms back home (*smiles*). Besides things you can find in every country, like good people and bad people, Belgium is totally different from where I come from in both a positive and negative way. In the Soviet-Union we learned to realize that we were born in ‘the best country of the world’. We learned to stand up for fellow human beings, to live together, to accept people as they are. Self-development did not really exist. Only in Belgium did I get to know my own talents and learn to think about myself.”

## COUNTERBALANCE

“Music brings a counterbalance to my daily life. It is important mainly because it allows self-expression, gives me confidence, and simply makes me happy. My interest in music goes back to my youth in Russia when I used to sing folk or pop or even schlager music with friends. At schools in Russia, you also get music lessons. In Belgium I discovered karaoke and I used to do it with my husband almost every day. With the encouragement of my mother-in-law, I participated in a singing contest and won a weekend trip at a three-star hotel. That is how I decided to enroll in a music academy. I added Russian songs to my repertoire later because they were well received by the audience. Russian songs gave me an exotic touch, of course, which the audience found interesting. In general, people like to highlight things that make them stand out. Of course, if you get reduced to your exotic label, it becomes problematic. That is why it is important to make sure that your roots are incorporated into your personality. So for me, it worked.”<sup>26</sup>



## MUSIC IS CONTEXT DEPENDENT

“Music both as a talent and interest is highly context dependent. Since I came to Belgium, I have learned different styles such as Celtic folk music. As I grow older, I appreciate classical music more than before. I believe the geographical place you live in, the atmosphere you were born and raised in, and the type of education you received all influences your taste and interest

<sup>25</sup> The following paragraphs are an extract from an interview to Natalia Bachtina made on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2020. Here are quoted her words. Interview by Vida Razavi.

<sup>26</sup> Image above: Natalia Bachtina (photos ©Clément Vidal, January 2020).

in music. Of course, there are exceptions, but generally speaking, this is how you come to know music, to like it or not.

One example is language and how it influences the way of singing. Depending on where you are from, you use your vocal apparatus in a different way. Western people speak in front of their mouth. In Russia, we speak more in the middle and in China, man use guttural sounds.

Self-expression and storytelling are two important elements in music for me. I prefer songs that tell a story because they are highly expressive and are about events and occurrences in the lives of people. I often sing for myself, choosing songs that I like to sing. Those who like my work will come and listen.”

## **MORE THAN ONE STYLE**

“Music for me is a chameleon because it has the ability to adapt to different people and situations. I’m sure each of us is attracted to more than a single musical style. Sometimes you want to listen to something relaxing, sometimes you want to listen to something invigorating or uplifting. In every country, people play music that is adapted to the situation: the environment, the surrounding nature, the interaction with other people. Besides this, the musical instruments are made of materials which are locally available. Music also changes with social and political contexts. During a revolution, artists make revolutionary songs and during an economic depression you see the rise of gloomier music.”

## **LACK OF DIVERSITY IN PUBLIC MEDIA**

“Content diversity has not yet reached our public media. It is a pity that radio channels do not stream a more diverse collection of music. In Belgium, we live in a diverse country with many different nationalities and subcultures. As Russian-rooted I would like to hear Russian song on the radio. It would make me proud. We do not hear Moroccan, Turkish songs or Congolese songs either, even though they have big communities here in Belgium. In this sense our mainstream music is not diverse enough and it does not represent the diversity of the society.

The key is to plant the seeds of interculturality. Our multicultural society hosts many different subcultures and different practices in the field of art, religion, sports etc. Unfortunately, we haven’t yet cultivated interculturality to connect these subcultures with each other, although new things could emerge from their interaction. People do not have to lose their way of being in order to be accepted in other groups. To know that my way of being is recognized and appreciated brings me to peace with the rest of society.”

## **UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE**

“I consider music as a universal language. Lullabies are one good example in this regard. Singing to babies and children exists in all societies. Children can express or feel so many

emotions even if they do not yet know the language. Also, the sounds might be different in different languages, but they serve a similar purpose in touching the soul of the audience.

Of course, music cannot resolve specific conflicts. It is not a magic spell which brings peace and harmony to the world. What music can teach us is that the harmony comes from reconciliation and adaptation. Reconciliation and adaptation are the skills we need to get along with diversity and explore its potential. In the context of music, if diversity is present, the conflicts and challenges do not go away automatically only because everyone knows music. You need to make a conscious effort in order to ensure harmony.”

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# RWANDA

by Koor&Stem

The Republic of Rwanda<sup>1</sup>, often nicknamed “the land of a thousand hills”, is one of the smallest countries in Africa located in East Central Africa along the African Great Lakes region. As a landlocked country, Rwanda shares borders with Uganda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Tanzania. This country is populated with 12.2 million (2017) and its demographics feature a young population. Rwanda's main cities are Kigali, the capital, with more than 1.132.686 inhabitants (2012), Huye (formerly known as Butare) in the south, Rubavu (formerly known as Gisenyi) in the north-west and Musanze (formerly known as Ruhengeri) in the north. One of its five rivers, the Akagera - also known as the Kagera River - is the longest headstream of the Nile.



Several languages are spoken in Rwanda. The principal language is Kinyarwanda which is spoken by everyone. Under the influence of European colonies speaking in English and French also became very common by natives. Currently Kinyarwanda, Swahili, English and French are the four official languages in Rwanda.

Rwanda is mostly considered as a rural society where the population maintains a rural lifestyle and livelihood while the urban activities are mainly concentrated around administrative affairs and public service. The Rwandan population originated from Banyarwanda. *Banyarwanda* literally means ‘those who come from Rwanda’.

In the late 19th century, Rwanda was under German control. Right after the First World War, it was moved to Belgian colonial rule until 1962. The Belgians installed a kind of divide and conquer politics. Part of this was creating segregation by giving everyone an identity card for the first time and putting a stamp on who you are: Tutsi or Hutu. It provoked several conflicts. In 1959, a Hutu uprising destroyed the Tutsi feudal hierarchy and overthrew the monarchy. Inter-ethnic rivalry between the Hutu and Tutsi culminated with the Rwandan Genocide of 1994, right after the Hutu president was assassinated.

Because of colonisation, people were divided into three subgroups including Twa, Tutsi and Hutu, who share the same language and the same culture and share the same hilly habitat. The Hutu (Bantu people) are the largest group and form about 85% of the population. They are mainly agricultural. The Twa (Pygmy people) comprise about 1% of the population and are forest hunters, farmers, potters, dancers. Hutu and Twa have been ruled since the 16th century by Tutsi, cattle breeders from the north. They conquered the area and founded a feudal

<sup>1</sup> This chapter mainly uses information from the general Wikipedia article about Rwanda (Rwanda, in “Wikipedia”, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Rwanda&oldid=1032766143>>) and the introductory chapters of GANSEMANS, JOS, *Les instruments de musique du Rwanda: étude ethnomusicologique*, Leuven University Press, Leuven 1988.

kingdom. It is assumed that they had absolute power over the other population groups although they represented only about 15% of the total population. We want to warn about this categorisation, as it is mainly a colonial construction that also musical reference books started to use after colonisation.

Rwanda suffered heavily in the wake of the 1994 genocide, but has since strengthened its economy. The country's GDP growth averaged at 8% per annum between 2001 and 2015, and child mortality dropped by two-thirds. Concerning IT, Rwanda is nowadays called the Singapore of Africa. The country is bidding to become a centre for high-tech innovation and creativity in Africa. Tech ventures like the Mara Group's recently released Mara Phone, which has taken the title of the first African-made smartphone. Five years ago, Rwanda had little 4G coverage, but in 2019 it had reached 95 percent. Thanks to that infrastructure, start-ups have been able to introduce a variety of projects, e.g. smart technology in schools, hospitals and busses.

Different religions are practiced in Rwanda including Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Baha'i, and a small percentage of other religions.

In pre-colonial times Rwanda had periods of frequent expansion wars with neighboring kingdoms and power struggles within the Rwandan Kingdom between centrally located regions and some of the peripheral regions. e.g. as the latter would hold on to its autonomy or sometimes lean towards kingdoms in nowadays Uganda, Burundi and D.R. Congo. But it is assumed that there was no noteworthy tension or conflict among these, so called, three main ethnic groups (*Batwa, Batutsi and Bahuti*), up till European colonisation.

## ABOUT THE MUSIC

For centuries, the royal court of the former Tutsi king (or *mwami* in Kinyarwanda) and those of his major chiefs were centres of cultural life and musical performances. Several musical genres and instruments, even ensembles, were associated with the *mwami*.

As a main source, we used Gansemans who writes about traditional Rwandan music and the traditional instruments that are used in it in *Les Instruments de Musique du Rwanda* (1988), which now serves as reference on the subject, and is in fact the only one to give an overall view up to today. An overall view on Rwandan music between 1988 and 2021 still needs to be written.

## TRADITIONAL INSTRUMENTS

In comparison with other central African countries, musical instruments<sup>2</sup> are few in Rwanda, possibly because people show a marked preference for vocal genres. Nearly all instruments are

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<sup>2</sup> GANSEMANS, JOS, *Collections of the RMCA: Musical Instruments*, Tervuren, Belgium: Royal Museum for Central Africa, 2009.

played by men only. We describe the most important chordophones, membranophones and aerophones.<sup>3</sup>

The sound archive of the department of Ethnomusicology of the Royal Museum for Central Africa at Tervuren (Belgium) contains a collection of sound recordings of traditional music from Central Africa, with a particular focus on D.R. Congo and Rwanda. The sound archive contains about 3,000 hours of music recordings, the oldest of which date from 1910. The collection was created during and after the colonial era of the Belgian Kingdom in Central Africa. The RMCA collection forms for an important part the musical memory of Central Africa and in terms of size, documentation and musical quality, it is – without any doubt – the world's most important sound archive for this region. Some of the examples in this section are from this sound archive.<sup>4</sup>

In this chapter, we have only made a very brief selection of instruments. If you want to know and hear more, we advise you to have a look at the online sound archive of the Royal Museum for Central Africa.

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## THE RWANDAN HARP

The most known instrument might be the **inanga**, a stringed instrument that looks like a lyre or a harp<sup>56</sup>. It has 9 to 12 strings, is made of the skin of a cow and the soundboard (resonator) is made of wood called *umyungu*. This instrument has been played by the most known artists in Rwanda such as Maître de Rujindiri<sup>7</sup> (1900-?), Jozef Sebatunzi (1900-1980), Thomas Kirusu<sup>8</sup> (1930-2010), Sentore Masamba (1932-2012), Victor Kabarira, Apollinaire Rwishyura, Simparingoma, Simon Bikindi (1954-2018), Sophie Nzayisenga (°1978), first female player of the inanga, daughter of Thomas Kirusu), Daniel Ngarukiye (°1987), Jules Sentoré (°1989) and Emmanuel Habumuremyi.<sup>9</sup>

The *inanga* is tuned pentatonically, which means not all the 6 to 9 strings are always used. Tuning is carried out by tightening the string slightly (higher notes) or loosening it (lower notes), a single string being laced seven or eight times to and from along the length of the body.

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<sup>3</sup> GANSEMANS, JOS, *Les instruments de musique du Rwanda: étude ethnomusicologique*, Leuven University Press, Leuven 1988.

<sup>4</sup> DEKKMA - *Digitalisatie van het Ethnomusicologisch Klankarchief van het Koninklijk Museum voor Midden-Afrika* (translation: *Digitization of the Ethnomusicological Sound Archive of the Royal Museum for Central Africa*), <<http://music.africamuseum.be/english/index.html>> (last accessed date: 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021).

<sup>5</sup> *Rwanda Music. Inanga, Rwandas most important music instrument*, in “Rwanda Express”, <<http://rwandaexpress.blogspot.com/2012/05/rwanda-music-inangarwandas-most.html>> (last accessed date: 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021).

<sup>6</sup> GANSEMANS, JOS, *Les instruments de musique du Rwanda: étude ethnomusicologique*, Leuven University Press, Leuven 1988, pp. 154-184.

<sup>7</sup> OCOLLUS, *Runjindiri - maîtres de l'inanga*, in “Disquesdumoi”, <<https://disquesdumoi.com/2019/03/31/runjindiri-maitres-de-linanga/>> (last accessed date: 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021).

<sup>8</sup> *Thomas Kirusu dies at 80*, in «The New Times», 10<sup>th</sup> May 2021, <<https://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/16563>> (last accessed date: 29<sup>th</sup> March 2021).

<sup>9</sup> *Rwanda Music. Inanga, Rwandas most important music instrument*, in “Rwanda Express”, <<http://rwandaexpress.blogspot.com/2012/05/rwanda-music-inangarwandas-most.html>> (last accessed date: 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021).



Listen here to Daniel Ngarukiye playing the *inanga*: [Daniel Ngarukiye - Inkuza](#)

The *inanga*<sup>10</sup> is used as a solo instrument or to accompany pastoral, humorous or moralizing songs or epic and historical songs sung in praise of the *mwami*. The *inanga* is also played during rituals and was played for the kings in the palaces. Most of the *inanga* songs have been transmitted orally, with little variation from generation to generation and are thus an important source of information for the early history of the Rwandan kingdom.<sup>11</sup>

As most instruments, it is mostly played by men, but in very rare cases it may also be played by a woman. Sophie Nzayisenga, daughter of *inanga* player Thomas Kirusu, is passing on the tradition of playing *inanga* by training young children at the Kigali Music School. The school first opened its doors in 2000 with the aim of teaching traditional dance and instruments to vulnerable children.<sup>1213</sup>



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## RWANDAN PERCUSSION

The most important percussion instrument is the **ingoma**<sup>14</sup>. It is a drum covered with a membrane of animal skin. The top of the drum is always broader than the bottom. The *ingoma* is usually cylindrical in form, tapering only in the lower section of the instrument, although the drum shell can also taper gradually over its entire length. Making an *ingoma* is a long and delicate process and is therefore entrusted to specialised drum makers, assisted by a woodworker who prepares the hide.

The *ingoma* is only played by men on festive occasions or to welcome an important guest. The drummers use two wooden sticks called *imirishyo*. To ensure that the instrument plays the right tone, the membrane is warmed up by placing it near a fire or in the sun.

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<sup>10</sup> Image on the right: INANGA - MO.0.0.35918 - collection KMMA Tervuren\_ photo J. Van de Vyver, KMMA Tervuren ©.

<sup>11</sup> GANSEMANS, JOS, *Rujjindiri: Music from the old Rwandan court*, cd by Outhere Music, 1990, <<https://outhere-music.com/en/albums/rujindiri-music-from-the-old-rwandan-court-fmd186>>.

<sup>12</sup> CLOVER, JENNY, *In my father's footsteps - Sophie Nzayisenga*, in «The New Times», 7<sup>th</sup> March 2010, <<https://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/17400>> (last accessed date: 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021).

<sup>13</sup> OPOBO, MOSES: *Inanga: Rwanda's centuries-old music instrument*, in «The New Times», 11<sup>th</sup> September 2016, <<https://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/203413>> (last accessed date: 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021).

<sup>14</sup> GANSEMANS, JOS, *Les instruments de musique du Rwanda: étude ethnomusicologique*, Leuven University Press, Leuven 1988, pp. 185-255.

*Kalinga*<sup>15</sup>, the royal drum of a similar shape, used to play an important part in the king's cult. Drums used for this purpose were known as *ingabe* and were even kept in a separate hut. They were not allowed to touch the ground and were rubbed with bull's blood once a month.<sup>16</sup>



Listen here to the sound of the [ingoma](#).<sup>17</sup>

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## RWANDAN WIND INSTRUMENTS

Comparable to the Western hunting horn, there is the **ihembe**<sup>18</sup>, a side-blown antelope horn. It is used as a signaling instrument for hunting and communal work. The instrument is played in the horizontal (transverse) position, while the bell is either held in the hand or rests on the upper arm. Changing the embouchure enables other notes to be played besides the two fundamental notes. Some players also use a glissando technique.

The *ihembe* is an ideal communication tool while hunting and even symbolises the hunt itself. The men gather before and after the hunt to recite texts and perform dance movements with their arms held wide open, accompanied by the *ihembe*. They sing to bolster their courage at the start of the hunt.

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<sup>15</sup> Image below: INGOMA - MP.0.0.4910 collection KMMA Tervuren\_ photo J. Gansemans, 1978, KMMA Tervuren ©.

<sup>16</sup> GANSEMANS, JOS, *Ingoma*, in “DEKKMA - music.africamuseum”, <<http://music.africamuseum.be/instruments/english/rwanda/ingoma.html>> (last accessed date: 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021).

<sup>17</sup> This is an example from the Sound Collection Royal Museum Central Africa (Belgium). *DEKKMA - Digitalisatie van het Etnomusicologisch Klankarchief van het Koninklijk Museum voor Midden-Afrika*, <<http://music.africamuseum.be/english/index.html>> (last accessed date: 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021).

<sup>18</sup> GANSEMANS, JOS, *Les instruments de musique du Rwanda: étude ethnomusicologique*, Leuven University Press, Leuven 1988, pp. 101-109.

The *ihembe*<sup>19</sup> is also an accompaniment to dancing. Because of its limited range, however, the *ihembe* is always part of an ensemble and is never played on its own.<sup>20</sup>



Listen here to the sound of the [Ihembe](#).<sup>21</sup>

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## THE THUMB PIANO

Only one letter difference with the *ihembe*, the **ikembe** (or *likembe*, *kalimba*, *mbira* and other names) is a lamellophone which spread from the Democratic Republic of Congo to Rwanda through Burundi.<sup>22</sup> It has 11 to 13 metal keys and is played with both thumbs.<sup>23</sup>

According to Gansemans, the *ikembe* is made by the Twa and is mainly played by the Twa and Hutu people. A singer usually accompanies himself on the *ikembe*, but it can also be played together with other instruments as part of either a duet or even a trio. In the last example one of the performers plays a continuous note as the bass accompaniment to the melody (bourdon).

Depending on the scale required, the lamellae are made longer or shorter in order to obtain a different pitch. A pentatonic scale without semitones is most commonly used.

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<sup>19</sup> Image below: IHEMBE - MP.0.0.3747 collection KMMA Tervuren\_ photo J. Gansemans, 1975, KMMA Tervuren ©.

<sup>20</sup> GANSEMANS, JOS, *Ingoma*, in “DEKKMA - music.africamuseum”, <<http://music.africamuseum.be/instruments/english/rwanda/ingoma.html>> (last accessed date: 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021).

<sup>21</sup> This is an example from the Sound Collection Royal Museum Central Africa (Belgium).

*DEKKMA - Digitalisatie van het Etnomusicologisch Klankarchief van het Koninklijk Museum voor Midden-Afrika*, <<http://music.africamuseum.be/english/index.html>> (last accessed date: 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021).

<sup>22</sup> GANSEMANS, JOS, *Les instruments de musique du Rwanda: étude ethnomusicologique*, Leuven University Press, Leuven 1988, pp. 50-70.

<sup>23</sup> COOKE, PETER – GANSEMANS, JOS, *Rwanda and Burundi*, in *New Grove of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, London, 2001.

The songs that are accompanied by the *ikembe*<sup>2425</sup> are either entertaining tales set to music, songs of praise to figures of authority or expressions of personal feelings. Occasionally historical and traditional themes are set to music, but these are mainly based on texts of songs that are accompanied by the *inanga*.<sup>26</sup>



## VOCAL GENRES

### SOLO AND GROUP SINGING

Whereas playing the instruments was mainly done by men only, solo, group and choral singing are all heard in Rwanda and performed by both men and women.

In solo singing, singers can sing a cappella or accompany themselves on instruments as the *inanga*, mentioned above.

The most spread form of singing however is responsorial solo and choral singing. It has many functions also: some songs accompany dancing, others are related to the pre-colonial Rwandan religions or are performed during the hunting, during rowing, during agricultural work or as entertainment. Accompanying instruments are the gourd rattles (*ikinyuguri*), the *ingoma* drum or hand clapping.

Interesting to know is that the Twa vocal style is distinct from that of the Hutu and Tutsi: it is based entirely on the yodel technique and has an individual polyphonic structure.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Image below: IKEMBE - MO.0.0.9456 collectie KMMA Tervuren\_ photo H. Metz, MIM Phoenix, KMMA Tervuren ©.

<sup>25</sup> This is an example from the Sound Collection Royal Museum Central Africa (Belgium). DEKKMA - Digitalisatie van het Etnomusicologisch Klankarchief van het Koninklijk Museum voor Midden-Afrika, <<http://music.africamuseum.be/english/index.html>> (last accessed date: 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021).

<sup>26</sup> GANSEMANS, JOS, *Ikembe*, in "DEKKMA - music.africamuseum", <<http://music.africamuseum.be/instruments/english/burundi/ikembe.html>> (last accessed date: 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021).

<sup>27</sup> COOKE, PETER – GANSEMANS, JOS, *Rwanda and Burundi*, in *New Grove of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, London, 2001.

We find lullabies and love songs, fairy tales, legends, recitation of dynastic poems, songs related to work or vital activities, pastoral songs (*amahambo*, e.g. for the cow who is a glorified animal in Rwanda) and warrior songs.

Eloquence is an important quality in singing: there is a considerable amount of *parlando* and recitative in the songs. Aurélie Nyirabikali Lierman confirms:

*«The power of speech as the supreme art form is immensely important in Rwandan culture, and cannot be overemphasized. It may even be more important than music. Daily life spoken language uses poetry and many expressions and proverbs, the art of insulting each other extremely hard and extremely subtle and delicately spoken, is seen as a form of intelligence.»*

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## DANCE SONGS

In Rwanda, music is highly intertwined with dancing.<sup>28</sup> Traditional music and dance have been an integral part of Rwandan ceremonies, festivals, community gatherings and storytelling art from pre-colonial times to the present day. There are dance songs that were performed at the royal court and gave rise to the dance called *Umushagiro*, which has a slow tempo and is danced with sliding steps. It is usually performed by women, with an emphasis on the elegance of arm gestures and movements and showing off the body. According to some Rwandan choreography experts this song is “highly characteristic of Tutsi music with its refined complication of tones, voices that are often high, its ornamentation and melismatics”.<sup>29</sup>

Other categories of songs are those that give rise to the dance called *Umudiho*, a dance in which 'the feet are stamped on the ground with a certain degree of force'; it varies depending on the dancers who dance it and in particular varies from region to region. This variation, which can be said to be horizontal, makes dance songs in Rwanda one of the richest genres in the sphere of music and choreography.

Dance songs have a responsorial structure, with a chorus that remains the same throughout the song and is repeated by a group of singers. The chorus comes after each verse, of which there are usually many and which are started by a soloist. Dance songs have a simple or complex measured rhythm, with metric and expressive accentuation and are traditionally vocal, either in unison or polyphonic. Clapping of hands serves as accompaniment, supports the rhythm and indicates the tempo to the singers and dancers. Dance songs, however, may also be accompanied by a number of musical instruments like the *ingoma*, *inanga*, *ikembe indingiti fiddle* and the *ihembe horn*.

Today hip hop, dance and R&B songs in the urban areas are supported by a variety of Western instruments: the guitar, the electric organ, drums, saxophone, trumpets but also use of electronics in many different ways like synthesizers, drum machines, drum loops, vocoder.

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<sup>28</sup> NKULIKIYINKA, JEAN BAPTISTE, *Music and dance in Rwanda*, in “DEKKMA - music.africamuseum”, <<http://music.africamuseum.be/instruments/english/rwanda/rwanda.html>> (last accessed date: 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021).

<sup>29</sup> *ivi*.

## MUSICAL CHARACTERISTICS<sup>30</sup>

From 1973 to 1988, Jos Gansemans undertook an ethnomusicological investigation of Rwanda, commissioned by the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren (Belgium) and by the National Institute for Scientific Research in Butare (Rwanda) thanks to the help of - among others - Cyprien Rugamba, Marcel d'Hertefeldt and André Coupez.

The traditional music in Rwanda is basically pentatonic and modal, with more emphasis on the melody instead of the harmony, often in 6/8 or 5/8 measure with recurring syncopation.

Hutu music clearly shows Bantu elements found in most areas of central Africa. Their melodies are built mainly on anhemitonic pentatonic scales<sup>31</sup>, sometimes extended to hexa- and heptatonic. Songs are primarily monophonic and responsorial with sporadic overlapping of solo and chorus and occasional use of drone and ostinato.

Tutsi music reveals melisma, ornamentation and microtonal variation, it seems to refer to Arab influences, although there is no link.

Twa music contrasts with Hutu and Tutsi music in that it is characterized by melodic yodels and movement in parallel fourths and fifths. The Twa are scattered in the forests from Cameroon to the mountains surrounding Lake Kivu.

*Here we share an example of yodeling from the border between Cameroon and Congo-Brazzaville: [Yelli – Baka women “yodellers”](#).*

*Here you can listen to a few musical examples: [Music from Rwanda](#).*

## MUSIC BETWEEN INDEPENDENCY AND THE RWANDAN GENOCIDE

At several points during the 20th century, Rwandan musicians were forced to flee. Including 1962, during the violent declaration of independence from Belgium, many traditional Rwandan musicians fled to refugee camps in Burundi or Uganda, never to return.

During the early 1990s, you would find urban bands in Rwanda like Impala, Les Fellows, Bisa and Ingenzi. They played music based on Congolese rumba, reggae and rock.

In 1994, however, more than one million Rwandans died through genocide and civil war. The music bands suffered particularly after the events of 1994. Within Rwanda, it became very difficult to earn a living. More than two million Rwandans were again forced to flee to neighboring countries and many musicians live in exile, especially in Brussels.<sup>3233</sup>

<sup>30</sup> COOKE, PETER – GANSEMANS, JOS, *Rwanda and Burundi*, in *New Grove of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, London, 2001.

<sup>31</sup> An anhemitonic pentatonic scale makes use of five notes, without semitones, eg: do, re, mi, sol, la.

<sup>32</sup> COOKE, PETER – GANSEMANS, JOS, *Rwanda and Burundi*, in *New Grove of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, London, 2001.

<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately, music was also used as propaganda in the genocide. Simon Bikindi, the countries' most famous musician, was sentenced to 15 years of prison because of his role in the genocide. Bikindi argued that neither he nor his songs ever killed anyone. Prosecutors had singled out three of Mr. Bikindi's popular rap lyrics promoting ethnic hatred, which they said had been widely broadcast and were sung by mobs as they killed their victims.

(see article: SIMONS, MARLISE, *Rwandan sentenced to 15 years for role in genocide*, in «The New York



The Rwandan-Belgian **Cécile Kayirebwa** (°1946) has been the most popular Rwandan musician for decades. She<sup>34</sup> started singing as a child, developed into composing and studied traditional Rwandan music. In 1973, during another violent conflict, she left with her mother to live in Belgium and formed the group Inyange. In Europe she

continued to work as a singer to her fellow members of the Rwandan diaspora. She and her husband had four children and she studied her cultural heritage at the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren (Belgium). In 1981 her first cassette was released with her own compositions as well as traditional music. She appeared around Europe and America in the group *Bula Sangoma* in the mid-1980s. Kayirebwa sang in groups and alone. Her first CD was titled *Music from Rwanda* and dates from 1994. She released more albums in 2002 and 2005 and she participated in festivals including the Holocaust Memorial Event in London in 2001. In 2020 she was honored for her contribution to the music industry and for preserving the Rwandan culture and traditions.<sup>35</sup>

Another important singer is **Jean-Paul Samputu** (°1962), together with his group Ingeli, won two Kora awards (African Grammy), for being the most Inspiring Artist and also the Best Traditional Artists in the year 2003, for their performance of neo-traditional Rwandan music.

His recordings show the many rich traditions of Rwandan music and dance, and include influences from Uganda, Burundi and Congo, as well as pygmy voices and traditions. Samputu sings in 6 languages (Kinyarwanda, Swahili, Lingala, Ganda, French and English), and in styles ranging from soukous, rumba and reggae, to traditional Rwandan 5/8, Afrobeat, pygmy and gospel. He combines unique musical traditions from all regions of Rwanda. With his dance troupe Ingeli, he captivates audiences of all ages. The group goes around the world proclaiming

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Times», 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2008, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/03/world/africa/03rwanda.html>> (last accessed date: 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021).

If you are interested in this matter, read JASON T. MCCOY's dissertation, *Mbwirabumva ("I Speak to Those Who Understand"): Three Songs by Simon Bikindi and the War and Genocide in Rwanda*, 2013, <<https://fsu.digital.flvc.org/islandora/object/fsu:183817/datastream/PDF/view>> (last accessed date: 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021).

<sup>34</sup> Image on the left: Cecile Kayirebwa - © netphoto.

<sup>35</sup> NSABIMANA, EDDIE, *Music icon Kayirebwa to be honoured at cultural concert*, in «The New York Times», 13<sup>th</sup> February 2020, <<https://www.newtimes.co.rw/entertainment/music-icon-kayirebwa-be-honoured-cultural-concert>> (last accessed date: 25<sup>th</sup> May 2021).

the Christian message of peace and reconciliation and helps collect money for the large number of orphans in Rwanda.<sup>36</sup>

Over the last few years more and more people have begun to move back home to a stable and flourishing country. Some musicians are embracing their roots while others are exploring a sound that incorporates influences from their time spent overseas in West Africa, East Africa, Europe and beyond.<sup>37</sup>

## MOVE ON: MUSIC DURING THE RWANDAN RENAISSANCE

*“Rwanda should be known for the strength and courage to move on; looking beyond a tough historical background”*

*TETA DIANA (°1992), RWANDAN SINGER<sup>38</sup>*

In what follows, we have a look at a few bands that try to mix past and present in Rwandan music.<sup>39,40</sup>

**The Good Ones** was formed in 1994, in the wake of the genocide. In the original setup of the band, there was a member of each of Rwanda’s three tribes: a Hutu, a Tutsi and a Twa. The trio sings emotionally uplifting folk songs about love and tragedy, using only acoustic guitar and farming tools such as boots and hammers for accompaniment. The sound of the band is reminiscent of bluegrass. Their lyrics are in Kinyarwanda.

Another band is named after the tribe to which their members belong: **Abatwa** (or Twa), one of the most marginalized groups in Africa. The group uses a range of traditional instruments, like the 11-stringed *inanga* (discussed above). The group experiments with electronic music in their songs too.

**Teta Diana** (°1992) is another young artist, mixing styles like folk, jazz and afro-pop. Her<sup>41</sup> debut album is called *Iwanyu*, which means ‘home’. It is interesting as it explores the concept of



<sup>36</sup> GREENBERG, MARK, *Interview with Jean Paul Samputu*, Upstreet Productions, 2004, <<https://web.archive.org/web/20070929213611/http://www.worldmusicstore.com/docs/samputu-interview.pdf>> (last accessed date: 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021).

<sup>37</sup> PROUDFOOT, JARED, *Six artists bridging past and present in Rwandan music*, 2020, <<https://daily.bandcamp.com/scene-report/rwanda-music-list>>, (last accessed date: 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021).

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Image on the right: Teta Diana - from her website.



belonging. She was born in Kenya from two Rwandan parents: “*I was born in exile, from two ordinary parents who had lost the right to live in their own country for over 30 years. I was taught to love a home I had never seen.*”<sup>42</sup> She sings songs about the past and the present time in Kinyarwanda, Swahili and English, exploring her identity through music.

**Paul Van Haver**<sup>43</sup> (°1984), globally known as **Stromae** is a musician, rapper, singer and songwriter with a Belgian mother and a Rwandan father. In 2009 he became popular in Europe with his song *Alors on danse*. In 2013, his second album *Racine carrée* was a huge success, selling 2 million copies in France alone and nearly 600,000 units elsewhere. The album explores themes as diverse as alienation from social networks, relationship issues, discrimination, absent father figures... *Racine carrée* received critical acclaim for its thoughtful lyrics and gained comparisons to fellow Belgian recording artist Jacques Brel. He mostly sings in French.

*By Aurélie Nyirabikali Lierman & Liesbeth Segers*

## ABOUT OUR ARTIST AURÉLIE NYIRABIKALI LIERMAN



Aurélie Nyirabikali Lierman<sup>44</sup> is an independent radio producer, vocalist and composer trying out new directions by fusing radio art, vocal art and composition. She focuses on field recording and assembling her personal large collection of unique sounds and soundscapes from rural and urban contemporary East-Africa. Sound-bit by sound-bit she transforms and sculps them into something she would call “Afrique

Concrète”. Lierman has won multiple international nominations and awards for her outstanding artwork including Artists-in-Berlin Fellowship at DAAD (Berlin), CTM Radio Lab (Berlin), Sally and Doc Lucas Fellowship at Montalvo Arts (Saratoga, California), Sonic Art (Rome) and Grand Prix Nova (Bucharest).<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> PROUDFOOT, JARED, *Six artists bridging past and present in Rwandan music*, 2020, <<https://daily.bandcamp.com/scene-report/rwanda-music-list>>, (last accessed date: 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021).

<sup>43</sup> *Stromae*, in “Wikipedia”, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Stromae&oldid=1028111328>>.

<sup>44</sup> As a background source, we also read the interview with Aurélie Nyirabikali Lierman about the making of *Anosmia*: CICCONE, ANDREW, *Aurélie Nyirabikali Lierman: Anosmia*, 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020, <<https://blog.navelgazers.co.uk/2020/12/aurelie-nyirabikali-lierman-anosmia.html>> (last accessed date: 25<sup>th</sup> May 2021).

<sup>45</sup> Image on the left: Aurélie Nyirabikali Lierman (source: photos © 2021 Sightways/Concertgebouw Brugge).

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### AN UNEXPECTED PLOT TWIST

Aurélie<sup>46</sup>: “I was born in Rwanda, but grew up with my adoptive family in Belgium. When I was in my early twenties, I went back to Rwanda for the very first time and started a search for my biological family: assuming that there was actually “nothing to be found”. That I am an orphan, as it was written on my papers. What followed sounds almost like a novel or movie with a remarkable plot: but after 2 or 3 weeks I unexpectedly got to meet my entire family, including both my birth parents. Now I have 8 parents if you add up all divorces and remarriage, 26 siblings and 2 nationalities, namely a Belgian and a Rwandan. I got “richer” by going back and knowing who is still there.”

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### MUSIC MEANS EVERYTHING TO ME

“I have given up many things, including a comfortable job at VRT (the Belgian radio and television broadcasting corporation). Becoming a national radio speaker was my main ambition in my late teens, and I achieved that ultimate goal faster than I could ever have imagined. But I had to take a break from my radio career so I could study music, my other big dream in life.

Music helps me express myself in a way in which no other means can do justice. Making and performing music is for me a continuous process of both transformation and becoming. With music I experience not only the depth of my own feelings and thoughts but also, I get to experience these from many different perspectives. I also believe music is the greatest and most selfless gift to just anyone: regardless of who your audience might be, where and whenever they might end up listening (e.g. at the other side of the planet, or who knows in 500 years from now).

It's important for me that people rather “experience” my music: not only as something to listen with your ears, nor only as something beautiful or perhaps terribly ugly (I like to make use of both and mess around with those aesthetical norms). But most importantly, as something that really touches or inspires you: emotionally, physically, intellectually and spiritually, ideally all of this within the same piece.

I also aspire to communicate through music, which can be through abstract acoustic sounds, noise or electronics, but also by literally using a voice in my composition. And no matter how abstract and unintelligible I go, it is always from the urge to touch someone: from one person to another. Ideally my audience leaves my performance in an altered state, or at least a little different from how they felt when they first entered the performance space: because of what they have heard and experienced. And if in the end you even manage to create an oeuvre that remains relevant and can stand the test of time and space (in all those ways that I just spoke about) then I think you can be deeply satisfied as an artist.”

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<sup>46</sup> The following paragraphs are an extract from an interview to Aurélie Nyirabikali Lierman made on 4th September 2020. Here are quoted her words. Interview by Vida Razavi.

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## **SINGING IN BED**

“Some of my oldest memories are linked to music. Before I could consciously think or speak. I remember, I must have been in Belgium for about 2 years. And, I assume partly because of what I had experienced in Rwanda, trying to comfort myself alone in bed by inventing songs. Night after night I would hear my Belgian mother's stern voice calling me to sleep and not sing. Most of the time, being extremely shy, I'd listen to her. But somehow at night there was something more powerful than myself that would still give me the audacity to sing. However, under the influence of my adoptive mother, I gradually stopped doing so over the years. Only years later I became aware of the power that I already had back then, by inventing and improvising. Music and voice had been very important to me all along. Especially when I was 17 or 18 years old, I suddenly fully realized all the incredible sounds you can utter with the voice, or how you can tell stories (sung or spoken). At the end of my journalism study, while I was working for the national radio, I noticed that I had a greater dream than just telling stories or announcing the news. I wanted to further explore all the possibilities of the voice in both a linguistic and a non-linguistic way, a musical or a non-musical context. Then I happened to discover jazz, because of its opportunities in improvisation and scatting. That gave me a kind of freedom. However, not being totally satisfied with vocal jazz, I moved on, and via a detour I ended up studying composition combined with classical and early music singing. Today I am active as a multi-disciplinary artist, but it seems any of my artistic activities always implement vocal experimentation in one way or another, and it is always a strong reminder of how happy I felt singing out loud as a brave little toddler in bed.”

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## **MUSIC AS A REFUGE**

“Even in moments of doubts, fear, anxiety and uncertainty: I always take refuge in music. I remember during the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015 there was a speculation from the police that one of the suspects had most likely escaped to Brussels (Belgium). The same day I had a performance in Brussels, in exactly the same borough (Molenbeek). I still remember the stressful and intense atmosphere in the streets. Everyone was alarmed and extremely anxious. At first it felt a bit odd to perform music in the midst of such a vast and international tragedy. But in the end we decided to go on stage anyway. And at the end of the performance everyone, performers and audience, felt that thanks to our music, we had for a while managed to take everyone's minds off all those heavy feelings, beyond the idea of entertainment or distraction. In that moment music had offered all of us a safe space: to express ourselves as well as find a communal place of comfort. With music providing us different enriching perspectives and perceptions within that same reality. That night definitely taught us the mind blowing cathartic and uplifting power of music.”

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## **MUSIC: MY HERITAGE**

“During one of my first visits to my family in Rwanda I stayed overnight with my birth mother. Her village is quite remote from any big city, with no water, electricity or paved roads. And we were sitting indoors, in her kitchen, next to an open fire that kept us all warm. A

brother, whose French was very basic, did his very best to translate (and my Kinyarwanda is also very limited). So at a certain moment we ran out of words, and the only thing I could do was to observe and just “be” in that moment. Certain things remain very complicated between me and my mother, and not speaking the same language makes it particularly hard.

But I remember that at a certain moment the little brothers started to improvise with all kinds of pots and pans as percussion. A kind of singing circle then emerged where someone could occasionally give a singing solo, first some of my brothers and sisters, then my mother. I was amazed at how incredible the whole family sounded and especially how well she sang too, with so much feeling and so much passion. For the first time I discovered a completely different personality within my mother, through her singing, a heavenly feeling. All the obstacles that ever had been there had suddenly completely disappeared. My mother kept on singing with the whole family, playing rhythms and singing along. It appeared my family sang and played every day, it’s as essential as eating and drinking to them. It also turned out that my late maternal grandfather had also been a good singer who instilled his passion for music in my mother. That’s when I realized that my passion for music initiated in Rwanda (even from when I was still inside my mother’s womb) and continued in Belgium during my childhood there: first as a toddler while singing and improvising alone in bed; and then when growing older being constantly exposed to classical and romantic music on a number of cassette tapes of my adoptive parents.”<sup>47</sup>



## COMPOSER

### MUSIC AS A SUBCATEGORY OF SOUND

“I see “sound” and “silence” and “texture” as the fundamental material for any of my compositions (not necessarily pitch or rhythm). And let’s say that music is just a subcategory of sound. Sound affects everything in nature and human life. And we know that certain kinds of music improve human’s emotional and physical well-being. That is one of the things that makes sound and music so intriguing to me. E.g. There is one of my favorite Indian ragas played with sitar, harmonium and light percussion that acts like an effective medicine to me. I can have this raga as a continuous soft background and in no time manage to work non-stop for hours in deep concentration. No matter how scattered my brain was prior to listening to that raga. I do not know anything technical or neurological about this incredible effect of the raga

<sup>47</sup> Image on the right: Aurélie Nyirabikali Lierman, taken by A.N. Lierman.

on the mind or the body, and I do not entirely know what its original context or purpose was (something to check out in fact), but it works incredibly well for me in that particular way. That is something I really like about sound and music: that it can go beyond words, generations, and cultures. Merely as a universal language between me and the music, me as a composer or performer and my audience, me and my fellow musicians on stage, or even all of that at once.”

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## CONCRÈTE

“Many of my works are inspired by the journeys I have made in East Africa since my early twenties. I love to incorporate my background as a journalist in my compositional practice: I combine acoustic music and electronics, I collect a lot of audio recordings (a.k.a. field recording), for example during my travels in Rwanda.

Sometimes I process and develop these field recordings into more abstract soundscapes. Sometimes I use these recordings nearly untouched and integrate them as documentary entities in my music. I am both fascinated by *sound* (silence, pitch, rhythm, noise and environmental sounds) as well as how a room or *a space* itself sounds (acoustics). In doing so, I like to use “sound” as the most inclusive way of looking at music, to not only think about how a violin or a piano sounds, but to experience every event in the world as a potential musical experience or happening. That may be e.g. the soundscape of my childhood in Bruges. But as well the soundscape of the Virunga Mountains: my native region, and the landscape where my paternal grandfather as well my birth mother lives. My work can range from abstract electronics with a lot of noise and bleeps to very fine poetic lines. I am particularly interested in how I can get all of this together. The entire spectrum of sound and how I can deal with it in a musical and immersive way.”

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## AFRICAN CONTEMPORARY CLASSICAL MUSIC

“I am constantly reflecting on my own perspective on the continent in general as well Rwanda in particular. This includes also an ongoing questioning and defining of my position in the context of both African and European concert music. Hence also the umbrella name for all my sonic explorations: *Afrique Concrète*, considering (some of) my keywords as an immediate offspring of *Musique Concrète*. I have always been very curious and excited about how different musical cultures can come together and develop as one. And I am particularly anxious to discover a fresh take on how contemporary classical music from an African perspective might sound, by combining both Western Classical music and African traditional music for instance (I’d actually really prefer to coin the term *African Classical music*), and to have both musical traditions densely interwoven. And this interweaving should not only happen through e.g. a lucky combination of African and European sounds that sound a bit this or that.

But actually, via some of the key compositional techniques, form and structure that are important in the musical traditions of both continents. So, I’d like to eventually come up with a fundamental way of creating and eventually also performing an Afro European or Euro African sort of contemporary classical music. African music is different from European music in a fundamentally structural way: just imagine the contrast between the most common characteristics of the sonic textures, timbre, instrumentation on both continents. But also one

focusing more on virtuosic explorations of rhythm and time (Africa), and the other much more in depth development of harmony (Europe). Or the one more often being experienced in a quiet, still and sterile environment such as a black theater box to purely focus on the genius of the composer or the performer, far away from any possible distractions (Europe). And the other being incorporated in communal and everyday life activities, also where very often live dance and live sound production go together all along (Africa).

Also passing on, performing and executing music is so different on both continents: European music has a vast history of engraving, with a written notational system. While African music is completely embedded in an oral tradition. My current and near-future projects are all going for this particular artistic quest, that is probably my ongoing life project: figuring out how that new hybrid African European experimental form can be made possible.”

*Listen here to Aurélie's music:*

[Sampling the Man of Memory, 2014 - 2017](#)

[Tele Drumming, 2016](#)

[Anosmia, 2013](#)

[iota mikro, 2012](#)

[KARIAKOO, 2013](#)

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We thank the Royal Museum for Central Africa for musical examples, books, information and pictures.



# SOUTH KOREA

by Ensemble Amadeus



## FOREWARD

This short paper was entirely written between March 2020 and March 2021 during the Coronavirus pandemic. All the study material as well as the listening material was collected by me through the contribution of online research as it was impossible to travel to Korea during the pandemic.

Until a few years ago, the writings available to Western scholars not conversant in Korean was very limited. Today, thanks to the spread of Korean/English bilingual manuals and the great work of some Korean cultural organizations such as the National Gugak Center<sup>1</sup>, a large number of writings, especially in English, are available to scholars wishing to approach and broaden the understanding of Korean musical culture.

Although the music on which most emphasis is placed in this writing are equally present in the territories of North and South Korea, this contribution limits its field to South Korea, given the extreme difficulty in finding updated books, articles and writings regarding North Korea.

## INTRODUCTION

In South Korea, as in every industrialized country in the world, you can find every form and genre of music.

Music education in Korea plays a very important role and today it is possible to study and improve in ancient and modern Western cultured music, jazz, pop and rock. Korean high schools and universities today are very important training centers for musicians dedicated to the interpretation of Western cultured music from the Gregorian to contemporary experimentation.

The openness to the world and the great work of digitization has allowed South Korea to establish itself as one of the most important pop music producers on the planet.

K-pop<sup>2</sup> has met with acclaim and success globally in the most diverse age groups.

Even in the jazz and independent music field, Korean interpreters, especially of the new generations, are crossing the borders of their own nation thanks to a wise use of social networks for self-promotion.

<sup>1</sup> <<https://www.gugak.go.kr/site/main/index001?menuid=001&lang=en>>.

<sup>2</sup> Although K-pop is the most important planetary phenomenon concerning Korean music, it is beyond the scope of this paper. For more information about K-pop see bibliography and <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/K-pop>>.

## TRADITIONAL MUSIC OF KOREA

*«Korea has developed its own brilliant culture through thousands of years of history. But like other countries, it has also maintained continual cultural exchange with its neighbours [...]. Geographically, Korea is situated at the far east of the Asian continent, with China to the west, Russia to the north, and Japan to the east. It has a long history of cultural exchange with all these neighboring countries, but its relationship with China stands out as particularly significant.*

*China exerted the greatest influence on the Korean peninsula, not only because of its large land area and population or its abundant natural resources, but also because of its long history and its advanced culture, always a step ahead of its neighbors. Music is no exception, and in discussing Korea's traditional music, we cannot omit the influence of China.»<sup>3</sup>*

However, one cannot ignore the additional influence that Japanese culture had in Korea.

In 1910, Korea was annexed by the Empire of Japan after years of war, intimidation and political machinations; the country would be considered a part of Japan until 1945. In order to establish control over its new protectorate, the Empire of Japan waged an all-out war on Korean culture.

Schools and universities forbade speaking Korean and emphasized manual labor and loyalty to the Emperor. Public places adopted Japanese, too, and an edict to make films in Japanese soon followed. It also became a crime to teach history from non-approved texts and authorities burned over 200,000 Korean historical documents, essentially wiping out the historical memory of Korea.<sup>4</sup>

Korea served as a bridge to Japan for many Chinese musical ideas as well as exerting influence through its own forms of court music.

Despite the Japanese domination and strong Chinese cultural influences, Korea has developed its own unique musical identity.



In all the music of the Far East (China, Vietnam, Japan, Korea and India) each note is endowed with a movement of intonation or timbre and this movement and the timbre is more relevant than the note itself.

<sup>3</sup> HWANG, BYUNG-KI, *Korean Music and its Chinese Influences*, <<https://www2.gwu.edu/~eall/special/hwang.pdf>>.

<sup>4</sup> BLAKEMORE, ERIN, *How Japan Took Control of Korea*, 28<sup>th</sup> July 2020, <<https://www.history.com/news/japan-colonization-korea#:~:text=In%201910%2C%20Korea%20was%20annexed,out%20war%20on%20Korean%20culture>> (last accessed date: 4<sup>th</sup> August 2021).

		3 장		2 장		1 장		연 소 독 주 곡	
	장고창악파기							청	성
									곡
									인명 · 요권준연지
									清聲曲

An element that appears new and unusual to the Western listener in Korean traditional music is the integration of music and what we normally call "noise". We notice it in the percussive techniques of the *Geomungo* or in the sound broken by the vibration of the membrane typical of the great *Daegeum* flute, as well as from the apparently awkward use of the voice in the *Pansori* which is so far from the western "bel canto".

The system of traditional music is not the same as that of Western music notation first, performance next<sup>5</sup>.

The traditional music is handed down by oral tradition, and it has been notated when necessary. While classic music is relatively good to approach because it is organized as *jeongganbo* (the Korean notational system), folk music, which has been transcribed, is not used for research, but serves as a score for performance.

## STYLE OF TRADITIONAL MUSIC

*Sanjo*<sup>6</sup>, literally meaning 'scattered melodies', is a style of traditional Korean Music, involving an instrumental solo accompanied by drumming on the *janggu*. The art of *sanjo* is a real crystallization of traditional Korean melody and rhythm which may have been handed down by rote generation after generation. The drummer who beats the *janggu* also makes exclamations in order to please the audience. The audience can also express their excited feeling with exclamations while listening to *sanjo*.

*Jeongak*<sup>7</sup> (literally "proper music") is that category of Korean music which is considered classical, as distinct from *misnongak* which is folk music. The category has traditionally been associated with the upper classes.

*Pansori*<sup>8</sup> is a Korean genre of musical storytelling performed by a singer and a drummer. The singer holds a fan in his hands and sings with a peculiar technique characterized by great emphasis and vocal power.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> High School and University students trained in Korean traditional and court music today are trained also in the use of western notational system.

<sup>6</sup> *Sanjo* (music), in "Wikipedia", <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanjo\\_\(music\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanjo_(music))> (last accessed date: 4<sup>th</sup> August 2021).

<sup>7</sup> *Jeongak*, in "Wikipedia", <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeongak>> (last accessed date: 4<sup>th</sup> August 2021).

<sup>8</sup> *Pansori*, in "Wikipedia", <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pansori>> (last accessed date: 4<sup>th</sup> August 2021).

<sup>9</sup> Recommended videos from YouTube - *Pansori*:

<<https://youtu.be/N7Gbo-y3uFo>>

<<https://youtu.be/U5TN0G6MqHs>>.

Originally a form of folk entertainment for the lower classes, *Pansori* was embraced by the Korean elite during the 19th century. In 2003, UNESCO recognized *Pansori* as a Masterpiece of the Oral and intangible Heritage of Humanity.



## TRADITIONAL KOREAN MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

### GAYAGEUM



The *gayageum*<sup>10</sup> or *kayagum* is a traditional Korean plucked zither.

There are many types of *gayageum* according to the number of strings: such as 12, 18, or 25; according to its tones: high, mid, low; and according to the string's texture, such as a silk-string *gayageum*; plus an electronic *gayageum* which has an electronic devices attached to the body of the instrument.

<sup>10</sup> *Gayageum*, in "Wikipedia", <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gayageum>> (last accessed date: 4<sup>th</sup> August 2021).

The 12-string *pungnyu gayageum* has a long history and other types were modified for collaboration with Western instruments by intentionally changing the number of strings and then its texture, reacting to the influences of imported Western culture.<sup>11</sup>

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## GEOMUNGO



The *geomungo*<sup>12</sup> (also spelled *komungo* or *kŏmun'go*) is a traditional Korean plucked zither with both bridges and frets.

The *geomungo's* place in Korean culture is traditionally that of a scholars' instrument for self-cultivation, much like ancient Chinese had done with the guqin in China. The *geomungo* has six strings, sixteen fixed frets, and three movable bridges on its long and round front plate. The left hand decides the pitches by pushing the strings on the frets while the right hand, with a seventeen-centimeter stick-like pick called a *suldae*, which produces sounds by plucking or striking the strings.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Recommended videos from YouTube - *Gayageum*:

<<https://youtu.be/pob6NbRcmBw>>

<<https://youtu.be/6ucEoORnf5A>>.

<sup>12</sup> *Geomungo*, in “Wikipedia”, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geomungo>> (last accessed date: 4<sup>th</sup> August 2021).

<sup>13</sup> Recommended videos from YouTube - *Geomungo*:

<<https://youtu.be/r1Zj62gKbAc>>

<<https://youtu.be/r1Zj62gKbAc>>

<[https://youtu.be/\\_t7zf66Hpn4](https://youtu.be/_t7zf66Hpn4)>.

## DAEGEUM



The *daegeum*<sup>14</sup> (also spelled *taegum*, *daegum* or *taegŭm*) is a large bamboo flute, a transverse flute used in traditional Korean music. It has a buzzing membrane that gives it a special timbre.

The structure of *daegeum* is as follows. *Daegeum* has a *chwigu* (embouchuer) through which air is blown into the instrument. It has six finger holes, *jigong*. There is a hole called “cheonggong” which is used to create a unique buzzing sound by attaching the inner skin of reeds (*cheong*). The *daegeum* also has one or two holes pierced to determine the pitch and to balance each pitch. These holes are called *chilseong gong*.

There are three kinds of *daegeum*: jeongak daegeum, sanjo daegeum and gaeryang daegeum. The Jeongak Daegum is widely used in classical music such as court music, and the sanjo daegeum is extensively used for folk music, such as accompaniment for folk dance, folk song, shaman ceremonies, and sanjo music. The gaeryang daegeum is a modified instrument that has vivid tone colors. The pitch of gaeryang daegeum is the same as Jeongak daegeum, but the modified one can produce pitches in Western scales, so problems of dissonance during collaboration with Western music were solved.

In North Korea there is a wooden flute which is similar to the orchestral western flute of the end of the XIX century.

In the picture here on the right you can see from the top: Sanjo daegeum, modified Sogum, gaeryang daegeum, jeongak daegeum and North Korean flute based on the western Boehm flute.<sup>15</sup>



<sup>14</sup> *Daegeum*, in “Wikipedia”, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daegum>> (last accessed date: 4<sup>th</sup> August 2021).

<sup>15</sup> Recommended videos from YouTube - *Daegeum*:

<<https://youtu.be/f00eDzDMXBM>>

<<https://youtu.be/lvFO6lBexfs>>

<<https://youtu.be/29qJecHzgd4>>

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## SOGEUM

*Sogeum*<sup>16</sup> is the smallest among the Korean bamboo flutes. It has one blowing hole and seven fingering holes.

Unlike the larger *daegeum*, it does not have a buzzing membrane (although it did have one in ancient times). It is used in court, aristocratic, and folk music, as well as in contemporary classical music, popular music, and film scores.



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## DANSO

*Danso*<sup>17</sup> is a small, short, notched vertical flute which is mainly used in solo recital, duet performance, and chamber music. It has four finger holes in the front and one in the back.

*Danso* (as well as *daegeum*) are produced in plastic too for didactical purposes and are very popular in school music all over South Korea.

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## PIRI



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<sup>16</sup> Sogeum, in “Wikipedia”, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sogeum>> (last accessed date: 4<sup>th</sup> August 2021).

<sup>17</sup> *Danso*, in “Wikipedia”, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danso>> (last accessed date: 4<sup>th</sup> August 2021).

The *Piri* is a Korean double reed instrument, used in both the folk and classical (court) music of Korea. It is made of bamboo. Its large reed and cylindrical bore gives it a mellower sound than that of many other types of oboe.

In the typical *piri*, there are eight finger holes on the bamboo body. Seven of the finger holes are on the front and one is on the back for the thumb.<sup>18</sup>

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## HAEGEUM



The *haegeum*<sup>19</sup> is a traditional Korean string instrument, resembling a vertical fiddle with two strings; derived from the ancient Chinese *xiqin*. It has a rodlike neck, a hollow wooden soundbox, and two silk strings, and is held vertically on the knee of the performer and played with a bow.

The *haegeum* is one of the most widely used instruments in Korean music. The *haegeum* is used in court music as well as *madangnori* (ordinary people's music)

The construction of the *haegeum* is mainly divided into a resonator body made from bamboo roots, a stick-like neck called *ipjuk*, and a bow. The *ipjuk* is vertically attached onto the resonator body, two pegs winding silk threads are xed to the *ipjuk*, and the bow made of the horsehair is inserted between the two strings. Compared to other traditional Korean instruments, *haegeum* uses eight kinds of materials: metal, stone, silk, bamboo, gourd, earth, skin, and wood.<sup>20</sup>

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## AJAENG

*Ajaeng*<sup>21</sup>, large Korean bowed zither having seven strings. Its body is about 160 cm (62 inches) long and 25 cm (10 inches) wide and is made of paulownia wood. The *ajaeng*'s strings, made of twisted silk, are supported by separate movable bridges. The bow with which it is played, some 65 cm (25 inches) long, is fashioned from a peeled forsythia branch that has been hardened with pine resin.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Recommended videos from YouTube - *Piri*:

<<https://youtu.be/FDHwdnCausQ>>

<<https://youtu.be/K3lkScuUSFM>>

<<https://youtu.be/Qo0wYIRQoi8>>.

<sup>14</sup> *Haegeum*, in "Wikipedia", <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haegueum>> (last accessed date: 4<sup>th</sup> August 2021).

<sup>20</sup> Recommended videos from YouTube - *Haegeum*:

<<https://youtu.be/OfsFoUell4Y>>

<<https://youtu.be/aLYCyIxDUcE>>

<<https://youtu.be/XPjWPy4R4KA>>.

<sup>21</sup> *Ajaeng*, in "Wikipedia", <<https://www.britannica.com/art/ajaeng>> (last accessed date: 4<sup>th</sup> August 2021).

<sup>22</sup> Recommended videos from YouTube - *Ajeng*:

<[https://youtu.be/UXA\\_NbtWKvk](https://youtu.be/UXA_NbtWKvk)>





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## SAENGHWANG

*Saenghwang*<sup>23</sup> is a Korean wind instrument. It is a free reed mouth organ derived from (and quite similar to) the Chinese *sheng*, though its tuning is different. It is constructed from 17 bamboo pipes, each with a metal free reed, mounted vertically in a windchest. Traditionally the *saenghwang*'s windchest was made out of a dried gourd but it is now more commonly made of metal or wood. In contrast to other Korean traditional instruments, it is not well known today, even in Korea, and very few musicians are able to play it. It is used primarily in chamber music, usually in combination with instruments such as the *danso* (vertical flute) and *yanggeum* (hammered dulcimer).



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## YANGGEUM

The *yanggeum*<sup>24</sup> is a traditional Korean string instrument. It is a hammered dulcimer. Unlike other traditional Korean instruments, most of which have silk strings, the *yanggeum* has metal strings. It is played by striking the strings with a bamboo stick. *Yanggeum* means a stringed instrument of the West (*yang*).

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<[https://youtu.be/\\_SL9t0wFPL4](https://youtu.be/_SL9t0wFPL4)> (Changgo, Daegeum, Geomungo).

<sup>16</sup> *Saenghwang*, in “Wikipedia”, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saenghwang>> (last accessed date: 4<sup>th</sup> August 2021).

<sup>24</sup> *Yanggeum*, in “Wikipedia”, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yanggeum>> (last accessed date: 4<sup>th</sup> August 2021).

The origin of the *yanggeum* is the santur in the Middle East. The Chinese introduced it into Korea in the 18th century. Its body is flat and trapezoidal, with seven sets of four metal strings. The right hand strikes the strings with a thin bamboo strip.



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## JANGGU



The *janggu*<sup>25</sup> (or *janggo*; also spelled *changgo*) or sometimes called *seyogo* (slim waist drum) is the most representative drum in traditional Korean music. It is available in most kinds, and consists of an hourglass-shaped body with two heads made from animal skin. The two heads produce sounds of different pitch and timbre, which when played together are believed to represent the harmonious joining of Yin and Yang.

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## BUK

The *buk*<sup>26</sup> is a traditional Korean drum. While the term *buk* is a native Korean word used as a generic term meaning "drum", it is most often used to refer to a shallow barrel-shaped drum, with a round wooden body that is covered on both ends with animal skin.

The *buk* used for court music are usually fixed with nails on the rims, while ones used for folk music are usually tied up with leather straps to form the shape.



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<sup>25</sup> *Janggu*, in "Wikipedia", <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Janggu>> (last accessed date: 4<sup>th</sup> August 2021).

<sup>26</sup> *Buk*, in "Wikipedia", <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buk\\_\(drum\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buk_(drum))> (last accessed date: 4<sup>th</sup> August 2021).



## THE INTERVIEW: CECILIA SOON YUK SOO (SINGER – KOREA)

My name is Cecilia Soon Yuk Soo, I come from South Korea and I've been living here for 19 years. I came here to study opera. I've always sung, since I was a child and I've always had this dream of coming here to study music, because this is the place where classical music and opera were born.

At first, I felt isolated and sad, I only thought about study singing, but gradually I got married, had children, made new friends here in Italy. I think I'm well integrated now.

I can't say that I didn't have difficulties right after I arrived here. At first, I had so many difficulties, in particular with language and culture and friends and acquaintances, but then I found friends and I started finding my place and I decided to stay here.

Music makes me feel at home. When I sing Italian people understand what I'm saying because I sing in their language. I manage to communicate more when I sing. Also my family, my home and my friends make me feel at home. When I go back to Korea I don't feel the way I feel here. Yes, I'm happy to see my parents and my friends, but after two weeks maximum I feel anxious and I want to come back. I think I really got very close to Italian culture.

I've never felt discriminated. I can't say that everything I expected before I arrived here has realized, but to me is already very important to know Italian language, history and culture and live with Italians. That is already satisfying. Plus, I'm following the career path I've always wanted.

Since I decided to become an opera singer the influence of my culture isn't really evident in my work life. Mainly it's my mum's influence that I feel, because she's the one who encouraged me to sing. Apart from habits that date back from my childhood, my way of thinking is certainly Italian. In Korea we have very different ways, for example, what parents decide must be done without opposing and, for example, at school you can't raise your hands to talk. With our children, my husband and I follow Italian habits.

Surely it exists a common European history, it descends from wars and facts that connect all European countries one way or another. But also music is a part of a common culture. Musicians from many European countries have all influenced one another.

## MUSIC TO ME IS LIFE

Music to me is life. I started living with music since I was a child and I can't think of my life without it. It's also passion. I'm doing what I've always wanted.

My passion began thanks to my mum, who wanted to be a singer. When I was 4 years old, she wanted me to play the piano and in primary school I'd already started studying singing. I've always studied in music schools.

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<[https://youtu.be/ia9td1\\_jQ8I](https://youtu.be/ia9td1_jQ8I)>

<<https://youtu.be/IpDFhhAuq-A>>.

I'd like to tell everyone that opera is beautiful, not old stuff. Opera has always lived inside all of us, because it's part of our history.

My ideal audience is everyone. Even those who don't like classical music, I'd like to make them understand that the stories are always the same. Love, dramas, tragedies, are always the same, like tv shows. It is always near. It's always inside of us.

To create integration in Europe it is necessary to collaborate, just like we're doing with MoSaIC. Doing these kinds of things is going to help to bring people together and collaborate. I expect from MoSaIC the chance to show my abilities.

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# SYRIA

by Swinging Europe

## GEOGRAPHY

**Syria**, officially the **Syrian Arab Republic**, is a country in Western Asia, bordering Lebanon to the southwest, the Mediterranean Sea to the west, Turkey to the north, Iraq to the east, Jordan to the south, and Israel

to the southwest. A country of fertile plains, high mountains, and deserts, Syria is home to diverse ethnic and religious groups, including the majority Syriac Arabs, Kurds, Turkmens, Assyrians, Armenians, Circassians, Mandeans and Greeks. Religious groups include Sunnis, Christians, Alawites, Druze, Isma'ilis, Mandeans, Shiites, Salafis and Yazidis. Arabs are the largest ethnic group, and Sunnis are the largest religious group.

Syria is a unitary republic consisting of 14 governorates and is the only country that politically espouses Ba'athism. It is a member of one international organization other than the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement; it was suspended from the Arab League in November 2011 and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, and self-suspended from the Union for the Mediterranean.



## MUSICAL GENRES IN SYRIA

Long before the modern state was formed in 1946, Syria had developed rich musical traditions over thousands of years. The diverse religions, sects and ethnicities that inhabited and travelled across the country over the millennia – Muslims, Christians, Jews, Arabs, Assyrians, Armenians and Kurds, to name but a few – all contributed to this eclectic musical heritage.

Modern Syriac music notably contrasts its folk music: It uses an orchestra of mostly European instruments with one lead vocalist and sometimes a backup chorus. Projects to preserve the existing music have also been active in recent years.<sup>1</sup>

The music of Syria merged the habits of people who settled in Syria throughout its history. Syria was long one of the Arab world's centres for musical innovation in the field of classical Arab music; for example, the city of Aleppo is known for its *muwashshah* music, which was specially conceived to accompany Andalusian *muwashshah* poetry. The secular musical genre took the form of the *wasla* of Aleppo and the Andalusian *nubah* of the western part of the Arab world.

<sup>1</sup> For an example, read: *Syrian Cassette Archives: Preserving Syrian Musical Heritage One Tape at a Time*, in "Scene Arabia", 29<sup>th</sup> September 2020, <<https://scenearabia.com/Noise/SYRIAN-CASSETTE-ARCHIVES-Preserving-Syrian-Musical-Heritage-One-Tape-at-a-Time>> (last accessed date: 27th May 2021).

Syria, being one of the countries where Christianity had originated, has a long history of church music.<sup>2</sup> It is the origin of the Christian hymnody, which was entirely developed in Syria and its style of chant<sup>3</sup>, the Syriac chant which continues to be the liturgical music of some of the various Syriac Christians, is the oldest in the world.

The current Syriac civil war, emerging from the unrest following the Arab Spring protests back in 2011<sup>4</sup>, is an ongoing multi-sided civil war, fought in Syria, between the Syriac Arab Republic led by Syriac president Bashar al-Assad (along with domestic and foreign allies) and various domestic and foreign forces that oppose both the Syriac government and each other (in varying combinations) - the war has not only meant destruction of historical architecture, but music has also been lost in the war, as well as used as a political element to oppose the regime.<sup>5</sup>

## MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS IN SYRIA

The most prominent musical instruments in Syria are the *oud* (lute), *flute nay*, *darbouka* (goblet drum), *daf* (tambourine), *arghul*, *qanun* (box zither), *rebab* and *kamanjah* (spike fiddle).



Image 1 - *Arghul*:



Image 2 - *Qanun*:

<sup>2</sup> LAHDO, ABROHOM and ZAZI, ELIAS, *History of the Syriac Music Church*, in “syriacmusic.com” <<http://www.syriacmusic.com/history.asp?menuid=cm&type=history&purpose=churchmusic>>.

<sup>3</sup> SWEDENBURG, TED, *Syrian Prayers: Sacred Music from Bilad Al Sham KKV*, in “RootsWorld”, <<http://www.rootsworld.com/reviews/bilad-17.shtml>>.

<sup>4</sup> Music in connection with the Arab Spring is given insight into in the article: SHOKAIR, MAYSON, *Remembering the Syrian revolution through song*, 9<sup>th</sup> April 2021, <<https://syriauntold.com/2021/04/09/remembering-the-syrian-revolution-through-song/>>, (last accessed date: 27th May 2021).

<sup>5</sup> For an example of how music is used as a political tool, read: ALWAN, LEILA, *How Syrians defied Assad through music*”, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2016, <<https://english.alarabiya.net/blog/2016/03/22/How-Syrians-defied-Assad-through-music>> (last accessed date: 27th May 2021).





*Image 3 – Ney*



*Image 4 – Rebab*

## MUSIC IN MODERN TIMES

Syria has a wide number of popular artists, who have made their way in the pop world, relying on the already classical Syriac music, interlaced into a modernised version. Noteworthy is Syriac electronic music star Omar Souleyman, who has created a synthesised version of the Middle Eastern dance music known as *Dabke*<sup>6</sup>, adding current electronic dance music to engage a young generation.

## SALAM SUSU – HARPIST AND CLASSIC PIANO

Syriac musician Salam Susu has not only extensive knowledge playing harp and classical piano from a classical musical background – her field of study back, which she started when she was still in Syria has been about the broad and defining impact, which *Syriac culture* has had not only on music, but also culturally across the world and outside the Middle East dating back for centuries.

Salam's knowledge of the musical history and impact of Syriac sacral hymns and chants on Europe will also be presented during the MoSaIC project's final part during the World Music Festival with a workshop called *Ancient Roots from South to North*:

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<sup>6</sup> SILVERSTEIN, SHAYNA, *Syria's Radical Dabka*, Middle East Report 263 (Summer 2012), <<https://merip.org/2012/05/syrias-radical-dabka/>>.

In a two-part performance, consisting of a lecture of the ancient Syriac language and music, followed by storytelling from the ancient Nordic mythology, the first part will consist of a small lecture by Salam Susu. The Syriac culture is an ancient Syrian culture. The music is still played in churches today, and the culture is linked to the Aramaic language, which was spoken by Jesus Christ. The lecture will consist of both live performed music and live painting.

Unfortunately, as a result of ongoing strife, particularly in Syria and Iraq, the Syrian and Aramaic heritage communities of the Middle East are under unprecedented pressure. Faced with civil war, violence against civilians, and political and economic instability, many have been killed or forced to emigrate. As a result, these unique communities which have survived in the region for nearly two millennia face extinction. In addition to this terrible human cost, Syrian and Aramaic physical and cultural heritage have also been gravely threatened.

### *Why did you choose Syrian culture as your field of study?<sup>7</sup>*

“I chose this field of study about Syrian music – Syrian sacral music and its church hymns and chants – seeing as it's not just specifically music; Syrian culture is also religion and has origins that date way back. The Syrian people have been inhabiting a number of countries – civilisations have been created from this. I'm not talking simply about Syria, but also Lebanon, Iran, some of Turkey – we're talking about an ancient people, who have been there for many years and then Christianity came, overthrowing and excluding them from the land.

The music to be found within Syriac culture has always been a way to express feelings through life cycles – weddings, funerals, seasons passing and so on. Seminal moments in human lives that define us – the music supports the moments. When Northern Syria and the middle part of Iraq were forced to convert to Christianity, action was taken to maintain the connection to their roots. That was done through collecting all of the hymns that they'd been singing for years into text.

In regard to Syriac culture, it's one-part society, one-part language and one-part music – also that it's based on Aramaic language, the language spoken by Jesus Christ.

What collects the different geographical areas is that they make use of the same sort of music; for example, Lebanon and Iraq, are similar. When I started my research, I started going to the villages in the mountains, valleys and deserts – it was the only way to get the original folk music. None of it is recorded – it's only oral. All these songs are in the countryside and are told about by old people. I started talking to the ladies going to weddings – What are you singing? And from there, I started collecting the songs.

When my studies led me to the different geographical locations, it drove me to find more about really amazing aspects that collect the ancient civilisations to the modern civilisations. When Islam came and political strife followed after Christ, it didn't change the identity of the music in itself. Quite the opposite. This is documented in singing and music.”

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<sup>7</sup> The following paragraphs are an extract from an interview to Salam Susu made on 4th March 2021. Here are quoted her words.

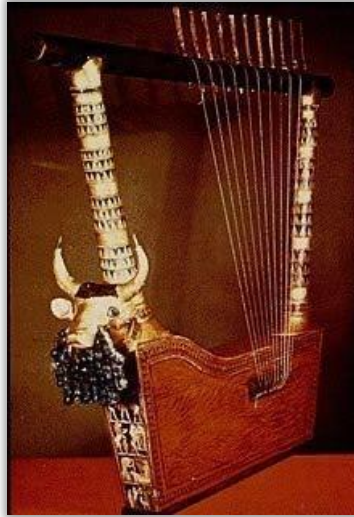


Image 5 - An example of an ancient lyre, the combination of harp and bull shows beautiful ornamental decoration on the music instrument. The photo shows a lyre from the Royal Tomb in Ur.

“When I started my research, I was looking for the roots of all of this – for example, I didn’t know that Syriac music connected to the epic text of *Gilgamesh*, which was written 400 A.D. They found a stone book, in which there were poems that they sang in *Gilgamesh*, as there is a big section of music in the ancient text. They found string instruments, oud and tambura – as well as the first example of a harp was found.”

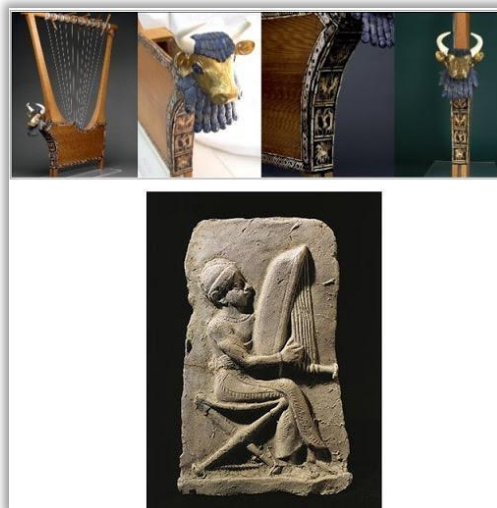


Image 6 - Above: Photos of the lyres found in the Royal Tomb of Ur. Below: Terracotta relief depicting a harp player - Photo by DeAgostini Getty Images



Image 7 - An example of Ugarit Music Note, <[www.heritageforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/UgaritMusicNote](http://www.heritageforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/UgaritMusicNote)>.

“I drove through the areas, where the music travelled the ancient Silk Road many years ago, going to Syria and the coastal area. When the Syriac people started to move, they also brought musicians along on their ships when they started traveling to other countries.

Using the music instruments, the people back in ancient times started to travel and eventually came to Scandinavia, meeting Vikings. The Phoenicians were travelers that built ships and travelled all around - this influenced other geographical regions. You can clearly see this, when comparing a Viking ship with the Phoenician ship, despite some changes that were influenced by the Viking improving for war, while the Phoenicians were merchants.

When you compare the instruments, you can see the influences, which had a direct impact – the Vikings’ instruments ended up looking like modern versions of the old instruments. This could only happen in a direct meeting between the two people – to influence and exchange. There’s still a huge connection between the mythologies in singing and celebrating the seasons – Syriac people and Northern Vikings both pray to the weather and so forth.”

*What does the Syriac hymns accomplish and what does it make you feel?*

“Music now is used to heal and meditate – it’s the same purpose it accomplished before in ancient times. The nature was prayed to with songs and Islam, Christianity and Judaism leaned on this musical tradition in their way. What it has led to is that all of the religions want to lay claim to having the original rights to it and all of them want to be correct – rather than look at the interaction and influence throughout the ages. The tunes in Islam and the chants in Christian churches are cut from the same mould – but it seems hard to admit this for a number of people.

They refuse to admit that Syriac culture has built up the culture that we all know today – that it has created the prototype to sacral music, as we know it now, and created the background for all of it. If anything, it renovated folk music – it has beauty in it. There are Syriac songs that talk about rain, sadness, love and all of these essential human elements.

The hymns in the churches right now during Easter and Christmas all draw back to the roots of the Syriac church. The hymns were collected in a book – the most prominent works of the Syriac Church’s music were written down in the anthology named *Beth Gazo* (*Psalms of the Treasury of Maqams*). The hymns have been transported all around the world and influenced the geographic-specific places – ending up perhaps slightly changed, but essentially the same.

This Syriac civilization has the light to come to life – I’ve researched, but there are no books on it. The focus has been lost in a continued political and religious strife between countries and religions, which is still ongoing. It’s sad and unfortunate.”



*Image 8 – Syria, Ugarit, 1400-1300 BC Female drummer. It might be the goddess "Anat", but it might also be a simple musician. (Photo by Patrick CHAPUIS/Gamma-Rapho via Getty Images).*

***How do you see the interconnection between religion and music?***

“I think the range of expression and the emotions are beautiful – the universality of it appeals to everyone. But I disagree with the idea of strict religion that dictates that only certain people can sing certain songs; I started singing hymns when I was young. But I was always met by a misunderstanding of how it defined me. I would be asked: “You are Muslim?” And I would answer: “No, I’m a musician.” There’s no difference for me when you engage with music – it is the music I am engaging with, not a religion as such.

I’m still on the path of collecting more material in regard to my study – but the comparisons are everywhere. The folk music, the instruments, the civilisations all connect to each other, as I’m simply pointing out facts in my research in regard to Syriac musical history. The original Syriac music for instance - all the scales from this have been turned into Arabic scales.”



*Image 9* - Syriac Chants by Lebanese singer Fayrouz (1971). The song is an example of clips of hymns in the Syriac language according to the Syriac Maronite rite, performed by the creative artist Fayrouz.

“I’ve added an example of a song that musically gives you a glimpse of the hymns and how they sound; This hymn, performed by world-famous artist Fayrouz, is meant to show glory to God – God that has created everything. It’s the description of Jesus Christ – his mortal parents staying on Earth. The Moon is also celebrated in it. It connects a lot of people.”

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# TUNISIA

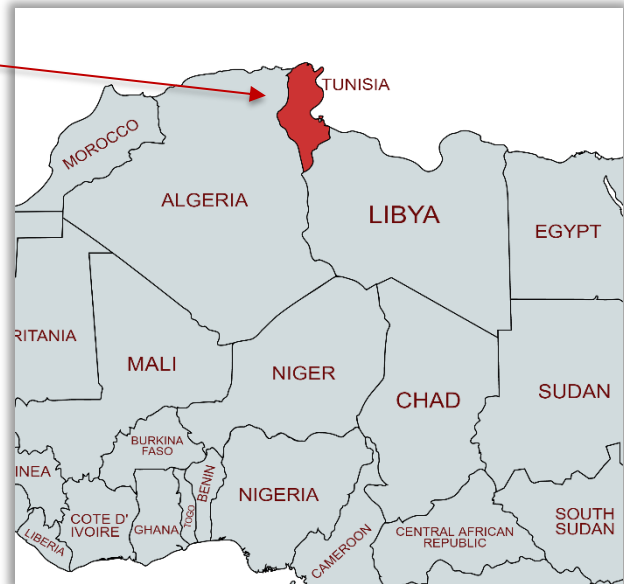
by Koor&Stem

## ABOUT THE COUNTRY

The Republic of Tunisia is the smallest country located in the Maghreb Region of North Africa. It shares borders with Algeria and Libya and the Mediterranean Sea to the north and east. In Tunis the capital city of Tunisia is inhabited by the largest share of population. Tunisia was inhabited by the native Berbers (Amazigh). Berbers are an ethnic group native to North Africa and West Africa, specifically Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania, northern Mali, northern Niger, and the Canary Islands. Tunisia was first occupied by Romans in 146 BC until 697 when Muslims conquered all of Tunisia. In 1574 the Ottoman Empire established control for over 300 years, until the French conquered and colonized Tunisia in 1881. Tunisia gained independence only in 1957. Another turning point in the history of Tunisia is the Tunisian Revolution in 2011 also known as Jasmine Revolution. The revolution was inspired by the Arab Spring movement throughout the Arab countries and ended the 24 years presidency of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

Arabic is the official language in Tunisia and is spoken by the vast majority of the population. Only a small portion of the population speaks in Jebbali or Shelha which are known as Berber languages. Besides Arabic and Berber languages French is also widely spoken in Tunisia as an unofficial language.

The majority of Tunisia's population are Muslims and they practice mostly the Sunni Islam. There is also a considerable portion of the population who practice Christianity and Judaism. However, according to surveys nearly a half of the young Tunisians described themselves as non-religious. As a result of long periods of occupation by different empires Tunisia has a very diverse culture influenced by Phoenicians, Romans, Vandals, Byzantines, Arabs, Turks, Italians, Spaniards, and the French. In general as a secular country, Tunisians are considered very tolerant of other religions and cultures.



## ABOUT THE MUSIC

Tunisia finds itself at a crossroads of many different cultures: from Berber, Bedouin and Arab to Mediterranean, Ottoman and Sub-Saharan. This reflects in the rich and diverse music traditions of the country. Some of the most important of these traditions are the urban art music of *ma'lūf* and the spiritual songs of Sufi ceremonies and other rituals. Bedouin songs and dance music make up an important part of the folk music tradition of rural Tunisia, and more recently other popular genres have developed in the country as well. But, the histories of all these different music traditions intertwine more than once.



*Ma'lūf* is probably the most prestigious music tradition in Tunisia. At its core is a repertory of many hundreds of songs and instrumental pieces. They are performed by solo singers and choirs, their melodies hovering over the pulse of clapping hands or percussion instruments. Often you hear melodic instruments in *ma'lūf* performances as well. They accompany and embellish the vocal melodies or embroider the songs with purely instrumental pieces. Today, the old songs and pieces of the *ma'lūf* are seen as the classical or art music of Tunisia, but throughout its long and complex history, *ma'lūf*, its performance spaces and instruments have changed constantly.

### THE ORIGINS OF MA'LŪF

Literally *ma'lūf* means “that which is familiar or customary.”<sup>2</sup> And indeed, *ma'lūf* is regarded as one of the oldest music traditions of Tunisia. Its roots are believed to trace back to the medieval times of Al-Andalus, when Iberia (the peninsula of Spain and Portugal) was under Muslim rule. When the exceptional musician and freed Persian slave Ziryab founded a music conservatory at the splendid court of Cordoba in the 9th century, a distinct Arab-Andalusian compositional style came to circulate in the many cities of Al-Andalus. Later, when many Muslims and Jews fled to North Africa between the 10th and 17th centuries, as Christian kings beleaguered Al-Andalus, they took this special Andalusian music with them. The refugees settled in the cities by the sea in northern Tunisia, and in Morocco, Algeria and Libya. As centuries passed, their songs were transmitted from one generation to the next and developed into distinctive music traditions in each of their new home countries. *Mūsīqā andalusīyya* is the general term for all these different urban music traditions in the Maghreb. *Mal'ūf* is the name for the Tunisian tradition, with its own collection of songs and pieces, melodies and rhythms.<sup>3</sup>

The man who gathered and organized all those different Tunisian songs in several large song cycles (so-called *nūbāt*), is Muhammad al-Rashid Bey, the 18th-century Husainid ruler of Tunisia. This aristocratic music lover is also credited with commissioning the composition of many of the instrumental pieces that are part of the *ma'lūf*. Until the introduction of Western music notation throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the melodies and rhythms of these pieces and of the *ma'lūf* songs were transmitted orally. The lyrics, on the other hand, were recorded in special written collections, called *safā'in* (“vessels”). Usually these lyrics are poems in classical or colloquial Arabic, designed to be sung. Eventually, between 1965 and 1979, the Tunisian government compiled and published an official *ma'lūf* canon, containing thirteen large cycles with more than 400 songs and instrumental pieces. While some newly composed pieces by 20th-century artists like Ahmad al-Wāfī, Khemais Tarnān and Salāh al-Mahdī were included in the canon, most of the older songs and pieces remain anonymous.

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the information on *ma'lūf* recounted here, comes from RUTH DAVIS, *Arab-Andalusian Music in Tunisia*, in *Early Music from Around the World* 24, no. 3, 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Translation by Ruth Davis, in RUTH DAVIS, – L. PLENKERS, *Tunisia, Republic of* in *Grove Music Online*: <<https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.kuleuven.e-bronnen.be/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000045998>> (last accessed date: 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Although this originary story is generally accepted, some scholars have doubts about it.

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## THE SONGS AND PIECES OF THE MA'LŪF

Trying to describe the experience of listening to *ma'lūf*, the 20th-century Tunisian music scholar Manoubi Snoussi asks us to picture an Arab garden, shaped in a circle, full of lawns, flowers and paths that all lead to a pavilion in the center. “There I will stand and look around. I may turn to this side or that and the view will always be the same. There is nothing irregular, nothing disturbing my mind. Everything comes towards me. I am able to allow it to come or not.”<sup>4</sup> Just like that, Snoubbi says, it is with listening to *ma'lūf*.

A performance of *ma'lūf* usually follows the sequence of songs and pieces grouped together in the large *nūbāt* cycles. Since performing an entire cycle would take many hours, a cycle is rather treated like a menu, from which performers freely pick several songs and pieces. As the performance progresses, the rhythms of the songs and pieces usually move from slow to fast. With the exception of songs and pieces that use a free rhythm without a steady beat, every piece of *ma'lūf* music is determined by a specific rhythmic cycle, that is, a pattern of stronger and weaker beats. This percussive pattern is repeated throughout an entire song or piece under the meandering melodies and sometimes even clashes with them.

The melodies closely follow the pace of the lyrics, describing romantic love, the beauty of women and nature, or the intoxicating effects of wine. Every song or piece is determined by a specific melodic mode, called *tab'* or *maqām*. These modes each contain a collection of pitches and motifs that make up the melodic line of each piece of *ma'lūf*. The system of melodic modes, used in most Arab music, is highly complex and fits into a larger framework of music theory and a philosophical view on the universe and human emotions. It would be impossible to perform the modes in a precise manner on the piano, because many of the pitches would linger right in between two piano keys, sounding a bit higher or lower than either one of them. This is why, to ears that are used to Western classical or popular music, the tones of the *ma'lūf* might seem a bit out of tune. But in fact, the modes of the *ma'lūf* present us with a far richer palette of tones.

While during the *ma'lūf* performance, rhythmic patterns change with every piece, the mode of the melodies stays the same, resulting in a constant melodic flow. The singers and instruments improvise embellishments or add little commentaries to the flowing melodies. Each performer does so in a slightly different manner, creating a flowing tissue of diverging musical lines: much like the Arab garden with all its winding paths.

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## CLASSICAL MUSIC? CHANGING PERFORMANCE CONTEXTS AND INSTRUMENTS

In recent times, the meandering melodies and pulsing rhythms of the *ma'lūf* resound in prestigious concert halls, played by large ensembles, sharing the stage with the Tunisian Symphony Orchestra. Young musicians practice *ma'lūf* in the many music schools scattered around Tunisia.<sup>5</sup> *Ma'lūf* seems to be the equivalent of Western classical music, with its prestigious concerts and old repertoire. And yet, historically, *ma'lūf* has always been popular music as well.

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<sup>4</sup> Manoubi Snoussi, quoted in RUTH DAVIS, *Ma'lūf: Reflections on the Arab Andalusian Music of Tunisia*, Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> See also RICHARD C. JANKOWSKY, *Ambient Sufism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021.

Before the independence of Tunisia in 1956, *ma'lūf* could hardly be heard outside of the cities along the northern coast of the country. There, the music flourished in many different social spaces. *Ma'lūf* was cultivated in the palaces of aristocrats or bourgeois patrons and amateurs, but you could also listen to the songs during the popular ceremonies of the many Sufi orders around Tunis. In these ceremonies, the *ma'lūf* was and still is performed with choral voices and a percussive layer of typical North African and Middle Eastern percussion instruments, such as the goblet-shaped *darbukka* drum and a pair of small *naqqārāt* kettle drums. Almost never absent, is the sound of the *tar* (tambourine). Some Sufi musicians would play the music at weddings, circumcisions and other family celebrations in the city. Other hot spots for *ma'lūf* were the many coffee houses that swamped Tunis from the early half of the 19th century. Unlike the Sufi performances, the *ma'lūf* ensembles here would boast several melody instruments, next to the voices and the drums, while listeners often completed the excitement of the music with other forms of sensory stimulation, like smoking hashish.



*Image 1* - Muhammad Ghanim, a member of the baron d'Erlanger's ensemble, playing the rabab (source: Ruth Davis, "Traditional Arab Music Ensembles in Tunis," *Asian Music* 28, no. 2, 1997).

*Image 2* - Khmais Tarnan playing the 'ūd 'arbī (source: Ruth Davis, "Traditional Arab Music Ensembles in Tunis", *Asian Music* 28, no. 2, 1997).

One of the palaces where private *ma'lūf* parties were held in the beginning of the 20th century, was that of Baron d'Erlanger, in the picturesque coastal city of Sidi Bou Said. Today you will find the center of Arab and Mediterranean Music in his palace. D'Erlanger was one of the many Westerners who took an exoticist interest in Arab culture and became one of the first ethnomusicologists to study the *ma'lūf*. He even tried to reconstruct what he thought to be an 'archaic' *ma'lūf* ensemble. This ensemble included a pair of the small *naqqārāt* kettle drums and a tambourine. A male singer shared his melodies with a *rābāb*, which is a two-stringed fiddle in the shape of a boat, and with an 'ūd 'arbī, a Maghrebian lute with four courses of strings. This was, however, far from a typical *ma'lūf* ensemble around 1900. In fact, d'Erlanger had tried to delete the more common cosmopolitan influences on the ensembles. Other sources indicate that *ma'lūf* ensembles around this time actually replaced the *rābāb* by a violin. The 'ūd 'arbī was often replaced by its Egyptian counterpart: the 'ūd sharqi with six strings. Moreover, a bamboo flute or *nay* and the *darbukka* drum was sometimes added, along with

a *qānūn*, which could be described as a cimbalom or a small harp in the shape of a trapezium held on your lap while plucking its many strings. All these instruments are commonly found in North African and Middle Eastern music, but instruments with European roots, such as the piano, the harmonium and the mandolin often joined the *ma'lūf* ensemble as well, even as they can't play all the pitches of the melodic modes precisely.<sup>6</sup>

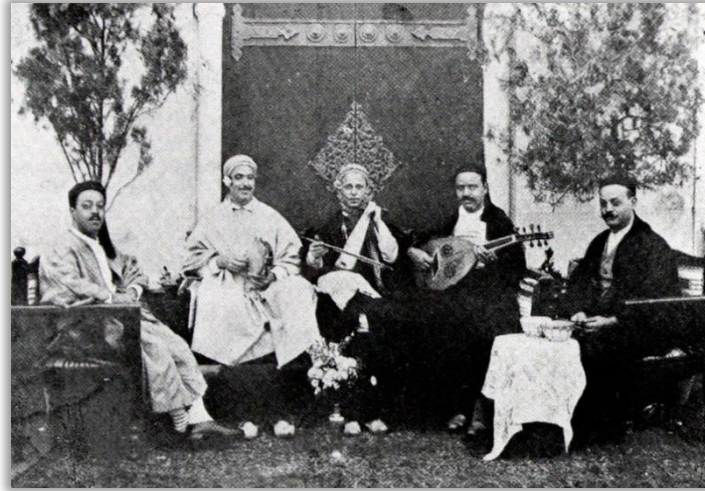


Image 3 - D'Erlanger's ensemble at the 1932 Cairo Congress  
(source: [https://www.umbc.edu/MA/index/number7/davis/dav\\_03.htm](https://www.umbc.edu/MA/index/number7/davis/dav_03.htm)).

Not only the instrumentation, but also the education of *ma'lūf* changed in the early 20th century. Normally, a *shaykh*, the elderly leader of an ensemble, passed on his particular knowledge of the songs and pieces to younger musicians: orally, through repetition and memorization. In this way, every ensemble's take on the *ma'lūf* songs and pieces was unique. In the 1930s, all of that started to change. Following the rising anti-colonial and nationalist spirit, a group of musicians, poets and intellectuals founded the Rashidiyya Institute in Tunis.



Image 4 - The Rashidiyya ensemble in rehearsal at the Institute, Tunis.  
(source: Ruth Davis, "Traditional Arab Music Ensembles in Tunis," *Asian Music* 28, no. 2, 1997).

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<sup>6</sup> RUTH DAVIS, *Traditional Arab Music Ensembles in Tunis*, in *Asian Music* 28, no. 2, 1997.

The institute wanted to promote and conserve the musical heritage of the *ma'lūf*. The best *shaykhs* around Tunis were gathered into a new ensemble and the *ma'lūf* melodies and rhythms they knew, were written down in music notation. A Western-styled conservatory was set up to teach these scores to new musicians. Soon, the airwaves of the new Tunisian radio (founded in 1938) were flooded with performances of the Rashidiyya ensemble, that by now also had standardized its set-up with a conductor, a section of violins, cellos and basses, a choir with male and female voices, the usual percussion section and a sprinkle of Arab melodic instruments. Popular recording artists, using the institute as a springboard, found inspiration in the old *ma'lūf* songs to compose new ones. It was the 'golden age' of Tunisian Song.

When independence finally came in 1956, the national government turned *ma'lūf* into the official musical heritage of Tunisia. The Rashidiyya conservatory became the National Conservatory and its stacks of notated *ma'lūf* pieces were published as the official *ma'lūf* canon between 1965 and 1979.<sup>7</sup> The state also set up music schools, or so-called 'houses of culture,' across the country to teach the *ma'lūf* to amateur musicians. Like this, the music spread to places in Tunisia where it was never practiced before. And at once, the regionally varied and flexible music tradition became a unified national heritage. But even though *ma'lūf* was played now on competitions and concert stages, some musicians never ceased to perform it in the ambience of cafés. Far from being a museum piece, *ma'lūf* still lives on.

*Listen here to ma'lūf songs performed by star singer Lofti Bouchnak and his ensemble: [Sama i](#)*

## THE MUSIC OF SUFI ORDERS AND OTHER SPIRITUAL SONGS<sup>8</sup>

Sufism left an important mark on Tunisia: not only on the social history but on the musical history of the country as well. Until independence in 1956, it were Sufi orders who most vibrantly kept the *ma'lūf* alive. The music-driven Sufi rituals continue to be held until this day and since the turn of the 21st century, you can even encounter their spiritual music, along with other ritual songs, on concert stages or during big music spectacles.

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### SUFISM IN TUNISIA AND THE HISTORY OF SPIRITUAL MA'LŪF

Sufism is a broad and problematic term, but you could describe it as a devotional practice that places trance rituals at the center of an Islamic worldview. These rituals take place in the many shrines (or *zāwiya*) of Muslim saints that characterize the landscape of Tunisia and other North African countries.

The saints are all historical figures. Some of them lived during the earliest times of Islam in the 7th century, others lived much later, and several of them established formal Sufi orders or *tarīqas* (meaning "path"). The many *tarīqas* in Tunisia fulfilled an important social role. They provided services that were only taken over by the state in the 20th century. And while each of the orders, with

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<sup>7</sup> The title of this publication is *Al-turāth al-mūsīqī al-tūnisī* ("The musical heritage of Tunisia").

<sup>8</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the information in on Sufi rituals and *stambēlī* comes from: RICHARD C. JANKOWSKY, *Ambient Sufism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021.

their different rituals and spiritual guidelines, spoke to different social groups, they were part of the daily lives of many ordinary and aristocratic Tunisians throughout the 18th and 19th centuries.<sup>9</sup>

Music played such a central role in some of the orders and their rituals, that some *tarīqas* started to function as conservatories. Many musical rituals were open to be listened to for anyone. Among the music that helps Sufis to attain divine ecstasy is the *ma'lūf*. *Ma'lūf* songs were introduced to some Sufi orders already in the 13th century, by the Andalusī poet-composer Abū al-Hasan al-Shushtarī. In his mystical songs, he popularized key ideas of Sufism. The connection between Sufism and Andalusī music was further strengthened in the late 16th by a Sufi named Sīdī Qashshāsh, who placed this musical practice at the center of his ceremonies. In this spiritual context, one often speaks of 'serious *ma'lūf*' (*ma'lūf al-jidd*) to differentiate it from its secular counterpart, discussed above. But, even in the spiritual *ma'lūf*, the far from religious lyrics of the secular *ma'lūf* are sometimes retained. The descriptions of love, beauty and intoxication, then are interpreted as religious metaphors.<sup>10</sup>

Despite or perhaps because of the important musical role of Sufi orders, their relationship with the state was tenuous from the late 19th century onwards. Especially after independence in 1956, Sufi orders were regarded with suspicion. The newly independent state, under president Habib Bourguiba stressed secularization and modernization, regarded some Sufi orders and their trance rituals as remnants of the past. It was even thought that some *tarīqas* had connived with the French colonizers during the independence struggle. Many Sufi properties were appropriated by the state and their social prestige was undermined. But despite this, the Sufi orders did not cease to exist.

In the years following the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia between 2010 and 2011, the Sufi orders came under siege again. This time, its attackers were militant followers of different strands of orthodox Islamism, who believe that the veneration of saints and the role of music and trance is contrary to true Islam. Some Sufi shrines were burned, to the outrage of many Tunisians. But even in this unstable situation, the Sufi rituals did not die out.

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## LISTENING TO A SUFI RITUAL

In the years just before and after the Revolution in Tunisia, ethnomusicologist Richard Jankowsky followed the rituals (or *hadra*) of the Īsāwiyya, one of the Tunisian Sufi orders that gives much importance to music and trance to achieve a heightened sense of spiritual focus and transcendence.<sup>11</sup> Their rituals fall into three sections, with different *shaykhs* (or leaders) coordinating them. At its opening is the *hizb*, a long recitation of passages from the Quran and other liturgical texts. A group of chanters rhythmically shapes the religious words into monotonous melodies. Sometimes the group chants as one, sometimes they split up in call and response. As the *hizb* gradually progresses, the chanting increases drastically in tone and in tempo.

When the emotional rapture of the *hizb* has settled, the second section, called *shishtrī*, starts. Now the Andalusī songs of Abū al-Hasan al-Shushtarī and other *ma'lūf* songs are performed. Percussion instruments (a *tar* and the *naqqārāt* kettle drums) are added to the choir of male voices, who sing the melodies, stretching the syllables of the poetic texts over different tones. As with a secular *ma'lūf* performance, here too the repeated rhythmic patterns underlying the melodies become shorter and speed up, further intensifying the ritual.

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<sup>9</sup> RICHARD C. JANKOWSKY, *Absence and 'presence': el-Hadhra and the cultural politics of staging Sufi music in Tunisia*, in *The Journal of North African Studies* 22, no. 5, 2017.

<sup>10</sup> See also Davis, *Arab-Andalusian Music in Tunisia*.

<sup>11</sup> The ritual described here by Jankowsky took place at the shrine of Sidi 'Ali Hattab near Tunis in 2009.

The last part of the ritual of the *Īsāwiyya* is perhaps the most spectacular, as it is here that the Sufi dancers with their twirling white robes enter and may break into states of trance. These acts of trance can be highly dramatic, including dancing with fire or eating glass. But equally characteristic of this section are its intoxicating rhythms. The section progresses from slow and majestic songs to repetitive hand-clapping in a five beat pattern (clap rest clap rest rest), on top of which melodies of the *ma'lūf* are sung. Finally, an array of *bendīr* drums saturates the music further. These frame drums, typical of Sufi ceremonies, have a set of snares that buzz along with every stroke. With the dense sounds of the *bendīr*<sup>12</sup>, the trance begins.



Watch here [Ritual Reflexivity: Musicality, Sufi Pedigrees, and the Masters of “Intoxication” snippets of the Īsāwiyya ritual.](#)

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## HEALING RITUALS AND STAMBĒLĪ

Sufi orders are not the only ones who praise Muslim saints. An important part of the spiritual landscape of Tunisia existed (and still exists to some extent) of healing rituals, where saints are invoked to relieve people from suffering and afflictions. The saints are summoned through praise songs and asked to heal through trance. The rituals moreover created important social meetings, where different social and minority groups could come together. Some rituals, for example, are held for and by women. *Stambēlī* is the name for another musical healing ritual, associated with Tunisians from Sub-Saharan descent. Their music recently gained the attention of young musicians in Tunisia, interested in the musical heritage that long has been pushed to the margins of official culture.

*Stambēlī* has a complex history that moves between Tunisia and Sub-Saharan Africa. It developed in the network of communal houses, established in Tunis during the height of the trans-Saharan slave trade (1700-1850) to offer support to new migrants and freed slaves. Each house developed its own set of rituals. But through many years of interaction the rituals fused into one practice.<sup>13</sup>

In essence, a *stambēlī* ritual consists of a long chain of praise songs for different Muslim saints. Special attention goes to saints from sub-Saharan origin, like Bilāl ibn Rabāh, who lived during the 7th century. Whole families of spirits, some of which carry the names of old African kingdoms, appear in the songs as well. According to ritualistic thought, the metallic sound of the three strings of the *gumbrī* lute establishes communication with the saints and spirits.

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<sup>12</sup> Image on the right: Bendīr (source [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bendir#/media/File:BENDIR\\_\(1\\_sur\\_1\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bendir#/media/File:BENDIR_(1_sur_1).jpg)).

<sup>13</sup> RICHARD C. JANKOWSKY, *White Saints: Music, Spirit Possession, and Sub-Saharanans in Tunisia*, in *Ethnomusicology* 50, no. 3, 2006.



Image 5: gumbri – Photo 180031563 © Jose Manuel Muñoz | Dreamstime.com

The *gumbri*, whose origins lie in the Lake Chad region of Central Africa, leads the *stambēli* ensemble. The other musicians in the *stambēli* ensemble sing lines in call and response, merging with the repeated melodic phrases of the *gumbri*. Their lyrics also index the diverse roots of *stambēli*, because in between the Arabic, you can also hear phrases in the Hausa, Kanuri and Zarma languages from Central and West Africa. While singing, the musicians perform the *shqāshiq*, which are like castanets made of iron. These repeat short rhythmic patterns, gradually accelerating. The change of rhythm happens in a sophisticated and unique manner: while the patterns repeat, the different beats shift closer towards each other, in irregular micro-timings that confuse a regular pulse.

Already in the early 1700s *stambēli* rituals were quite public. They were performed at the shrines of local saints that were important both to sub-Saharan and Arab Tunisians. But after independence in 1956, *stambēli* suffered the same fate as the Sufi rituals. The modernizing state targeted them as pre-modern. At least until the late 1990s *stambēli* music was informally banned from television and radio. Moreover, clients seeking healing dwindled. From the 2010s *stambēli* musicians thus started to keep their music alive on stage, with enthusiastic audiences dancing to it in the hip cafés of Tunis. They take pride in this exceptional music tradition, viewing it as the Tunisian equivalent of jazz in the United States.

*Listen here to stambēli, with Mohamed Jouini on the gumbri: [Stambeli Medina Tunis – SIDI ABDELKADES \(Yenna Mohamed Jouini\)](#).*

## FOLK AND POPULAR MUSIC: FROM BEDOUIN SONGS TO MIZWID AND RAP

It was already clear in the history of the *ma'lūf* that a clean distinction between art or classical music and folk or popular music is difficult to make in Tunisia. Music scholars instead uphold a distinction between the music of urban areas (the domain of *ma'lūf*) and the folk songs and dances of the rural parts of Tunisia. But again, when tracing this folk music and other popular styles, that line of demarcation becomes blurry too.



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## RURAL FOLK SONGS AND DANCES<sup>14</sup>

The folk songs and dance tunes that make up the surviving musical heritage of rural Tunisia mostly belong to the culture of the Bedouins, the Arabic speaking communities of Tunisia, who used to live as nomads. Several researchers still recognize in Tunisian folk songs some traces of the music of the Berbers, the oldest ethnic group living in Tunisia. But as it went with their language, Berber music too has generally been assimilated into Arab culture.

An important type of instrumental music in the rural music tradition of Tunisia, is the dance music performed by bands at weddings, such as the *sa'dāwī* scarf dance. The typical musical instruments for this dance music are the penetrating, oboe-like *zokra* (played all over North Africa and Western Asia), and the *tabl*. This is a two-headed drum, hanging from the shoulders of the performers, who can do dance steps while sounding out a layer of steady rhythmic patterns. Another type of instrumental music, known throughout Tunisia in the first half of the 20th century, are improvisations that depict a story in musical tones. The *tarq al-saīd*, for example, tells the story of a fight between a brave Bedouin man and a lion, using the sounds of the bamboo flute *gasba*.

The different types of songs and chanted poetry in the rural music tradition are numerous. Sometimes they are named after a specific town or the function they perform. *Nawāhī*, for example, refers to the Arabic word for lament. It is the name for a somber funeral song. Many pre-composed songs exist, both with and without a steady beat and instrumental accompaniment. These perform ritual functions, narrate an epic or voice a love ballad. But songs can be improvised in a certain style as well. One of those improvisation types is the *salhī*. It was developed by a south Tunisian musician who was imprisoned and consists of short mournful poems, sung in dialogue with a *gasba* flute.

*Listen here to the tarq al-saīd, recorded in 1960 by Wolfgang Laade: [Targ Es Sid](#).*

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## AN UNCHANGED RURAL TRADITION?

The little research done on the rural songs, dances and Bedouin music of Tunisia, often presents them as timeless and unchanging traditions. But the story is more complicated. In 1997 the Tunisian music publisher Mohamed Boudhina produced a notated collection of anonymous folk songs, titled “songs from the heritage.” It was Boudhina’s attempt to establish a canon of folk songs, equivalent to the canon of the *ma'lūf*.

*Image 6 - Cover page of Boudhina, Mohamed, 1997. Aghāni al-turāth. Tunisia. (source: Ruth Davis, “Remembering the Jewish Past through Song in Contemporary Tunisia,” in Jewish-Muslim Relations in Past and Present, ed. J. Meri (Leiden: Brill, 2017).*



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<sup>14</sup> This section is based on the research done by Leo Plenckers and by Wolfgang Laade. See: WOLFGANG LAADE, *Tunisia vol. III Folk Music*, liner notes, Folkways, 1962; and R. DAVIS, PLENCKERS L., *Tunisia, Republic of in Grove Music Online*.

He wanted to preserve what he described as a living past, passed on to us directly from the old generations of Bedouin and Berber people through oral transmission.<sup>15</sup> However, some musicologists point out that some of the songs in this collection in fact come from popular urban recording artists, like Cheikh El'Afrīt, who in the early 20th-century liked to travel from Tunis to rural Tunisia in order to collect tunes from Bedouin singers and process them into his own songs.<sup>16</sup> As did many Tunisian people, so did music circulate between the rural and the urban parts of the country.

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## THE RURAL-URBAN MUSIC OF THE MIZWID

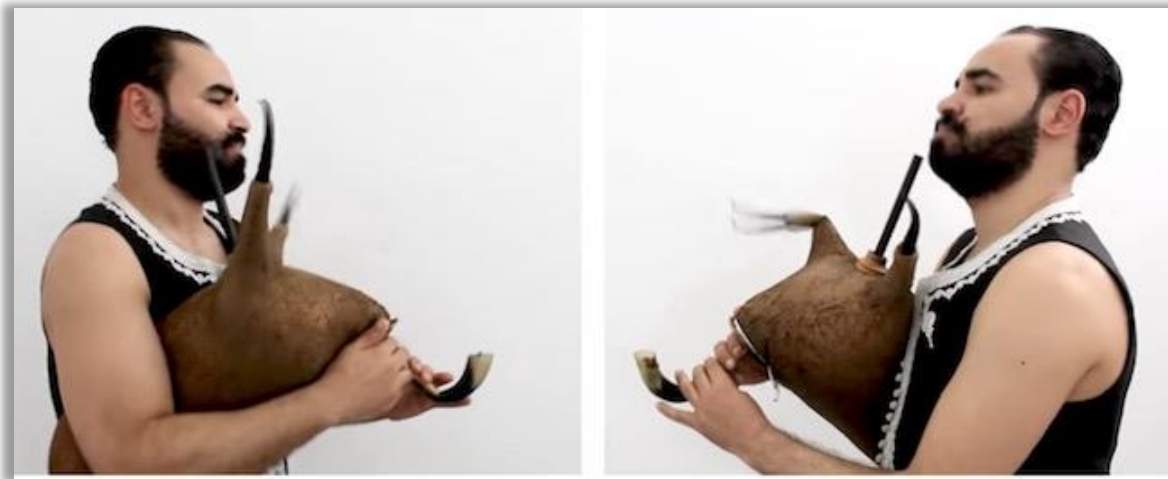


Image 7 - Picture of Mizwid (source: <https://www.broadsheet.ie/tag/tunisia/>).

The hugely popular genre of *mizwid*<sup>17</sup> is perhaps the most beautiful example of how urban and rural sounds can fuse to form something new. *Mizwid* is a type of popular folk song. Its namesake is the characteristic instrument that accompanies the singing: the *mizwid* bagpipe, with its two perforated reed pipes extending from a goatskin bag. It is unclear where this bagpipe originated exactly, but it might have travelled to Tunisia from the Fezzan area in Libya on slave trade caravans during the 19th century. The instrument was picked up by some Sufi orders and by street musicians. In a *mizwid* band, the five tone melodies produced by the bagpipe are usually joined by a solo vocalist and two dancers who sing the backing vocals. A percussion section of *bendīr* and *darbukka* sounds out rhythmic patterns. These are usually rhythms common to rural folk music. The melodies and singing style of *mizwid* are rural as well. And yet, *mizwid* originated in Tunisia's urban capital Tunis, where it became both the best-selling and most subversive music from the late 20th century.

The reason for *mizwid*'s subversive image lies in its association with the marginalized urban poor. Starting from the first half of the 20th century, major disruptions in the pastoral-nomadic life of rural Tunisians compelled many of them to migrate to the city. The new urbanites, coming from all regions in Tunisia, brought their own types of folk music with them. They interacted with each other and with the urban street musicians performing the *mizwid* bagpipe. Playing *mizwid* music together in cafés or on squares became a way to forget about the long and hard working days in the city. While new rural

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<sup>15</sup> MOHAMED BOUDHINA, quoted and translated in RUTH DAVIS, *Remembering the Jewish Past through Song in Contemporary Tunisia*, in *Jewish-Muslim Relations in Past and Present*, ed. J. Meri, Leiden: Brill, 2017.

<sup>16</sup> RUTH DAVIS, *Remembering the Jewish Past through Song in Contemporary Tunisia*.

<sup>17</sup> The information on *mizwid* in this section comes from: KATHRYN STAPLEY, *Mizwid: An Urban Music With Rural Roots*, in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 32, no. 2, 2006.

immigrants arrived in Tunis in ever larger numbers throughout the 1950s and 60s, the audience for *mizwid* grew as well. *Mizwid* came to be associated with large drinking parties and wild weddings. There even exists a special subgenre of *mizwid*, sung from the viewpoint of prisoners. Pioneer Hedi Habbouba, who was the first to record *mizwid* songs in 1967, is rumored to have been in prison. Other songs by artist like Mohammed El-Rouge or Hedi Doniya address social problems and the alienation felt by immigrants. These lyrics might also help to explain the taboo placed on *mizwid* by the official establishment. Even in 1988, while the genre dominated the cassette business, the first *mizwid* broadcast on Tunisian television caused such a scandal that the TV director was dismissed and the show cancelled.

*Listen here to a mizwid singer Hedi Doniya: [Hadid onia 3la beb il ma7la.](#)*

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## RAP, THE ARAB SPRING AND THE TUNISIAN UNDERGROUND

The outrage with *mizwid* eased throughout the 1990s as its bagpipe sounds, often replaced by synthesizers, found their way into the mainstream. Its subversive role was taken over by hip hop and rap. In the late 1990s rap in colloquial Arabic survived as an underground scene in Tunisia. Songs that expressed dissent with the political and social situation of Tunisia, travelled mostly on the internet, since the rap scene, like other underground music scenes in Tunisia, was tightly surveilled by Ben Ali's regime. But when at the end of 2010, civil resistance boiled into the protests of the Arab Spring in Tunisia, some hip hop songs were on the lips of the protesters. One song in particular helped to fuel the protests: *Ra'is Leblēb* by the Tunisian rapper Hamada Ben Amor, known as El Général. The song speaks up to the president, pointing in anger to the injustice suffered by many Tunisians. In 2011, Times Magazine selected El Général as one of the most influential people in the world.<sup>18</sup>

After the revolution, rap continued to be the language of youth, fed up with their dire economic situation. The underground scene of Tunisia boomed, with artists performing in varied genres like hip hop, metal and electro.<sup>19</sup> But they also turn their ears to older and forgotten musics of Tunisia. That, you can hear, for example, in the experimental songs of Neysatu, exploring her Amazigh roots.<sup>20</sup>

*Listen here to Ra'is Leblēb: [El Général-rayes le Bled.](#)*

*By Anna Vermeulen*

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## ABOUT OUR ARTIST: MOUFADHEL ADHOUM

Moufadhel Adhoum is a professional oud player, painter, and calligrapher. Throughout his life, he has studied music with several prominent musicians and composers in Tunisia, Arabia, and Europe.

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<sup>18</sup> ZOUHIR GASBI, *The Language of hip hop and rap in Tunisia*, in *The Journal of North African Studies* 25, no. 4, 2020.

<sup>19</sup> For more info on the underground in Tunisia: STEFANE BARONE, *Electronic Dunes and Downtown Vibes*, in *Popular Music and Society* 42, no. 2 (2019).

<sup>20</sup> NEYATSU (BADIÂA BOUHRIZI), *Tunisian sounds are actually African*, interview by Calum Humphreys, *Zenith* 2020, <<https://magazine.zenith.me/en/culture/interview-tunisian-singer-neysatu>>, last accessed date 2/06/2021.

## CHOOSING OUD ABOVE FOOTBALL

“I was born in Bab Jedid<sup>21</sup>, the heart of art, poetry and literature In Tunisia. I come from a musical family and I was surrounded by people who had passion for music. But as a child I was more interested in football and that was my favorite hobby. It was my grandmother who realized that I had a good musical talent. She saved up some money and asked my mother to buy me an oud. My mother ordered a custom-made oud for me so that I could start playing. I was only 12 years old. At first, I played the oud only to make my mother happy. But gradually I grew an interest in it - even more than football. It became almost an obsession for me to prepare my lessons as well as possible so my oud master couldn't give me any negative feedback. I was his best student and each time he would give me more challenging lessons. I used to practice for hours in my room so I could excel at the techniques the same day. Eventually, it became the only thing I cared about.”

## COMING TO BELGIUM

“In 1989 I came to Belgium in order to pursue my studies in fine arts. Before, I was playing and studying music in Tunisia. I had already learned traditional music and classical Arabic oriental music in all its forms. Farid Al Atrash and Munir Bashir were my first role models in music. But in time I realized there is no “single way” and everyone has their own unique style. Of course, every style has its own strengths and weaknesses. But it does not matter in art.

After finishing my first academic year in the school of fine arts in Tunisia (Institut Supérieur des Beaux-arts de Tunis), I decided to go abroad so I could get to know other worlds of music, art and cultures. I was eager to know other people, other mentalities and traditions. In Tunisia I learned a lot but it was not enough for me. The circle of knowledge had become smaller and smaller and I was so thirsty to learn more. And luckily through a school competition I could make this come true. I got into the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels (Académie royale des beaux-arts de Bruxelles). Besides that, living in Belgium, at the center of Europe, where many languages are spoken combined with all its cosmopolitan features was very appealing to me. At the beginning, thanks to the help of a Belgian friend whom I met in Tunisia, I could quickly find my way here and settle as a student.

I have loved Belgium from the beginning. I remember the first day that I arrived. My Belgian friend came to pick me up at the airport. As I was looking around I was shocked not to see any policemen around. To me, it seemed strange. In Tunisia you would see a policeman every hundred meters; in Belgium I felt free. This feeling of freedom put me in a state of serenity. That's how I started to feel good in Belgium.”

## I BREATHE MUSIC

“Music is like a very sweet sickness that cannot be detached from oneself. It drags itself with you from the moment of your musical awakening. And when this awakening comes, it does not let go. It only lets go of people who are not ready or who do not have these skills. But the artists' music is

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<sup>21</sup> The following paragraphs are an extract from an interview to Moufadhel Adhoum made on 16th February 2021. Here are quoted his words. Interview by Vida Razavi.

something that we develop little by little while we grow. It advances with the evolution of the human being. It is not acquired overnight. It takes years to be convinced of a way of life. It's an existence. I breathe music, I eat music, I read, I look, I feel, I listen.

I have rhythm in my blood. It is part of me and it is reflected in all my daily actions. I made it a job. When I started, I had such a passion, which devoured me and pushed me to learn. It is an asset that I must exploit in my life to live with, to behave, to communicate with others. It has allowed me to find common ground when I left Tunisia to settle here. Music is the universal language; we communicate without speaking the same language.”

## **GROWING INTEREST IN MY INSTRUMENT**

“In the beginning of my life and career In Belgium, there were not so many people who knew my instrument. So, when they saw my instrument, they looked very curious and somehow suspicious at first. but once they heard me playing, they were very surprised. Since the oud was not that well known I slowly built up a network here and soon I was playing with international musicians.”

## **COMPOSING**

“The theme and the subject of music is secondary to me. I compose mostly instrumental music and I do not include text but emotions. The emotion that can be released is the first thing I look at in music. I ask myself "Does this music touch me or not?". Therefore, I do not look at the origin or the theme. I choose the emotional approach rather than the cerebral approach. I find it richer. But unfortunately, I think Western music is a bit cerebral, it's very academic. Harmony in itself is already something cerebral. For this same reason Jazz has always interested me very much. Jazz began with a feeling of freedom and revolt. The goal was a human and deep emotional reaction in the first place. Only after that has it been standardized with rules and modes. This is the element I have tried to incorporate in my music. My music is diverse and it does not stay the same throughout the song. To me, music is feeling and in order to reach the audience, it needs to come from within you, something that you feel and want to express in notes. This is also why I do not play music for a specific audience. When I compose, I compose only because of things I have felt. They sometimes come at odd times. Sometimes in the early morning, sometimes when I feel in a state of musical drunkenness, or sometimes just when I'm in bed. So, I write it or I record it, I arrange it and then I listen to it with a lot of pleasure. But when I perform, the spirit and openness of the audience is very important to me. There should be a sort of emotional connection.”

## **THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS**

“So far, I've lived longer in Belgium than in Tunisia. These two are two very different cultures. But I have a philosophy and a personal vision about it. What I learned in Tunisia is an asset. It's very precious. What I learned in Belgium is also equally valuable and it is also very positive. I'm not going to change what I've learned since I was born. Because to me it would be a shame and a loss. But I will not remain attached to ideas that could prevent me from moving forward either. I take the best

of these two worlds and all that follows. I feel a little Belgian by my way of life, by my way of behaving and working but obviously my culture, my origin and my language live with me.

This applies to my artistic work too. I try to exploit the richness of my Arabic language and culture (music, calligraphy and poetry) but I will present them in a western way.”

## HARMONY IN THE COMBINATION OF DIFFERENCES

“Communication is the first and most important aspect when we talk about diversity. But communication is not only about talking the same language. It is also possible that people who speak the same language fail to communicate in a non-effective way. It could be body language or even the attitude people show to each other. Music is a rather powerful device in terms of communication. It plays an important role in bringing people together and bridges over the differences through providing a common ground. For example, in Tunisia I always played with an Arabic orchestra. When I came to Belgium, it was a completely different genre and music was the only language for me to communicate with. I knew from each note what I needed to do and how I had to play along.

In a European context, my instrument was very different in many aspects but the most important thing is how you can touch people with your music. No instrument is limited and it doesn't matter how simple or sophisticated an instrument is. What matters is to find out how different instruments can create music together. It is important not to merge into one or another or become similar, but to find harmony in the combination of differences. Because there is a risk when instruments become similar to each other. That's the same for diversity in a society.”

## FOR THE FUTURE

“I do not feel at home necessarily everywhere. I feel at home when I can share something with others and when I can get to know people who are different from me. That's why besides good communication, respect is very important for creating room for more understanding.

With music one can tell stories to future generations, emotions reach beyond generations in time and place. When we get the chance to make music with different cultures we learn how to go beyond differences. And that is how we can serve the future generations, because we always work for the future.”

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# UKRAINE

by Ensemble Amadeus

Ukrainian music covers diverse and multiple component elements of the music that is found in the Western and Eastern musical civilization. It also has a very strong indigenous Slavic and Christian uniqueness whose elements were used among many neighbouring nations.



Ukraine found itself at the crossroads of Asia and Europe and this is reflected within the music in a perplexing mix of exotic melismatic singing with chordal harmony which does not always easily fit the rules of traditional Western European harmony.

The most striking general characteristic of authentic ethnic Ukrainian folk music is the wide use of minor modes. Ukrainian folk song singing style can be divided into a number of broad aesthetic categories: solo, solo with instrumental accompaniment, Choral.

## TRADITIONAL VOCAL MUSIC

Ukrainian vocal music exhibits a wide variety of forms – monodic, heterophonic, homophonic, harmonic and polyphonic.

One of the most active proponents of these styles of Ukrainian vocal music is Nina Matvienko. In recent time groups have been established dedicated to preservation to Ukrainian traditional polyphony, notably "Bozhychi", "Hurtopravci", "Volodar", "Korali" and "Drevo".<sup>1</sup>

Listen to Nina Matvienko - [Нина Матвиенко - Летіла зозуля \(a-capella\)](#)



<sup>1</sup> The image below: Vira Zelinska Ukrainian Youth Bandura Capella "Zoloti Struny", <https://www.facebook.com/ZolotiStrunyBanduraEnsemble/videos/>.



## ETHNIC UKRAINIAN INSTRUMENTAL FOLK MUSIC AND PERFORMERS

Common traditional instruments include: the Kobza (lute), Bandura, Torban (bass lute), the Sopilka (duct flute); and the Drymba (Jaw harp).

Traditional instrumental ensembles are often known as *troïstī muzyki* (literally ‘three musicians’ that typically make up the ensemble, e.g. violin, sopilka and buben). When performing dance melodies, instrumental performance usually includes improvisation.<sup>2</sup>

### TORBAN

**Torban**<sup>3</sup> [торбан]: a musical string instrument that is plucked.

The Ukrainian *torban* is closely related to the shorter-necked Paduan theorbo as described by M. Praetorius (*Syntagma musicum*, 1618), but differs from the Western European instrument in that it has three sets of courses instead of two. In addition to the diapason and stopped strings, the *torban* has high-pitched accompaniment strings which run along the deck of the instrument.

In total the *torban* has 25 to 60 strings.

During the 17th century the *torban* was the instrument of the Ukrainian nobility. It spread into Poland and Muscovy but remained in use until the end of the 19th century only in Ukraine. Well-known torbanists included I. Koshovy, I. Oleksandrov, and members of the Vidort family.<sup>4</sup>

Listen to: [Ирландская летящая джига "Брызги росы" на торбане в исполнении Марии Виксниной.](#)



### KOBZA



**Kobza**<sup>5</sup>: an ancient string instrument of the lute family. Of eastern origin, it was known in Ukraine as early as the 11th century, but became popular only in the 16th century, when it was used to accompany the recitation of dumas by the Kobzars. Eventually, it was supplanted by the bandura, which has a larger body, longer neck, and more strings. Today ‘kobza’ and ‘bandura’ are often used synonymously.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Music of Ukraine*, in “Wikipedia”, <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music\\_of\\_Ukraine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_of_Ukraine)>.

<sup>3</sup> ROMAN TUROVSKY, *The Turban*, <<http://torban.org/torban3b.html>>.

<sup>4</sup> *Torban*, in “Encyclopedia of Ukraine”, <<http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CT%5CO%5CTorbanIT.htm>>.

<sup>5</sup> The image on the left: Modern Kobza Of Veresai - Ukrainian Luth-like instrument, primarily described by Mykola Lysenko from Ostap Veresai - Ukrainian blind epic singer approx. in 1871, <<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:KobzaOfVeresai.jpg>>.

<sup>6</sup> *Kobza*, in “Encyclopedia of Ukraine”,

Listen here: [Kobzar from Kharkiv](#).

## SOPILKA



*Sopilka*<sup>7</sup> (сопілка; fipple flute): a wind folk musical instrument of varied construction made of wood or bark. Generally cylindrical, blocked at one end, and with 6 to 8 finger holes (up to 10 since 1970), its related forms include the *telenka*, *floiara*, and *dentsivka*. The earliest-known example found in Ukraine is a mammoth-bone flute from the Paleolithic Period.

The flute is known from the Princely era of the Kyivan Rus' and is depicted on an 11th-century fresco in Kyiv's Saint Sophia Cathedral. In folk tradition it was commonly the instrument of shepherds or part of trio ensembles (*troisti muzyky*). Today it is featured mainly in folk instrumental ensembles. Prominent *sopilka* performers include Ivan Skliar, Y. Bobrovnykov, D. Demenchuk, and V. Zuliak.<sup>8</sup>

Listen to: [Ukrainian Fantasy – Maksim Popichuk – Ukrainina Traditional Instrumental Music](#).

## BANDURA

A Ukrainian musical instrument similar in construction and appearance to a lute. The bandura<sup>9</sup> has 32–55 strings: the 8–14 bass strings (*bunty*) are stretched along the neck, and the 24–43 treble strings (*prystrunky*) run along the side of the soundboard. Before the 20th century the bandura had various

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<sup>7</sup> <<http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CK%5CO%5CKobza.htm>>.

<sup>7</sup> The image above: <[https://www.picclickimg.com/d/1400/pict/184042888885\\_/SOPILKA-Ukrainian-Chromatic-Prima-Soprano-in-C-concert.jpg](https://www.picclickimg.com/d/1400/pict/184042888885_/SOPILKA-Ukrainian-Chromatic-Prima-Soprano-in-C-concert.jpg)>.

<sup>8</sup> *Sopilka*, in “Encyclopedia of Ukraine,

<<http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CS%5CO%5CSopilkaIT.htm>>.

<sup>9</sup> *Bandura*, in “Wikipedia”, <<https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bandura>>.

shapes and tunings (basically diatonic), but in recent times it has been standardized. The modern bandura is usually chromatic, with a basic tuning in G major/E minor; the range is from AA to G3. The Chernihiv bandura is 109 cm by 51 cm in size. The bandura differs from other lutelike instruments by the presence of the *prystrunky*, on which the melody is performed (the *bunty* are used only for accompaniment), and the absence of frets. Each string produces only one note.



The body (*koriak*) of the bandura is usually made from sycamore, cherry, maple, or red willow. The treble nut (*obychaika*) and pin collar (*strunnyk*) are made from maple or beech, and the sound board (*deka*) from spruce.

In the modern bandura steel strings are used, the lower ones being wound with copper, brass, or bronze. Until the 20th century wooden turning pegs were used, but these have been replaced by metal pins for greater tonal stability.

The more popular Chernihiv bandura is placed in the lap of the bandura player (*banduryst*) at an angle to the body. The melody is played with the right hand, the accompaniment with the left. In the Kharkiv (*Zinkiv*) method the bandura is placed in the performer's lap parallel to the body, the left hand reaches over the *obychaika* to play on the *prystrunky*, and the right hand plays on the *bunty*. These methods require somewhat different instruments.

The oldest record of a bandura-like instrument in Ukraine is an 11<sup>th</sup> century Fresco of court musicians in the Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv. This lute-like instrument is probably the ancestor of the bandura and the kobza. The two instruments were related, but distinct. The kobza was smaller in size and had fewer strings, but these were fretted. Around the 16th century *prystrunky* were added to the bandura, and from that time only one note was obtained from each string. During the 17th and 18th century the bandura was very popular at the Zaporozhian Sich, among the common people, and at the gentry manors. In the 18th century the bandura displaced the kobza, and both names are now used synonymously. Old banduras were symmetrical. Their shape limited the number of *prystrunky* and thus the range of the instrument. In 1894 Hnat Khotkevych designed an asymmetrical bandura, thus increasing its range.

Many attempts were made in the 20th century to turn the bandura into a chromatic instrument. Some banduras, such as the Chernihiv bandura, use an additional set of strings for the semitones; others use a mechanism for retuning individual strings by a semitone; and some banduras employ both devices. V. Herasymenko, O. Korniiievsky, Ivan Skliar, S. Snihyriov, V. Tuzychenko, and others have contributed to the technical improvement of the instrument. For larger ensembles, banduras of different ranges have been designed—the *pryma* (piccolo), alto, bass, and contrabass. Owing to the efforts of Mykola Lysenko, Hnat Khotkevych, and others, bandura playing began to be studied in the 20th century at music schools and other educational institutions. Instrumental-vocal ensembles and kapellen were organized at the same time.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Bandura*, in “Encyclopedia of Ukraine”,

Listen to: [Vivaldi storm](#), [Ukrainian Folk Song](#), [Bandurist Chorus](#), [Bandura Orchestra](#).

Listen here: [Discovering the Lost Instruments of Ukraine](#).

This is a one-hour conference about Torban, Bandura and Kobza, by Jurij Fedinskyj.

Over the centuries traditional Ukrainian music has been a source of great inspiration for classical composers from all over Europe: Haydn, Boccherini, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Chopin and many others used this nation's musical ideas as an inspiration for their compositions.

For those wishing to deepen this interesting topic, I recommend reading Yakof Soroker book *Ukrainian Musical Elements in Classical Music* (Toronto 1995).

## THE INTERVIEW: ARTEM DZEGANOVSKJI

My name is Artem Dzeganovskji, I'm from Ukraine, from Kiev, I live in Italy now, in Como. I've been here for a year and a half. My passion has always been studying Baroque music, the music of that period, and I met a great teacher who worked in Milan, at the Civic School, so I decided to change my whole life and leave work and everything in Ukraine and move to Milan.

My relatives live in Ukraine, I'm here without them, here I live with my girlfriend, who helps me getting used to live here and survive in the bureaucratic aspects of life, because it's not easy for non-EU citizens becoming part of the European life right away.

I like Italy a lot, because it has a culture, a very strong culture, I think a little conservative, I mean, it is a little closed in on itself, but the thing I like is that it is very open to everything new and is trying to assimilate more cultures and be alive. The things I miss to feel at home... perhaps the mentality, it is different. I like traditions such as happy hour, communication... I think that European culture and Italian culture in particular, are based on conversation. One cannot be alone. He could have a strong character, very charismatic, but here everything works if your part of a group, if you're involved.

I've never experienced discrimination, but I can say that there are way more possibilities for EU citizens than for non-EU citizens. When I decided to move to another country to study the music I like the most, in that period... I'm an idealist, I mean that I always imagine things more beautiful than they actually are - but I think that everyone does this to prepare themselves to what might happen - I thought I would've found new friends, a new job, new possibilities. Moving to another country is always almost making a fresh start, because you're naked, on your own, without friends, sure, you've got your family that helps you somehow and supports you morally and that really helps, but you're left alone in some sense. At the beginning is very important to have a goal, a reason why you came here, Italy showed me that you need to work way more, communicate more, improve yourself more. Yeah, that's it.

If we speak of life in Italy for a Ukrainian like me, yes, I've brought all my cultural background with me, but since I like new things, I'm very curious, I can assimilate very easily the new culture. I also like to - for example - cook very good Ukrainian dishes for my friends, so I can give them an idea of how it tastes life in Ukraine. I often talk about my country and say how beautiful it is, but I also like

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<http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CB%5CA%5CBandura.htm>.

to enjoy the beauty of Italian nature, of music, of literature slowly, because it is not so easy to understand everything right away, but also of relationships among people, these are things to learn from Italian, I think.

A thing I had to change of myself is certainly the fact that to be special, you need to work. So that you can be understood and to let people know that you have something, something to give, not just to take. You have to work on your soul, on your way of thinking and of being part of society.

I think that after all this long history, after the whole the history of the world we know, history, even more culture, wars, I think there is a common European culture and it's based in particular on conversation, encounters between nations and cultures, between art, music. Sometimes wars break borders, but they are also an impulse to build something new. You need to break the old to make room for the new. Or maybe to communicate somehow to not make war, and collaborate instead, so that we all can work and be stronger together.

To create a European society, I think we need to develop collaboration among the nations that are part of this entity unique in the world, that thank God exists in our life. I think that the projects that unite young people from many countries could create a new reality, a new kind of cooperation, because people from different countries can enrich everyone.

## MUSIC TO ME IS...

I decided to make music in my life... because music to me is the thing through which I can express my soul and talk about the things I think we should talk about more. I also like working with music because I can travel a lot and meet many people from different places in the world that have the same passion in this same field.

When I was in Ukraine I did a lot of chamber music. I really like making programs with the music that I like, the music I want to share, dig a little in this music and not just play it during concerts, sure, study it well maybe even with my friends who can give me more ideas, but also I want to tell about that music, to make classic music - because I mostly do classic and baroque music - to bring this music closer to the public, because if you know something this becomes part of your experience and you want to get to know it better. The idea of letting people get closer to classic music was very important to me.

I'm Ukrainian, this has a huge influence on the way I play, because the Ukrainian school is similar to the Russian, so we play the violin solo, this is how I learned to play and I can't really change everything but I can add something new to my knowledge. The thing that I really like here in Italy is that you can learn to play not just as a solo artist, but also with groups of people and do great and high quality things, you can create something meeting other people, making more beautiful and richer music, of interesting shades and colors compared to what you would do on your own. Yes, in this case one plus one is not two but three, four, it only depends on you.

My ideal public would be children, they are very attentive. Because children are our future, adult people already have their experiences, their mentality, but with children you can create a new world with your music, in order to give birth to a richer and more elaborated universe with music, because music is the language of God and this illness, this virus of Beauty, if a child's soul is open to it, can create wonders.

To make music and create a new European reality, to develop collaboration, I think it is very important to follow your heart and remember from where it comes, you should never leave your origins behind, because that's what gives strength to your identity, because when you share this strength, your character that is always unique, you can give something to the world and if we talk about EU, it is very important not just to unite, but to be in the best place to find inspiration and creativity. I feel that right now Italy is the best place to better understand myself, to understand which music I can and want to share with the world. Music right now is so various, it has so many genres and styles... One must be honest with himself because music is not always a convenience. Music used to be a symbol of richness, for the nobles, those who had their own chapel and their own orchestra, it was a status symbol. Nowadays everyone of us can find the music that... the music that plays the same notes as his soul, the one that mirrors his thoughts the right way. Also, I think it's not only very important to play someone's music or finding the music that suits you; it's important to be involved in the process, to be involved in creating music, so much music in different ways. Singing in a choir, playing in an orchestra, making music, composing music, sharing music you like with your friends, supporting new groups that do fundraising on Facebook, all of this can help make the world a little more interesting.

MoSaIC project can give me my identity so that I can share my culture, give a push to this idea I have that your culture is based on your origins. I studied classical music, I have studied classical music for almost my entire life and I've studied various genres from many different countries, but to me is very important to remember where one is from and what one can give to the world, what is unique about someone and how he can perform this music in a great way, not just correctly, but in a way nobody else could do without your experience.

I like so much music, the only important thing is for it to be well done. I have the most fun playing baroque music, Bach's Cosmos or Vivaldi's explosion of life, but I also like playing Beethoven sonates, because they are full of words, of different ways of expressing feeling. There is a lot of music for violin, I love playing Kessler, Paganini, also Brahms concerto is beautiful I think, but yes, there are also Ukrainian pieces that aren't well known here in Italy in my opinion, but there are so many interesting pieces that I'd like to play here.

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# WEST AFRICA

by Ensemble Amadeus

This short paper was entirely written between March 2020 and May 2021 during the Coronavirus pandemic. All the study material as well as the listening material was collected through the contribution of online research as it was impossible to travel to West Africa during the pandemic.



## GEOGRAPHY AND ETHNIC GROUPS OF WEST AFRICAN COUNTRIES



What we commonly name West Africa is a wide part of the African continent.

In the United Nations scheme of the African regions the region of Western Africa includes 17 countries<sup>1</sup>: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Saint Helena, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo.

West Africa, with its 500 plus indigenous languages, eclipses other regions of the world by its incredible linguistic diversity and density (on the left: the languages map).

So prosodic are the primarily tonal languages of West Africa, that most speech reverberates far, able to be beautifully mimicked, rhythmically reproduced, and literally “banged out”

through the elaborate talking drums motifs inherent to this region of the world<sup>2</sup>.

Within such a wide range of different languages, dialects and ethnic groups I will try to summarize the main common feature of western African traditional music even if it's important to underline that in this part of the world (like in many others) where music is part of an oral transmitted cultural system, any village, city or ethnic group has its own features.

Traditional West African music varies due to the regional separation of West Africa, yet it can be separated into two distinct categories; Muslim music and indigenous secular music. The widespread influence of Islam on culture in West Africa dates back to at least the 9<sup>th</sup> century, facilitated by the introduction of camels to trade routes between the North of Africa and Sub-Saharan West Africa.

<sup>1</sup> <<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/>>.

<sup>2</sup> *West Africa Languages*, in “Culture of West Africa”, <<https://www.culturesofwestafrica.com/west-african-languages/>>.



Islam-influenced West African music commonly includes use of stringed instruments such as the Goje, while more secular traditional West African music more incorporates the use of drums such as the Djembe.

Griot, also known as 'wandering musicians', have traditionally been a major part in the distribution of music throughout West Africa, as their purpose is to spread oral tradition through musical storytelling. The role of griots remains significant in preserving smaller ethnolinguistic groups' cultures<sup>3</sup>.

## MUSIC TRADITIONS IN WEST AFRICA

Given the great variety of peoples and languages, the musical instrumentation of West Africa is made up of many thousands of musical instruments belonging to all families: percussion, winds, strings...

## TRADITIONAL MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

In this essay we will deal with some of the main musical instruments that are widely found throughout West Africa and which for timbral importance have bypassed their regional and tribal borders, spreading throughout Africa and secondarily throughout the world.

### GOJE

The goje (the Hausa name for the instrument) is one of the many names for a variety of one or two-stringed fiddles from West Africa, almost exclusively played by ethnic groups inhabiting the Sahel and Sudan sparsely vegetated grassland belts leading to the Sahara. Snakeskin or lizard skin covers a gourd bowl, and a horsehair string is suspended on the bridge. The goje is played with a bowstring.



The various names by which the goje is known by include goge or goje (Hausa, Zarma), gonjey (Dagomba, Gurunsi), gonje, (Mamprusi, Dagomba), njarka (Songhay), n'ko (Bambara, Mandinka and other Mande languages), riti (Fula, Serer), and nyanyeru or nyanyero.

The goje is commonly used to accompany song, and is usually played as a solo instrument, although it also features prominently in ensembles with other West African string, wind or percussion instruments, including the Shekere, calabash drum, talking drum, or Ney.<sup>4</sup>

Listen to: [Talensi Fiddle Music \(goje\) from Ghana, West Africa](#) and to [Gonje](#).

<sup>3</sup> *Music of West Africa*, in "Wikipedia", <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music\\_of\\_West\\_Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_of_West_Africa)>.

<sup>4</sup> *Goje*, in "Wikipedia", <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goje>>.

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## KORA

The kora is a string instrument used extensively in West Africa. A kora typically has 21 strings, which are played by plucking with the fingers. It combines features of the lute and harp.

The kora is built from a large calabash, cut in half and covered with cow skin to make a resonator with a long hardwood neck. The skin is supported by two handles that run underneath it. It has 21



strings, each of which plays a different note. These strings are supported by a notched, double free-standing bridge. The kora doesn't fit into any one category of musical instrument, but rather several, and must be classified as a "double-bridge-harp-lute." The strings run in two divided ranks, characteristic of a double harp. They do not end in a soundboard but are instead held in notches on a bridge, classifying it as a bridge harp. The strings originate from a string arm or neck and cross a bridge directly supported by a resonating chamber, also making it a lute.

Kora players have traditionally come from jali families (also from the Mandinka tribes) who are traditional historians, genealogists and storytellers who pass their skills on to their descendants. Though played in Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali,

Senegal and Burkina Faso, the instrument was first discovered in the Gambia. While those from neighbouring Guinea were known to carry the lute, Senegalese Griots were known as carriers of a hand drum known as the Sabar. Most West African musicians prefer the term "jali" to "griot," which is the French word. "Jali" means something similar to a "bard" or oral historian.

Nowadays, koras are increasingly made with guitar machine heads instead of the traditional konso (leather rings). The advantage is that they are much easier to tune. The disadvantage is that this design limits the tuning range of the instrument because string lengths are more fixed and lighter strings are needed to lift it much more than a tone. Learning to tune a traditional kora is arguably as difficult as learning to play it, and many tourists who are entranced by the sound while in West Africa buy koras and then find themselves unable to keep it in tune once they are home, relegating it to the status of ornament. Koras can be converted to replace the leather rings with machine heads. Wooden pegs and harp pegs are also used, but both can still cause tuning problems in damper climates unless made with great skill.

Being part of the oral tradition of West Africa, music for the kora was not written until the 20th century. Ethnomusicologists were the only ones to record some traditional airs in the normal grand staff method, using the treble clef and the bass clef.

Today, kora scores are written on a single treble clef, following the Keur Moussa notation system. This notation system was created for the kora in the late 1970s by Brother Dominique Catta, a monk of the Keur Moussa Monastery (Senegal). The seven low notes that should be written on the bass clef are replaced by Arabic or Roman numerals and written on the treble clef.

While jali still compose in the traditional way (without writing scores), some Western musicians began to write partitures for the kora and adopted the Keur Moussa notation system at the beginning

of the 1980s. More than 200 scores have already been written for kora solo or kora and Western instruments.<sup>5</sup>

Listen here: [Toumani Diabaté, Sisiki Diabaté: Jarabi](#).

Listen here: [Harp-lute \(kora\) made by Idrissa Coulibay, Mali \(Bamako\)](#).

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## BALAFON

The balafon is a gourd-resonated xylophone, a type of struck idiophone. It is closely associated with the neighbouring Mandé, Senoufo and Gur peoples of West Africa.

Believed to have been developed independently of the Southern African and South American instrument now called the marimba, oral histories of the balafon date it to at least the rise of the Mali



Empire in the 12th century CE. Balafon is a Manding name, but variations exist across West Africa.

Records of the balafon go back to at least the 12th century CE. In 1352 CE, Moroccan traveller Ibn Battuta reported the existence of the *ngoni* and balafon at the court of Malian ruler Mansa Suleiman.

A balafon can be either fixed-key (where the keys are strung over a fixed frame, usually with calabash resonators underneath) or free-key (where the keys are placed independently on any padded surface). The balafon usually has 17–21 keys, tuned to a tetratonic, pentatonic or heptatonic scale, depending on the culture of the musician.

The balafon is generally capable of producing 18 to 21 notes, though some are built to produce many fewer notes (16, 12, 8 or even 6 and 7). Balafon keys are traditionally made from *béné* wood, dried slowly over a low flame, and then tuned by shaving off bits of wood from the underside of the keys. Wood is taken off the middle to flatten the key or the end to sharpen it.

In a fixed-key balafon, the keys are suspended by leather straps just above a wooden frame, under which are hung graduated-size calabash gourd resonators. A small hole in each gourd is covered with a membrane traditionally of thin spider's-egg sac filaments (nowadays more usually of cigarette paper or thin plastic film) to produce the characteristic nasal-buzz timbre of the instrument, which is usually played with two gum-rubber-wound mallets while seated on a low stool (or while standing using a shoulder or waist sling hooked to its frame).

The *gyil* is the name of a buzzing pentatonic balafon common to the Gur-speaking populations in northern Ghana, Burkina Faso, southeastern Mali and northern Ivory Coast in West Africa. Among Mande populations in Ghana like the Ligbi (Numu), Bissa and Dyula, the same instrument is known as *bala*. The *gyil* is the primary traditional instrument of the Dagara people of northern Ghana and Burkina Faso, and of the Lobi of Ghana, southern Burkina Faso, and Ivory Coast. The *gyil* is usually played in pairs, accompanied by a calabash gourd drum called a *kuor*. It can also be played by one person with the drum and the stick part as accompaniment, or by a soloist. *Gyil* duets are the traditional music of Dagara funerals. The instrument is generally played by men, who learn to play

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<sup>5</sup> *Kora*, in “Wikipedia”, <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kora\\_\(instrument\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kora_(instrument))>.

while young; however, there is no restriction on gender. It is also played by the Gurunsi people of the Upper East Region of Ghana, as well as neighbouring Gurunsi populations across the border in south and central Burkina Faso. A dance related to the gyil is the Bewaa.

The gyil's design is similar to the balaba or balafon used by the Mande-speaking Bambara, Dyula and Sosso peoples further west in southern Mali and western Burkina Faso, as well as the Senoufo people of Sikasso, a region that shares many musical traditions with those of northern Ivory Coast and Ghana. It is made with 14 wooden keys of an African hardwood called liga attached to a wooden frame, below which hang calabash gourds. Spider web silk covers small holes in the gourds to produce a buzzing sound and antelope sinew and leather are used for the fastenings. The instrument is played with rubber-headed wooden mallets.<sup>6</sup>

Listen here: [Nabi camara Balafon Solo](#).

Listen here: [A Traditional Griot Song](#).

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## TALKING DRUMS



The talking drum is an hourglass-shaped drum from West Africa, whose pitch can be regulated to mimic the tone and prosody of human speech. It has two drumheads connected by leather tension cords, which allow the player to change the pitch of the drum by squeezing the cords between their arm and body.

A skilled player is able to play whole phrases. Most talking drums sound like a human humming depending on the way they are played

Hourglass-shaped talking drums are some of the oldest instruments used by West African griots and their history can be traced back to the Bono people, Yoruba people, the

Ghana Empire and the Hausa people. The Yoruba people of south western Nigeria and Benin and the Dagomba of northern Ghana have both developed a highly sophisticated genre of griot music centering on the talking drum. Many variants of the talking drums evolved, with most of them having the same construction mentioned above. Soon, many non-hourglass shapes showed up and were given special names, such as the Dunan, Sangban, Kenkeni, Fontom form and Ngoma drums. This construction is limited to within the contemporary borders of West Africa, with exceptions to this rule being northern Cameroon and western Chad; areas which have shared populations belonging to groups predominant in their bordering West African countries, such as the Kanuri, Djerma, Fulani and Hausa.

Listen to: [Ayan Bisi Adeleke - Master Talkin drummer](#).

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<sup>6</sup> Balafon, on "Wikipedia", <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balafon>>.

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## DJEMBE

A djembe or jembe is a rope-tuned skin-covered goblet drum played with bare hands, originally from West Africa. According to the Bambara people in Mali, the name of the djembe comes from the saying "Anke djé, anke bé" which translates to "everyone gather together in peace" and defines the drum's purpose. In the Bambara language, "djé" is the verb for "gather" and "bé" translates as "peace."

The djembe has a body (or shell) carved of hardwood and a drumhead made of untreated (not limed) rawhide, most commonly made from goatskin. Excluding rings, djembes have an exterior diameter of 30–38 cm and a height of 58–63 cm. The majority have a diameter in the 13 to 14 inch range. The weight of a djembe ranges from 5 kg to 13 kg and depends on size and shell material. A medium-size djembe carved from one of the traditional woods (including skin, rings, and rope) weighs around 9 kg.

The djembe can produce a wide variety of sounds, making it an extremely versatile drum. The drum is very loud, allowing it to be heard clearly as a solo instrument over a large percussion ensemble. The Malinké people say that a skilled drummer is one who "can make the djembe talk", meaning that the player can tell an emotional story (the Malinké never used the djembe as a signaling drum).

Traditionally, the djembe is played only by men, as are the dunun that always accompany the djembe. Conversely, other percussion instruments that are commonly played as part of an ensemble, such as the shekere (a hollowed-out gourd covered with a net of beads), karignan (a tubular bell), and kese kese (a woven basket rattle), are usually played by women. Even today, it is rare to see women play djembe or dunun in West Africa, and African women express astonishment when they do see a female djembe player. Nevertheless the traditional barriers against women djembe and dunun players have come down over time

There is general agreement that the origin of the djembe is associated with the Mandinka caste of blacksmiths, known as Numu. The wide dispersion of the djembe drum throughout West Africa may be due to Numu migrations during the first millennium AD. Despite the association of the djembe with the Numu, there are no hereditary restrictions on who may become a djembefola (literally, "one who plays the djembe"). This is in contrast to instruments whose use is reserved for members of the griot caste, such as the balafon, kora, and ngoni. (The djembe is not a griot instrument.) Anyone who plays djembe is a djembefola—the term does not imply a particular level of skill.

Geographically, the traditional distribution of the djembe is associated with the Mali Empire, which dates back to 1230 AD and included parts of the modern-day countries of Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Gambia, and Senegal. However, due to the lack of written records in West African countries, it is unclear whether the djembe predates or postdates the Mali Empire. It seems likely that the history of the djembe reaches back for at least several centuries, and possibly more than a millennium.

The goblet shape of the djembe suggests that it originally may have been created from a mortar. (Mortars are widely used throughout West Africa for food preparation)<sup>7</sup>.

Listen here: [Foli \(there's no movement without rhythm\)](#) by Thomas Roebbers and Floris Leeuwenberg.

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<sup>7</sup> *Djembe*, in "Wikipedia", <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Djembe>>.

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## FULA FLUTE

The Fula flute (known as tambin in the Fula language) is a little-known type of flute with its origins in West Africa. Traditionally played by the Fulani people of the Fouta Djallon region of Guinea, it has also been incorporated into the traditional music of the Malinké people, who primarily inhabit regions of Guinea and Mali, and live in close proximity to the Fulani.

The tambin is a three-holed flute constructed from a conical vine that grows along the Niger River and in the forest region of Guinea. Its embouchure (mouthpiece) is typically constructed from a special beeswax mixture, which is heated and shaped to the flute and the player's liking. Often decorated with cowry shells and other decorations, the vine is sometimes covered with leather or other skin, to strengthen the flute and protect it from cracking.

The tambin is a beautiful instrument both in sound and appearance, and is capable of creating stunning and often profound melodies. It uses a scale that is roughly equidistant (consisting of seven whole tones), and has four "registers" that are accessed by variations in breath (ie, overblowing), with a total range of roughly an octave and a half. While the scale of the traditional Fula flute does not match our Western scales precisely, it can approximate a diatonic scale and when played with Western instruments (guitar, etc), the tambin adds a tonal coloring that is unique and interesting<sup>8</sup>.

Listen here: [Fula Flute 'Bao Fello'](#).



## THE INTERVIEW: OLGA AHIKOUNA (SINGER – IVORY COAST)

Hi everybody, I'm Olga, I'm 18, I live in a small town near Milan, that is called Marnate. I've been living here since I was 4 and a half years old, so now it's been 14 years.

I'm here in Italy for economic purposes, my parents decided to move here to find a job, they left Ivory Coast for Italy.

Well, I live with my parents at the moment, I made a lot of friends, I don't really have problems relating to people - about integration, let's say, my boyfriend is Italian so, I don't have problems from this point of view. The things that make me feel at home are many, mostly it happens when I feel a part of the Italian culture that I acquired living here and also when others make me feel a part of this culture. During my life, it happened maybe two or three times that I got discriminated, but they have obviously hit me because nobody should feel put aside or pointed out because of his origins. Once, I was in middle school, I was called nut? or... chocolate? well, obviously, said by a person that you know doesn't like you it is bad. But well, the episodes happened, but I'm still here, so they're not that important.

Well, for what concerns Italy, it is trying to take steps forward in including other ethnicities, other pasts and cultures, but it should move further, because, for example, to me, an 18 years old girls, growing up without seeing on tv or in ads people that looked like me, black or even of Asian or Indian

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<sup>8</sup> Dave Kobrenski, <<https://davekobrenski.com/music>>.

origins makes an impression, because you feel like you're the only one. You don't feel included, and it's a little hard from this point of view.

My Ivorian culture has certainly influenced my way of living and my way of being, but let's say that it's mixed with my, so to say, half Italian habits, so I couldn't say if I am more Italian or a mix of cultures. Well, the desire, the will of changing, or adapt to your entourage, because growing up you have Italian friends, you go to their houses, you play, laugh and smile with Italian friends, you arrive at a point where you say "I want to be like them" you want to be a part of the group and so without even realizing it, you find yourself changing your way of talking, your way of interacting with black people like yourself and even your way of thinking. But growing older you realize that it's not worth it, that it is better to be yourself.

So, according to my experience, it does not exist just one culture in Europe because well, it is full of different ways of living and people, so it can't exist just one culture. Sure, there are people that think the same things on certain subjects, but that happens all around the world. Europe is full of many different cultures and people and ways of being and traditions.

I think that inclusion is a very important thing, not only in Europe but in the whole world. These kinds of projects are very powerful and can make people feel included and not left alone.

First of all, to improve integration we should facilitate communication because everything begins from that. If you don't communicate you go anywhere only end up building walls. We're in 2019, walls should be tore down, not built.

## THE ROLE OF MUSIC

Music to me is expression. I mean, it allows me to say and express things that I could not or don't have the courage to say in real life, it is a moment of freedom in which I grant myself the pleasure to be who I want to be and do what I want to do, following my own rules. What brought me to do this was actually a mere chance. In middle school they were doing this musical project and I decided to start playing the saxophone, I don't know why, I said "Well, I have nothing to do, so let's try this", and then I figured out that I actually liked music. I liked it when I was a child already, but when you start playing an instrument you realize that maybe it is not just that you like music because you listen to it and it's pleasant. No, it's because you feel a part of what you're doing.

When I make music I'd like, and I like, to express pain, too, not only positive things. I'd like for people to realize that in life do not only exist great situations and experiences but everyone, not just me, have hard moments, times when they wonder, when they question themselves, and I'd like to put this into the music I make, and also immigration, yes, I think that too. Not just the good things of life, we should think also about all these other things.

Regarding my origins, when I make music I try to put the rhythms in it. The Ivory Coast rhythms and of Africa in general. I try to put my energy, my lust for life, my desire to play, to laugh and joke and I think that this could never be taken away from me, because it is something that lasts, something that I could never move away from, so I try and talk about Africa, about immigration. I try and talk about us, black people and immigrants in general, I try to speak also for those people that do not have a voice or think they don't.

Actually, when I make music, the only important thing is making music, I don't care about who I have in front of me. I could have an audience of just one person or ten people or one hundred, an audience of men, women, old or young people, that's not important as long as there are people that appreciate what I'm doing, people I can inspire feelings to, that's the most important thing to me, I don't really bother. I feel appreciated when I see smiles on people faces and when they clap and tell me "Damn, you're really good!" and I say "Thank you!".

Music can do a lot for integration, because when you're playing, singing, dancing, there are no boundaries, all that matters is making music together and this is very interesting and beautiful, because everyone can forget about their origins and which language they speak, they forget where they come from and their habits and customs, what really matters is having fun together, and that's the most important thing.

From joining MoSaIC project, I expect most of all a unique experience, that could widen my horizons, because we should get on Europe side: we always say "Europe tries to integrate", but we should try and integrate Europe within ourselves, that's it. So I expect great things and a change of ideas and points of view.

I think MoSaIC is going to have a huge impact on people, because it might be the first time that people that come from different places and cultures are going to confront for the first time and people might love this thing right away or perhaps feel a little uncomfortable because we have to admit that not everyone have a propensity for debate and see many people coming from different places being in the same place doing the same thing, so it could be a shock or something to remember and hopefully keep going.

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