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**Creating Light Music at the Festival of Song:
Politics, Personhood, and Cultural Production in Tirana, Albania (1944-present)**

A Dissertation Presented

by

Nicholas Tochka

to

The Graduate School

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements

for the Degree of

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in

Music

(Ethnomusicology)

Stony Brook University

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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Though different orders organize subjects in audibly distinguishable ways, only rarely have ethnomusicologists theorized how musical practice articulates to practices of government. Through a diachronic case study of Tirana, Albania, this dissertation interrogates how the production of popular music has supported the production of popular consent to illiberal regimes both socialist (1944-1992) and capitalist (1992-present). While previous ethnomusicological and musicological studies of eastern bloc musical practice have focused (respectively) on professionalized folk music and concert music, my research examines the composition, performance, and reception of the popular genre “light music” (Alb. *muzikë e lehtë*) at an annual song competition the Festival of Song (*Festivali i Këngës*, 1962-present). An eclectic genre blending jazz, Anglo-American pop, Italian *canzone*, socialist realist concert music, and folkloric material, light music provided attractive visions of Albanian-ness—and an ideologically “correct” leisure activity—to socialist-era listeners isolated from the rest of the

world. Since Albania's transition from socialism in 1992, a privatized music industry has decentralized light music's production, transforming musicians' and listeners' social space as it reinserts them into now-hegemonic “democratic” political projects.

While socialism depended on transforming individuals' consciousness to create a “new person” for the “society of the future,” Albanian neoliberalism's “return to Europe” today depends on the molding of capitalist subjects. Through archival research and ethnographic fieldwork, I reconstruct a genealogy of Albanian popular music production in order to survey and link the aesthetic-cultural projects of state-funded music intellectuals to the political programs of governing elites. I argue that the musical and cultural projects through which elites have sought to inculcate in individuals successive forms of “modern” personhood, or modes by which one might recognize him- or herself as a national political subject, have functioned as strategies of governance under both socialist and capitalist orders. Linking notions of personhood to processes of state hegemony, this case study parses the relationship between musical practice and post-1945 political-economic structures by combining critical perspectives on governmentality, national cultural policy, and the postwar state.

Dedication Page

To Keri-Ann, Besnik, and Sotir.

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List of Abbreviations

- AKVP: National Ensemble of Folk Songs and Dances (*Ansambli Kombëtar i Këngëve dhe Valleve*)
- APL: Albania's Party of Labor (*Partia e Punës e Shqipërisë*)
- BPSH: The Albanian Professional Union (*Bashkimi Profesionale Shqiptare*)
- CAC: The Committee on Arts and Culture (*Komiteti e Arteve dhe Kulturës*)
- CC: Central Committee [of the People's Republic of Albania] (*Komiteti Qendror*)
- EBU: European Broadcasting Union
- ESC: Eurovision Song Contest
- LAJM: The 'Jordan Misja' Performing Arts High School (*Liceu Artistik 'Jordan Misja'*)
- LAWA: League of Writers and Artists of Albania (*Lidhja e Shkrimtarëve dhe Artistëve e Shqipërisë*)
- LNÇ: War of National Liberation (*Lufta Nacional Çlirimtare*)
- MTKRS: The Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth, and Sports (*Ministria e Turizmit, Kulturës, Rinisë dhe Sporteve*)
- PD: The Democratic Party (*Partia Demokratike*)
- PKSH: The Communist Party of Albania (*Partia Komuniste e Shqipërisë*)
- RTSH: Albanian Radio-Television (*Radio-Televizioni Shqiptare*)
- PS: The Socialist Party (*Partia Socialiste*)
- TOB: The State Theater of Opera and Ballet (*Teatri i Operas dhe Baletit*)
- ZiP: The Voice of the People newspaper (*Zëri i Popullit*)

N.B. In several cases, authors writing about Albanian topics in English-language publications have standardized abbreviations for terms following common translations (e.g., APL for Albanian Party of Labor, rather than PPSH for Partia e Punës e Shqipërisë). In such cases, I have adopted these abbreviations, as outline above. In other cases, I have created abbreviations based on the original, non-translated Albanian-language term (e.g., LAJM for Liceu Artistik 'Jordan Misja,' rather than JMPAHS for the 'Jordan Misja' Performing Arts High School).

Pronunciation Guide for the Albanian Language
(Derived from Newmark et al. 1982:9-10)

A	a	as in <i>car</i>
B	b	as in <i>bus</i>
C	c	as in <i>rats</i>
Ç	ç	as in <i>church</i>
D	d	as in <i>driver</i>
Dh	dh	as in <i>neither</i>
E	e	as in <i>set</i>
Ë	ë	as in <i>sofa</i>
F	f	as in <i>family</i>
G	g	as in <i>gone</i>
Gj	gj	as in <i>George</i>
H	h	as in <i>hide</i>
I	i	as in <i>feet</i>
J	j	as in <i>yell</i>
K	k	as in <i>kick</i>
L	l	as in <i>belief</i>
Ll	ll	as in <i>hill</i>
M	m	as in <i>monster</i>
N	n	as in <i>not</i>
Nj	nj	as in <i>canyon</i>
O	o	as in <i>more</i>
P	p	as in <i>pot</i>
Q	q	as in <i>actually</i>
R	r	as in <i>race</i>
Rr	rr	as in <i>varroom</i>
S	s	as in <i>sit</i>
Sh	sh	as in <i>shot</i>
T	t	as in <i>tin</i>
Th	th	as in <i>ether</i>
U	u	as in <i>poor</i>
V	v	as in <i>vain</i>
X	x	as in <i>adze</i>
Xh	xh	as in <i>gorge</i>
Y	y	as in (Fr.) <i>deux</i> or (Ger.) <i>ü</i>
Z	z	as in <i>haze</i>
Zh	zh	as in <i>measure</i> or (Fr.) <i>je</i>

Note on Translations and Sources

Throughout the text, all translations from Albanian to English are mine. Modern Albanian-speakers, and especially the urban, university-educated intelligentsia chronicled in this dissertation, have adopted and adapted a number of foreign terms in order to describe political, social, cultural, and aesthetic notions locally understood to be previously inexpressible. Where appropriate, I underline key foreign-borrowed words, usually taken from the English, Italian, or French languages, in order to highlight their adoption into elites' political and cultural discourse.

I indicate in the text the given and family names of speakers with whom I conducted formal interviews and the given name of acquaintances and other individuals with whom I had more informal interactions. In some places, and especially in Chapter Six, which deals with composers' experiences of Tirana's music industry, I have deemed it necessary to employ pseudonyms, and have also altered minor identifying details. In most cases, I have hidden the names of individuals who spoke frankly and critically about the organization of the music industry and the roles of their colleagues in the privatized music field in order that my work not damage relationships, business or personal, on which contemporary composer-producers depend. In the text, I indicate with an asterisk the first usage of a pseudonym (e.g., *Sani).

In 2009 and 2010, I consulted archival materials at the Central State Archive (*Arkivi Qendror Shtetëror*, AQSH). Sources cited in the dissertation text are identified by the year, dossier number, and filing institution assigned at the AQSH (e.g., D21/1975 RTSH, or D[ossier] Number/Year Institution).

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CHAPTER ONE. CREATING LIGHT MUSIC

Each December, state broadcaster Radio-Television Albania (*Radio-Television Shqiptare*, hereafter RTSH) organizes the Festival of Song (*Festivali i Këngës*), a national competition of “light music” songs (*muzikë e lehtë*). Since 1962, the Festival has been Albania’s premier event for composers, lyricists, and vocalists. One young composer whom I interviewed described the Festival as “an institution.” Participants and listeners view its broadcast as a forum for modern national popular music. Professional composers affiliated with the national Conservatory and the RTSH’s Music Editorial Office organize the Festival and compose its songs, and competition often becomes heated. Between 1962 and 1991, the Festival’s broadcast of twenty to thirty songs over three or four nights marked the beginning of New Year festivities in the Socialist People’s Republic, as television sets and radio receivers throughout the country tuned in to hear light music’s biggest stars. Since 1992, competing song festivals organized by private media have challenged the Festival’s monopoly on popular music. Yet though its popularity has waned among younger listeners who gravitate toward privatized and foreign media, the Festival retains

significant symbolic weight for Tirana's cultural and political elites. As the national selection round for the Eurovision Song Contest since 2004, the Festival provides composers a forum to articulate their visions of the nation-state to an imagined "Europe."

The term "light music" entered Albanian intellectual discourse in the 1950s, when commentators began using it to describe a cosmopolitan repertoire including songs adopted from Italian, Yugoslav, and Soviet radio broadcasts, as well as locally composed foxtrots, rumbas, waltzes, and tangos. In Albania as elsewhere, "light" marked song's difference from the tonal art music practice of "serious music" (*muzikë e rëndë*). But unlike capitalist popular music that, in Adorno's colorful phrasing, "mummifies the vulgarized and decaying remnants of romantic individualism" (Adorno 1938 [2001]:55), Albanian light music, like its "serious" counterpart, was intended to elevate listeners' tastes while providing a national alternative to foreign popular genres. With light music's 1962 institutionalization at the Festival of Song, RTSH-broadcast songs became subjected to elite composers' aesthetic norms, exemplifying for the music field "correct" musical aesthetics while at the same time proposing progressive visions of a modern society for listeners. If light music's generic conventions came to be largely agreed upon by 1991, Tirana's postsocialist transition and music production's privatization have once again made this term slippery.¹ Framed as a venue for "national" popular music, and a bulwark against commercialized "anti-culture," The Festival of Song today remains Albania's sole state-organized popular music event.

During twelve months of archival and ethnographic fieldwork in Tirana, I researched the composition, production, and broadcast of light music at the Festival of Song in order to examine

¹ As I began thinking about this project in summer 2007, for example, young record store employees with whom I conducted preliminary conversations often told me Albanian light music no longer existed, or named global superstars, such as Whitney Houston or Celine Dion, as examples of their favorite "light singers."

the interrelationships among political and cultural elites, notions of personhood, strategies of government, and musical practice in post-World War II Albania. Since 1944, local popular music has begged comparison with non-local genres, giving rise to often acrimonious debates about how Albanian popular music should sound. The Festival of Song's inaugural edition caused "a veritable discursive explosion" (cf. Foucault 1978:17), inciting the proliferation of competing discourses about musicians' social and creative duties. These struggles over politically correct aesthetic practice have often been framed in terms of one's artistic identity: What does it mean to be a professional? To compose "correctly," or to perform "beautifully?" How may one recognize oneself, and be recognized by political elites, as a progressive Albanian artist? At the same time, light music has articulated intellectuals to an elevated culture's objects: the listening masses. Unlike arranged folklore, which obliged active mass participation, or concert music, constructed in elite discourse as indexical of the intelligentsia's maturity, light song has formed a key element of a media technology inducing ordinary listeners to recognize themselves as modern political subjects.

One potentially fruitful approach to the production and reception of light music might "read" songs for their meanings, investigating listeners' interpretations of state-sanctioned "culture." An extended exegesis could further interrogate how elites' constructions of the nation, progressive social values, gender relations, and so on, have influenced listeners. Such a framework would foreground issues of mediation, reception, and meaning, with special care paid to listeners' experiences. Initially, my research questions included listening practices, and my writing has in many places been informed by conversations I had with fans in Tirana. Much of this line of inquiry, however, came to fall beyond the scope of this current project. Instead, I take the production of light music at the Festival of Song as a point where an assemblage of practices,

institutions, technologies, and discourses on “culture and the arts,” social progress, and aesthetic values have met under contrasting political and economic orders. By examining the placement of musicians and popular music under different orders, this dissertation seeks to analyze the musical and cultural modes by which differentially capacitated social bodies in Albania have been produced and positioned since 1945. I thus approach light music’s production as part of a technology that has made and continues to make natural, even legitimate in certain contexts, hierarchical and unequal political-economic orders, whether socialist or postsocialist. Yet the naturalization of social order must be viewed as a secondary effect of modern strategies of government. The administration of “culture and the arts,” in constituting and capacitating the Albanian nation-state’s subjects and objects, has created governable spaces—bodies amenable to elite intervention.

CULTURE AND THE ARTS

In modern Albania, intellectuals have played an outsized role in selecting, adopting, mapping, and implementing the political-economic programs by which ordinary citizens, whether termed “the masses,” “the people,” or “the nation,” have been governed. In the following chapters I examine the relationship between culture specialists and two primary programs of government: Marxism-Leninism (1944-1991), and liberal democracy (1992-2010). By “program,” I mean to invoke an understanding of this term indebted to the later work of French social theorist Michel Foucault and his exegetes, especially Colin Gordon (1980), Nikolas Rose (1996, 1999), and Mitchell Dean (1999), on governmentality (e.g., Burchell et. al 1991; Foucault 1991 [1978]). In Foucault’s sense, government refers broadly to the regulation, administration, and shaping of human conduct toward specific ends and within particular political rationalities. Discursive programs of government thus do not simply describe social

reality, but actively contribute to its production by “presuppos[ing] a knowledge of the field of reality upon which [the program] is calculated to bring into being” (Gordon 1980:245). With few exceptions (e.g., Guilbault 2011, 2007), ethnomusicologists have rarely invoked “governmentality.”² Yet in providing “a language and a framework for thinking about the linkages between questions of government, authority and politics, and questions of identity, self and person” (Dean 1999:20), this elastic paradigm encompasses several of ethnomusicology’s primary emphases and concerns, to which I return below. Here, I simply register a key domain, “culture and the arts” (*kulturë dhe arte*), to which governmental regulation in Albania has been put since 1945, as well as one suggestive of the relationship between politics, identity, and musical production.

Consider, for example, the following event, which occurred toward the end of my dissertation fieldwork. On the First of May between 1945 and 1991, the Socialist People’s Republic of Albania lavishly celebrated International Workers’ Day. Though May Day celebrations have been considerably muted since 1992, when an opposition Democratic Party won the nation-state’s first freely contested elections, the date continues to hold symbolic weight for many citizens. Current Socialist Party leaders thus chose 1 May 2010 to commence a hunger strike before government offices in protest of what they termed “anti-democratic” elections that were conducted the previous summer.

Over the final two months of my dissertation fieldwork, discussions about the hunger strike came to dominate my formal and informal interviews and conversations with musicians. I had begun my fieldwork in Tirana just weeks following the hotly contested July 2009 elections, held amid allegations of voter intimidation, fraud, and corruption. As Socialist Party Leader Edi

² See also DeNora 1999 for a sociological perspective on how music listening might be conceived music as a ‘technology of the self.’

Rama, the son of socialist-era “Sculptor of the People” Kristaq Rama and himself an abstract painter, engaged in increasingly vitriolic polemics with Sali Berisha, then-sitting president and a founding member of the Democratic Party, debate assumed almost farcical proportions. By May Day, Albania had yet to seat a national government. Yet as the Socialists began their potentially destabilizing strike, the cameras of the state-run RTSH focused not on their tents, but on a hastily erected stage. Just two blocks away, pop singers were lip-syncing their most recent western-style rock and R&B hits through a blaring sound system at a Democratic Party-organized rally. Recently elected deputy Çiljeta Xhilaga, famous, or at least infamous, as a showgirl-turned-singer with a handful of bawdy music videos, emceed in a form-fitting dress in Democrat blue.³ Shouting “Long live democratic, European Albania! Long live the Democratic Party!” Xhilaga brought Sali Berisha to the stage for a stump speech (fieldnotes, 1 May 2010).

As if scripted to dramatize the symbolic gulf separating the two parties, lyric soprano Elsa Lila soon entered the Socialists’ hunger strike. A two-time winner of the Festival of Song, Lila had returned from conservatory studies in Italy in an expression of solidarity with the Socialists. At a rally I attended on the strike’s fourteenth day, an organizer passed a microphone around to the almost two hundred participating strikers stationed under a large white tent behind a stage. Attendees could not see the strikers, but we could hear their voices echoing through the powerful speakers. Each stated their name and town of origin, but when the microphone reached Lila, she responded by singing the opening lines of the 1979 popular song “Fjalët e qiririt” (The

³ Xhilaga's hit during the period of my fieldwork was “Deja Vu” (www.youtube.com/watch?v=6KtqR702G7w). She first rose to prominence as a beauty pageant contestant, and later as a model in provocative print advertisement campaigns, before entering wider public consciousness singing party songs such as “Tekila” (Tequila) and breathlessly voicing the chorus to Kosovar Albanian hip-hop group Tingulli 3nt’s hit song “Sa bythen e mirë” (What a nice ass).

words of the candle)⁴:

Në mes tuaj kam qëndruar,	Among you I've remained.
E përvëlur jam,	Fervent I am,
Që t'u jap pakëz dritë,	To give you just a little light,
Që natën t'ua bënj ditë.	To turn into day the night.

Based on nineteenth-century illuminist-nationalist Naim Frashëri's 1886 poem of the same title, the arioso song by composer Limos Dizdari had as its theme the "light" of knowledge.⁵ The unnamed narrator—here, Lila singing in the first person—addressed an audience shrouded in the darkness of ignorance. In a later interview, Lila made the poetic reference explicit, referring to herself and the strikers as the nation-state's "two hundred candles."

Over the following weeks, composers, painters, poets, and opera singers glutted evening talk shows to offer their commentary. Pro-Democratic Party media reported unceasingly on a "list of intellectuals" who had signed a petition against the Socialists' strike. "Today, 214 names have been added," a reporter announced breathlessly one night, and three days later the list ballooned to 433 after members of Tirana's football, basketball, and handball teams signed.⁶ After mocking the signees as *sazexhinjtë* and *dajrexhinjtë*, or 'saze and dajre players,' terms for urban professional musicians that here pejoratively connoted both non-Albanian-ness and amateurishness, Socialist Party leader Rama was forced to make a public apology. Rumors even

4 Operatic tenor Gaqo Çako performed the original version for the historical film *Mësonjëtorja* (The school-teacher, dir. Muharrem Fejzo; Kinostudio 'Shqipëria e Re' <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oIbnbowqVb8>).

5 Frashëri's poem was first published in Bucharest as part of a volume titled *Vjersha për mësonjëtoret të para* [Verses for the first school-teachers]. See www.albanianliterature.net/authors_classical/frasheri_poetry.html, accessed 9 August 2012.

6 Sonila Meço, news anchor on *TV Klan*, nightly news broadcast from 11 May 2010.

began circulating that the Democrats had paid several prominent intellectuals for their vocal support.⁷

Why did this partisan political dispute necessitate commentary and critique from Albania's top artists? Why were pop singers viewed as key sources for voicing the truth about the contemporary nation-state and its potential futures? Indeed, whether during *intervistë*, the formal interviews I conducted for my research, or *llafa*, leisurely cafe chit-chat, my interlocutors in Tirana consistently appealed to *kulturë dhe arte*, culture and the arts, in order to describe, appraise, and critique their quality of life before and after 1991. To some, singers like Çiljeta ("Çili," to her fans) represented how *moderne* society has become under a Democratic program of European integration, economic liberalization, and pluralism. To others, Çili indexed postsocialism's *degjenerim*, or degeneration, when contrasted with the "cultured" and "beautiful" popular music—personified here by Elsa Lila—that Albanian Marxism-Leninism's teleological program of modernization, professionalization, and centralization had administered. In this dissertation, I do not read these sentiments as mere reflections of social reality, nor simply my interlocutors' attempts to make sense of themselves and their lives. On the contrary, I approach "culture and the arts"—and, specifically, popular music—as a site to examine contrasting regimes of cultural administration in order to present an aural history of Albanian strategies of government since 1944.

Elites have long considered "culture and the arts" a matter of pressing concern for government at the national level, in part due to foreign observers' constructions of the Albanian state as a political novelty and of the Albanian nation as "backward." The last of "Europe's

⁷ Several pro-Socialist Party intellectuals reported this rumor to me in May-June 2010. One pro-Democratic Party signee told me a DP deputy texted him before he signed, but only to encourage him to publicly support the petition, not to offer payment.

nations” to attain the “universal” right of national self-determination—from Ottoman Turkish rule, in 1912—an Albanian-speaking “people” (*populli*; cf. *Narod*, *Volk*) long figured prominently as the continent’s primitive Other. In the words of one observer, the Albanians were “civilization-proof.”⁸ Moreover, observers often elided “the Albanian’s” lack of “culture” with a broader inability to self-govern. “The Albanian has no art, no literature, no national politics, no ‘Albanian cause,’ no individuality as an Albanian in contradistinction to neighboring races,” an Englishman wrote in 1912, while elsewhere Europe’s diplomats debated which continental prince should be installed as the country’s regent (Fraser 1912:256). Indeed, until 1945 Albania’s political order proved remarkably changeable, with large numbers of Albanian-speaking towns and villages located in neighboring states.⁹ Only with the 1928 ascension of prime minister and northern Albanian chieftain Ahmet Zog to a “throne” offered by Italian and Yugoslav patrons would Albania attain the semblance of political stability, albeit as a de facto protectorate of Mussolini’s Italy. Europe’s first “Muslim king,” however, bemused the international press. The founder of “modern” Turkey himself, Atatürk, reportedly quipped, perhaps in an oblique reference to Mozart’s use of “the Albanians” as an exoticist device in *Così fan tutte*, “What’s going on in Albania? Are you performing an operetta?”¹⁰

Since 1944, Albanian citizens have experienced relative stability under two political regimes: socialism (1944-1991) and democracy (1992-present). Following World War II, a small

8 For the description of Albania as “civilization-proof,” see Bercovici 1932. On broader constructions of Southeastern and Eastern Europe in the western imagination, see Wolff 1992 and Todorova 1997.

9 Austrian, French, Greek, Italian, and Slav troops occupied sections of the country at various points in the young nation-state’s early history. Today, Albanian-speaking communities compose key minorities in Greece, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia, as well as the majority in newly independent Republic of Kosova. This dissertation focuses on the republic of Albania.

10 Quoted in Tomes 2004:103.

communist guerrilla movement previously negligible to political life seized power by “liberating” the country from enemies they deemed “fascists” and “collaborators.” Novel among the eastern bloc’s “popular” democracies, communists founded a “dictatorship of the proletariat” without direct Soviet aid or a working class. Having consolidated political power by 1948, Party of Labor First Secretary Enver Hoxha tasked his administration with modernizing a people even his Soviet benefactor Josef Stalin had termed “rather backward and primitive.”¹¹ After breaking with Nikita Krushchev’s USSR (1960-2) and Deng Xiaoping’s China (1977) on ideological grounds, Hoxha’s government pursued isolationist and protectionist policies sometimes termed “Enverism” or “stalalbanianism.”¹² Since 1992, Albania has been engaged in a democratic transition characterized by periods of violence and widespread political corruption, as well as the re-emergence, heavily documented in western popular and academic press, of “barbaric” or non-modern customs.¹³ Even purportedly objective, scientific accounts by western experts today continue to ascribe to the nation-state an essentially premodern status: “Poor and backward by

11 Quoted in Vickers 2001:171.

12 Commentators have often depicted Albania’s socialism as brutal, idiosyncratic, enigmatic, or maverick (e.g., Costa 1995, Biberaj 1990, Pipa 1990), a grand experiment comparable in scope only to countries like North Korea or Burma (e.g., Appadurai 1996:55). See Robert McFadden’s *New York Times* obituary of Party Secretary (1985-1991) Ramiz Alia, whom he describes as “resorting even to the Stalinist horrors of burying enemies alive” (8 October 2011). I have not found a source other than the obituary for this charge.

13 See the *New York Times* front-page story “For Albanians, It's Come to This: A Son for a TV” (13 November 2003), describing a criminal who allegedly bartered his toddler for a television set. See also scholarly interest in Albania’s “sworn virgins,” women who take on male roles for social and financial reasons (Whitaker 1981, Young 2000), blood feuds, and political corruption. Popular representations often focus on “the ancient code of retribution known as the Kanun, which is still enforced in the nearly impenetrable mountains of this small nation” (Cohen 2012; see also director Jonathan Marston’s 2011 film *The Forgiveness of Blood*). In citing these, I do not intend to question their truthfulness, but to note that most knowledge produced about Albania today, whether framed as popular, academic, or journalistic, traffics in prurient, outrageous, or seemingly premodern “traditions.”

European standards,” the 2004 CIA World Factbook reported, “Albania is making the difficult transition to a more modern open-market economy.”¹⁴

To elites governing the nation-state in its various incarnations, these multifarious representations of Albania and Albanians as culturally backward, non-European, or “uncivilized” have encouraged experimentation with political programs that might be termed “modern.” With “modern,” I intend to emphasize a hallmark of modernity common to state-socialist (1944-1991) and postsocialist (1992-present) orders: the adoption of teleological doctrines which, grounded by global forms of knowledge about the malleability of social bodies, have aimed to transform society’s material conditions in order to produce “enlightened” (*të ndriçuar*) citizens. Just as utopian socialism sought to forge a “new person” (*njeriu i ri*) by transforming individuals’ consciousness, present-day postsocialism’s neoliberal “return to Europe” depends on molding “free” capitalist subjects. Intimately bound to modernity’s quintessential form of organization, the nation-state, the cultural projects through which elites have sought to inculcate in their subjects a “modern” personhood have figured prominently in postwar strategies of governance.

Personhood projects have held in common a concern with *kulturë*, or “culture,” which for my interlocutors in Tirana evokes a range of senses. Often synonymous with “high” culture (e.g., western concert music, literature, sculpture, the visual arts), *kulturë* implies different meanings across diverse contexts. One may “speak with culture,” or a lunch for guests may be “set with culture.” Some individuals may be characterized by an inherent quality of cultured-ness—*njeriu i kulturuar*, the cultured person—though in this usage, the term is also a synonym for “educated” or “learned” (*i/e shkolluar* or *i/e edukuar*). One can “have” culture—or not: *një mësues me kulturë*, literally “a teacher with culture,” or *ai s’ka kulturë*, “he hasn’t culture.” Irreducible to an

¹⁴ Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/al.html>, 7 August 2012.

immanent quality, “culture” also has to do with one’s bearing, manners, and training, as well as one’s manner of relating to oneself and others. Modernist-nationalist members of a pre-World War II network of social and performing arts’ clubs comprising Albania’s rudimentary civil society first articulated “culture” as a domain of concern for elite administration at the national level, an emergence that may be usefully situated as a local instantiation of a global “civilizing process” (Elias 1978) aimed at “bettering” social bodies (cf. Hart 1999:204). Limited to an urban cognoscenti before 1944, concern for “culture” would come to form the primary justification for the installation of a state-subsidized socialist mode of cultural production centralized in Tirana. For four decades, projects to “bring culture” to the masses, whether through literacy and hygiene campaigns, music festivals, radio-television programming, or amateur arts training, articulated “the People” to a robust creative intelligentsia. Since 1992, elites have ceded cultural and musical production to a private sphere, a successive privatization that has prompted postsocialism’s critics to create the neologism “anti-culture” (*antikulturë*).¹⁵ In music, anti-culture connotes the “bastardized” and impure, the non-Albanian and hybrid.

In the following chapters, I pursue a cluster of interrelated issues in order to trace how elites’ concerns with “cultured” senses of personhood have contributed to and enabled structural forms of political and social inequality. First, I ask how elites’ practices travel, or are rendered legible, across different social spaces, describing how political and aesthetic shifts have been able to occur within and among political, economic, and cultural fields. Especially, I ask how agents’ musical practice (compositional, performance, or pedagogical) and discursive practice (analytical, political, or critical modes of talk about music), in tandem with broader social

¹⁵ During the socialist period, intellectuals did not use the term *antikulturë* but a related one, *antivlera*, anti-values, which often was used in political speech to describe the faults of “capitalist” art.

discourses and knowledges, have shaped a music field conducive to certain kinds of action. Second, my diachronic analysis focuses on those intellectual technologies aimed at producing the subjects and objects of “culture and the arts.” By extension, I investigate domains of knowledge enabling, supporting, and legitimating cultural production, analyzing the emergence and deployment of ways of recognizing “correct” music and musicianhood in twentieth- and twenty-first-century Tirana. Finally, I ask how efforts to gauge and better the nation-state’s “cultural level” have produced spaces for elite intervention. By positing “culture and the arts” as a technology for bettering society, elites have at the same time produced a social body, “the People” or “the Masses,” amenable to government by a cultural vanguard.

MUSICIANS AND THE STATE IN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE

The approach I develop in this dissertation departs from, and is offered as one response to, certain longstanding perspectives in music studies of the region. Music research on an elite stratum of culture workers in post-World War II Europe has tended to follow three distinct paths: musicological scholarship on concert music composers and their reception; ethnographies of staged folk music and the aesthetic changes wrought by ideological programs on “traditional” musical practices; and interdisciplinary work analyzing the politics of popular music created by non-state-subsidized employees. In dividing this literature thus, I am following a conventional generic division of three practical “spheres” recognized by the musicians with whom I did my field research, as well as one existing more generally in postwar Eastern Europe. In the following sections, I review ethnomusicologists’ and musicologists’ discussions of southeastern Europe and the Soviet Union, with short detours into other disciplines and geographic areas to provide counterpoints on under-researched areas or topics, in order to preliminarily sketch existing theoretical approaches to musicians and the state.

Concert Music and the Cold War

Initially, scholarship by Russian émigré musicians (e.g. Olkhovsky 1955) inflected western musicologists' perspectives on concert music. Expatriate scholars tended to reveal how “‘Soviet music’ unmasks itself as pure bluff, which nevertheless is ingeniously thought out as well as ingeniously realized” (Arbatsky 1957:315), seeking to “expose, as far as possible, the true nature of Soviet art” (Olkhovsky 1955). Debate surrounding the “Shostakovich case,” inspired by the publication of Dmitri Shostakovich’s purported first-person memoirs (Volkov 1979; cf. Brown 2004), exemplifies the indebtedness of later approaches to these early perspectives on socialist realist art music. Here, the composer’s “true” testimony about art under socialism, which comprised substantially anti-Soviet views and unveiled the “hidden dissidence” written into his music, spurred novel re-readings of major compositions as expressing covert resistance.¹⁶ Critiquing Cold War-era music scholarship’s implicit “focus on the often heroic struggle of the lone artist against the repressive system,” historian Kiril Tomoff’s recent institutional history of the Soviet Composer’s Union has updated longstanding narratives on Soviet music policies in useful ways, locating composers and their works within the specificity of organizational forms and discursive struggles over compositional practice (2006; cf. Tomoff 2002). Enabled by new access to archival sources, a cohort of musicologists has also begun reexamining Cold War-era musical works in terms of the “behind the scenes” negotiations underlying cultural production (e.g., Calico 2002). More broadly, these musicologists’ recent calls for a “Cold War musicology” (cf. Schmelz 2007) have revised several disciplinary truisms

16 See Wilson 1994, Fay 2000, Brown 2004, and Ho and Feofanov 2012 for key texts in this polemic. See Schmelz 2007 on changing conceptions of Shostakovich within Cold War political debates. In Albania, the conductor and musicologist Eno Koço has most prominently invoked Shostakovich as a model for describing local intellectuals’ potential for resistance before 1991 (Koço 2005a, 2005b).

on modernism's politics on both sides of the Iron Curtain (e.g., Silverberg 2009a; Crist 2009), while contributing new reception histories of composers and works in the United States (e.g., Brody 1993; Ansari 2012) and Western Europe (e.g., Carroll 2003; Fallon 2009), as well as the Soviet Union (e.g. Schmelz 2005) and its satellites (e.g., Fosler-Lussier 2007; Jakelski 2010).

Folk Music's Professionalization and the Nation-State

Eastern bloc cultural policies generously supported state-subsidized folkloric ensembles, which standardized village performance practices by incorporating concert music aesthetics and techniques (e.g., a conductor, notation, suite compositional forms, tempered consorts). Following Russian and Soviet models created by nineteenth- and early-twentieth century intellectuals Vasily Andreyev, Igor Moiseyev, Mitrofan Pyatnitsky (Olson 2004; Smith 2002), national ensembles modeled “correct” folk practice for regional amateur groups. Music scholars of the USSR have situated the arrangement and performance of folk music as part of a Soviet colonialist-imperialist agenda to spread “culture” in peripheries constructed as “backward” (Levin 2002). In southeastern Europe, however, the ensemble model proved extremely attractive to modernist elites as a means to “update” rural music (Buchanan 2007a). In Bulgaria, village musicians recruited for state ensembles faced steep learning curves, yet by translating rural traditions into forms recognizably “national,” these individuals exercised an outsized influence on socialist-era conceptions of national identity. In detailing how these instrumentalists and vocalists functioned as conduits between “tradition” and a socialist mode of cultural production (Rice 1994), ethnomusicologists have demonstrated the complex and potentially anti-hegemonic roles these “cosmopolitans” (cf. Turino 2000) played in negotiating policy from within “the State’s symbolic apparatus” (Buchanan 2007a:40). In Yugoslavia, changes to tradition, conceptualized here and elsewhere as “source” material (Serb. *izvor*; Alb. *burim*), occurred

through the commercial genre, newly-composed folk music (*novokompanovana narodna muzika*, NCFM). While the multi-ethnic Yugoslav state's policy on "brotherhood and unity" influenced NCFM, so did its unique form of "market socialism" and a highly developed music industry stretching across several republics (Rasmussen 2002).

Eclectic theoretically, the above research ranges from a hermeneutics of personal experience in which the researcher's experience learning an instrument figures prominently (Rice 1994), to the detailed "thick description" of ensemble musicians' rehearsals (e.g., Buchanan 1995, 2007a). In general, these works share a concern with tracing the historical trajectories of music-making and cultural policy in order to diagnose the changes wrought by socialist policies, or to demonstrate how presocialist trends anticipated some socialist ones. Yet while scholars have catalogued well musicians' reactions, compromises, or even resistance to state socialism's institutions, the state itself has remained less fully theorized. Instead, a concern with tracing musicians' "hegemonic thrusts and subcultural parries" (Slobin 1996:7) has tended to cast these intellectuals as divorced from, or even in opposition to, a monolithic order. An alternative approach to how cultural policies both conditioned and enabled the study and performance of folklore might seek "to locate authenticity as a native concept and to investigate how and why it is used by elites and countered by non-elites" (Silverman 1989). Though still privileging a "resistance" frame, such an approach would illuminate more fully the complex and contradictory relationship between culture specialists who "translated Marxist-Leninist doctrine into local language" (Levin 2002) and state projects so dependent on appeals to national sentiment.

The postsocialist explosion of "pop-folk" genres in southeastern Europe enabled by recently privatized music industries, whether *chalga* (Bulgaria), *manele* (Romania), *turbofolk* (former Yugoslav republics), or *tallava* (Albania), has provided ethnomusicologists a key

window onto how musicians negotiate political and social transitions by “imagining” new senses of identity or participating in projects to reclaim or reconstitute previously banned ones (Buchanan 1996b:227, 2007b; cf. Sugarman 1999a). Scholars have also suggested how the spread of “pop-folk” cover songs between countries in southeastern Europe signals shared consciousness of an underlying regional identity (e.g., Buchanan 2007c), or allows locals to reject narrow, socialist-era senses of monoethnic “national” identity in favor of a “Balkan” one (Rice 2002, Apostolov 2010). Dissenting scholarship, however, has noted how such genres mark new forms of ethnic and religious difference even while proposing forms of identification counter to ones championed by local elites (Sugarman 2007). As post-1989 market practices and digital production technologies increasingly inflect local music and musicians, professionalized folk musicians have not only increasingly integrated themselves into these emergent private music industries (Mijatovic 2004), but have also been incorporated into global structures of capitalism reaching beyond the nation-state's borders (Buchanan 1996a, Levin 1999). Finally, a related vein of scholarship has emphasized the roles folk and popular musicians play in proposing cohesive identities around which individuals may rally in times of war, conflict, and change, especially in the republics of the former Yugoslavia (Baker 2010, Sugarman 2010).

Popular Music, Resistance, and Cooptation

State-socialist countries maintained diverse policies toward western-style rock and popular music. While rock, metal, and punk groups in Yugoslav republics recorded in western studios and released albums through state-run record labels, governmental oversight of instruments and Albania's one recording studio, as well as the criminalization of foreign music broadcasts, forestalled rock music in Tirana until 1990. An interdisciplinary scholarship on popular music in the region initially privileged rock music and musicians' “resistance” to the

socialist state (e.g., Ryback 1990). Quoting Goran Bregovic of the Yugoslav arena rock group Bijelo Dugme, for example, political scientist Sabrina Ramet characterized the collected essays in *Rocking the State* (1994b) as bound by a notion of rock as “one of the most important vehicles for helping people in communist countries to think in a different way” (1994a:4). Finding countercultural fashion and music to be indexical of rebellion and alienation—not unlike in nonsocialist contexts (cf. Risch 2005)—this scholarship has often posited an essential distinction between “official” and “underground” spheres. Such a perspective has been critiqued as overstating popular culture’s transformative potential while reductively equating state socialism with totalitarianism—and finding rock to be incompatible with both (Pekacz 1994). An “underground” might be usefully reconceptualized as a site where the “moral and political crisis of late socialist society was explored and dramatized,” albeit one where musicians’ “politics and pleasures” were constituted through this space’s very marginality to the mainstream (Szemere 2001:29-31). The politicized distinction between “official” and “underground” spheres itself thus produced the meaning of the latter—and with the “fall of communism,” rock largely lost its urgency for many fans and musicians. Several recent works have ignored such distinctions, tracing instead how young people crafted creative responses to local and non-local popular music genres within the structures of state-socialist “youth” campaigns (e.g. Taylor 2006), or organically “fit” western music into their lives without any sense of existential contradiction (Yurchak 2006:207ff.).

By analytically separating “underground” practices from those sponsored by the state, scholarship may risk mischaracterizing both. Such mischaracterizations occur because, with few exceptions, scholars have not researched a variety of state-sponsored popular music genres, variously termed “entertainment,” “dance,” “estrada,” or “light” music. During the 1940s and

1950s, hybrid musical genres drawing on jazz, swing, and Tin Pan Alley songwriting practice emerged throughout the eastern bloc. In the Soviet Union, a variety of popular music or “estrada” practices, related to pre-Bolshevik traditions (MacFayden 2001), the influence of American jazz (Starr 1983), and the popular sounds of interwar recording stars (Stites 1992), influenced mass-mediated, popular music. While state-funded estrada musicians in Eastern Europe have generally been portrayed as a “mafia” who created false alternatives to more “authentic” underground expressions (e.g. Ashley 1994:145), the genres they performed were widely popular among ordinary listeners. As Dean Vuletic has argued in relation to Yugoslavia, such musics played a complex role in socialist states' programs to “reconstruct and modernize” as well as carve out a “position in Cold War international relations” (2008:861).

Rethinking Musical Practice under Socialist and Postsocialist Orders

In a 2002 essay, Russian musicologist Izaly Zemtsovsky critiqued western music scholars' distinction—often implicit, and always unexamined—between “authentic” and “inauthentic” culture in state-socialist countries, a key dichotomy undergirding much of the literature reviewed above. Among other things, the musicologist concludes, “real individuals worked within the system, and did what they could in various ways” (Zemtsovsky 2002:186). In my view, the broad assumption of inauthentic/official and authentic/unofficial domains has given rise to two broad and interrelated theoretical approaches: a “resistance” paradigm, which examines power only by diagnosing individual subversions and refusals of state-socialist cultural policies; and an “identity” paradigm, which outlines the politics of identity formation during and after the socialist period without fully examining the constitutive effects of state-administered

cultural policy.¹⁷ Each stance may be usefully related to recent tendencies in music scholarship. The former, following a 1980s turn in cultural studies and anthropology positing “resistance” as an analytical object (cf. Hall and Jefferson 1976, Hebdige 1979, Scott 1985), has posed questions about how individuals resist the state’s hegemonic pull (e.g., Manuel 1993) or produce and access political resources through musical practice (e.g., Peña 1985; Averill 1997; Lee 2012). The latter, primarily following a constructivist turn in the social sciences and humanities toward “identity” and “identity politics,” has been characterized by a theoretical diversity that has recently prompted discussion about ethnomusicology’s lack of “discipline” (cf. Rice et al. 2010). While much of this literature has interrogated issues of power within and between “nominalist” identity categories (see Appiah 2006), music scholars have less often considered how the cultural constitution of social groups figures in to strategies of governance at the level of the nation-state.

Applied to research on socialist and postsocialist orders, each paradigm risks mischaracterizing and oversimplifying actually existing socialisms as well as musicians’ practice or, in Zemtsovsky’s terms, “real individuals” and “the system.” These analytical categories might be usefully reframed in terms of “agency” and “structure.” Recent critiques of Cold War-era scholarship in tandem with a self-reflexive turn among ethnographers of Eastern Europe (e.g., Viola 2002; Engerman 2009) provide a useful starting point for interrogating each. First, anthropologist Alexei Yurchak has proposed that scholars tend to undertheorize “agency” in Soviet-type societies by linking agential action primarily to the resistance or subversion of norms (2006). “[P]roduced either outside of, or in retrospect to, socialism, in contexts dominated by antisocialist, nonsocialist, or postsocialist political, moral, and cultural agendas and truths,”

17 For exceptions to this point see Rasmussen 2002 and, especially, Schmelz 2007, who develops a theorization of the “unofficial” in relation to a particular cohort of post-Thaw composers.

academic knowledge production about Soviet society has itself formed a particular object of inquiry: the duplicitous, mask-wearing agent (ibid.:2006:6). Inextricably linked to broader Cold War knowledge regimes about “the east,” this perspective does not simply understate individuals' potential for creative action, but fundamentally miscasts or ignores non-resistant agential practices. Second, scholars positing a “single model” theory of socialism have sought to describe a “coherent” structure that organized political, economic, and cultural spheres in ways irreducible to the naked exercise of “State power” (Kornai 1992; cf. Fehér et al. 1983, Verdery 1991a). By distinguishing an imagined “totalitarianism” from “actually existing” socialism (cf. Bahro 1978), these scholars seek to create analytical space for describing eastern bloc orders not strictly in negative terms, as characterized by an absence of markets or a lack of freedom, but through regimes' positive or constitutive effects, especially shared “practices of domination: manipulations of time and space, techniques of evangelizing, modes of inscribing the system on the bodies of its subjects” (Verdery 2002:17). This more nuanced notion of actually existing political-economic systems creates space for reconsidering and critically examining the relationship between identity and the state. I take these critiques as foundational for the theoretical perspective I develop in this dissertation, and to which I now turn in greater detail.

PERSONHOOD, GOVERNMENT, AND MUSIC

In this dissertation, I find it useful to adopt select aspects of the diverse literature often termed governmentality studies in order to raise and analyze particular issues concerning the relationship between cultural policy, personhood, social structure, and authority in socialist and postsocialist Albania. How is music implicated in the processes by which individuals come to recognize themselves as members of complex political-economic orders? How have

historically—and musically—constituted forms of personhood constituted and located governable social bodies under state socialisms and capitalisms in post-1945 Eastern Europe?

As ethnomusicologists have moved toward examining how musical practice may contribute to processes of identity formation (see Rice 2007), the performance, mediation, recording, reception, and composition of sound have emerged as key sites to investigate how human beings are sonically emplaced within specific orders, whether classed, gendered, colonial, racial, or national. In pursuing what one scholar has termed “a credible reading of musical practice lodged in social practice” (Danielson 1997:20), ethnomusicologists have increasingly proposed that musical practice enables individuals to deeply feel, or embody, social identities that are themselves in part constituted through sound. This work has followed a key strain of ethnomusicological scholarship that has, since the late 1980s, critiqued the notion that music articulates or reflects a “true,” “natural,” preexisting, and internalized “identity.”¹⁸ Instead, recent scholars have sought to examine how human beings, through both musical performance and the promotion of particular discourses about music, are constituted as particular kinds of subjects.¹⁹ Musical practice is thus viewed as productive of key power effects, which musicians and listeners encounter and are shaped by as they navigate, negotiate, resist, and become interpellated into hierarchies of gender, class, ethnicity, and so on.

18 For critiques of the notion that musical practice might articulate rather than constitute forms of identity or subjectivity, see Turino 1989, Sugarman 1989, and Sugarman 1997:24-5. Within ethnomusicology, this turn might be situated within a broader concern with examining musicians’ “creative, ongoing processes that call into question the fixed, essentialist conceptions of culture and identity that studies emphasizing culture contact, assimilation, and continuity and change require” (Turino 1993:13).

19 For treatments of musical discourses and the discursive character of “taste,” see O’Connell 2000. On performance, see especially Turino 1993 and Sugarman 1997.

Initially, the ethnomusicological turn to issues of power and social order examined how social identities or subjectivities may be contested, negotiated, and renegotiated among individuals in small, face-to-face communities. More recently, scholars have examined processes of identity formation within nation-states, and in so doing have emphasized how musical performances may enable performers and listeners to access diverse, historically situated means of nation-building (e.g., Askew 2002; Buchanan 2007a). At the same time, certain authorities, whether educators, tradition-bearers, or mediators, have been shown to play an outsized role in processes of identity formation that extend beyond their particular communities, classes, or professions by producing or policing musical meaning, even as they themselves are shaped by broader national and transnational processes.²⁰ Much of this work departs from or implicitly critiques the viewpoint that individuals necessarily empower themselves in musical terms through an emancipatory politics of affirmation, whether potential or “real,” and instead seeks to critically evaluate music’s power effects as potentially deleterious.²¹ In this dissertation, I

20 John Morgan O’Connell, for example, describes the role of elite westernizers’ activities at Turkey’s Institute for Fine Arts as “bounded” themselves by the discourses of republicanism (2000). Similarly, Sugarman (1999) views Albanian promoters of “the nation” as “simultaneously producing the discourses of [Albanian romantic nationalism] and being produced as national subjects by them (1999:421). Cf. Weidman 2006, which describes how the “voice” in Karnatic music came to represent “tradition,” albeit in a way necessarily enabled by a colonialist-era understanding of what it means to be “modern.” See Tucker 2010 on the role of mediators in generating musical meaning.

21 In much work termed poststructuralist, including Foucault’s own research, the emphasis has been on the deforming or de-naturalizing effects of discipline or government through psychiatry, prisons, and so on. In part, this emphasis arose through the investigation of the particular range of “problematizations” pursued by scholars of deviancy, medicine, science, and so on (Rose 1996:131). In cultural analysis, this emphasis on the incapacitating effects Foucauldian work often analyses has been significantly muted (Dirks et al. 1994:13). My sense is that music scholars’ default position on “identity” too often heralds the capacitating effects of musical practice without fully and critically examining the converse. Cf. Hammond 2010 and Pilzer 2003 for examples of music scholarship emphasizing how musical practice contributes to a potential or imagined politics of self- or social affirmation.

approach music's role in processes of social formation by examining the role of musical practice and cultural policy in both capacitating and incapacitating human beings through the constitution of hierarchically arranged social groups.

Ethnomusicologists' approaches to "identity" often point to questions about how human beings govern themselves and are governed as ethical, moral, and political beings, as well as how some individuals come to be culturally empowered as a governing elite and others as a governed population. Yet ethnomusicological perspectives have rarely prioritized a cluster of related issues having to do with the interlinkages among different scales of social relations: internal to oneself, between individuals, within institutions and communities, and between governors holding sovereign power and their subjects (cf. Gordon 1991:2-3). In Michel Foucault's later work, the philosopher linked these relations with the umbrella term "governmentality." With "governmentality," Foucault intended to focus analysis on government as a practice, an activity seeking to shape, administer, or "conduct" human beings' conduct throughout their lives and in diverse ways, as well as an art, a means of recognizing how best to govern social bodies (Rose et al. 2006:83; Gordon 1991:3).²² The former sense implies an understanding of "practice" as organized, overseen by codes, and routinized into "regimes."²³ The latter sense derives from and further develops Foucault's concept of power-knowledge (see Foucault 1980). By making social reality both intelligible and amenable to intervention by authorities, programmatic knowledges

22 In Foucault's published remarks "On Governmentality," he raises the following questions as ones that begin to be posed during the eighteenth century in Western Europe: "how to govern oneself, how to be governed, how to govern others, by whom the people will accept being governed, how to become the best governor" (Foucault 1978:87).

23 Foucault developed his most explicit discussion of "practice" in the interview published as "Questions of Method" (in Burchell et al. 1991). See also Brook 2008, who argues (elaborating on Warde 2004) that this particular conception of "practice" shares key resonances with Bourdieu's conceptualization of practice. I discuss my particular use of Foucault's work in relation to Bourdieu's "field theory" below.

exercise power effects by producing human beings as both “subjects of” and “subjected to” social orders (cf. Althusser 1970).²⁴

Discursive programs, which particular authorities adopt, adapt, and implement toward often teleological ends, form domains in which certain realities and potentials for action become structured and possible.²⁵ In applying a “governmentality” paradigm to “culture,” scholars have often focused on cultural policy at the level of the nation-state.²⁶ In this dissertation, I find the notions of “program” and “programmable knowledge” essential to understanding the relationship between state policies on the production and broadcast of popular music and broader techniques for the government of social bodies. Here, programs for the administration of “correct,” “beautiful,” or “good” music, whether implicitly or not, share key resonances with projects to shape the “good” citizen. Yet while programs shape social reality—that is, we live “in a world traversed by the effects of discourses whose object ... is the rendering rationalizable, transparent, and programmable of the real” (Gordon 1980:245)—programs remain theoretical until implemented through various means, or “human technologies,” which seek to act on, guide, shape, and form human beings into particular kinds of subjects (cf. Rose 1996:131-2). Moreover, the difference between the programmatic “normal” or “disciplined” and the technological

24 This particular line of thinking is developed most clearly in the essays in *Power/Knowledge* (1980), as well as the essay “The Subject and Power” (2004 [1982]).

25 These terms derive from the writings of two of Foucault’s most incisive interlocutors and exegetes, Gordon (1980) and Rose (1996). Gordon describes the “program” as discursively formulated, which “either articulates or presupposes a knowledge of the field of reality upon which it is to intervene and/or which it is calculated to bring into being,” while “[t]he common axiom of programs is that an effective power is and must be a power which knows the objects upon which it is exercised” and thus “programmable knowledge ... renders reality in the form of an object which is programmable” (Gordon 1980:247-8; cf. Rose 1996:132-4).

26 See Bennett 1995. Bennett, Emmison, and Frow 1999 presents an application of this paradigm to Australian regimes of taste. Barnett 1999 presents a critical appraisal of these and similar theorizations of cultural policy.

“normative” and “disciplinary” indicates how “the non-correspondence of discourse, practices and effects creates possibilities for operations whose sense is, in various ways, either unstated or unstateable within any one discourse” (Gordon 1980:250-1).

As a non-verbal, non-discursive domain, musical practice provides a primary point from which to examine the territory between programs and their implementation, or that “ineluctable discrepancy between discourse and reality” (Gordon 1980:250). The move to a focus on discrepancies and unintended outcomes begs conceptualization of musical production as a domain of negotiation, struggle, and positions-taking. In sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s theorization of the “field of cultural production,” he posits a space structured by strategic practice and practical knowledge that, nested within a hierarchical series of economic, political, and educational fields, provides agents a dynamic sphere of interaction (see Bourdieu 1993). At the same time, culture producers’ habitus (cf. Bourdieu 1977), an internalized set of dispositions generative of practices and modes of perception, provides a “structuring structure” which governs agents in a manner that is not unlike Foucault’s notion of “discipline” (cf. Postill 2010), especially as they compete to produce their own aesthetic visions for the field.²⁷ For Bourdieu, competition within academic and cultural fields matters because intellectuals occupy a space tenuously linked to both “dominant” and “dominated” segments of society.²⁸ In potentially producing the social distinction between governors and governed, agents of culture and the arts

27 Brook 2008 argues that Foucault’s “governmentality” and Bourdieu’s “fields” have been able to be accommodated in Ong 2006 and Bennett, Emmison, and Frow 1999 because the authors use each to strategically approach different levels of analysis, deploying Foucault to approach policy formation and Bourdieu for the interpretation of ethnographic data.

28 In his analysis of the politics of “taste” in France, for example, Bourdieu argues that the “denial of lower, coarse, vulgar, venal, servile—in a word, natural enjoyment ... implies an affirmation of the superiority of those who can be satisfied with the sublimated, refined, disinterested, gratuitous, distinguished pleasures forever closed to the profane” (1984:485ff.).

“express” in their creations the naturalness of objective social structures that they embody, without acting strategically or “consciously” to express the class or group interests that reproduce their structural positions (Bourdieu 1984:485ff.; cf. Gramsci 1971).

At the same time, Foucault- and Bourdieu-derived perspectives theorize the role of “the state” in contrasting ways.²⁹ I am primarily concerned with expanding conceptualizations proposed by Foucault and his interlocutors, as my analysis departs from orthodox governmentality perspectives, which have been applied primarily to liberal or neoliberal programs of governance. A “support for technologies” or even simply “an effect of governmental strategies” (Donzelot 1979:78), the state disappears as an analytical locus of power under such programs, as these governments’ successes depend not on “the expansion of the State machinery of control,” but on “a diversity of forces and groups that in different ways had long tried to shape and administer the lives of individuals in pursuit of various goals” (Rose et al. 2006:87). Yet for eastern bloc populations governed by a Marxist-Leninist program to install and maintain a “dictatorship of the proletariat” between 1945 and 1989, state repressive apparatuses mattered a great deal.³⁰ Nevertheless, actually-existing state-socialist rule remained irreducible to the bare

29 On his idiosyncratic view of the state, which I do not adopt here, see Bourdieu 1994.

30 In responding to an interview question probing whether his conception of power was “neglecting the State apparatus,” Foucault responded by discussing the experience of the USSR: “It’s true that since the late nineteenth-century Marxist and ‘Marxised’ revolutionary movements have given special importance to the State apparatus as the stake of their struggle. What were the ultimate consequences of this? In order to be able to fight a State which is more than just a government, the revolutionary movement must possess equivalent politico-military forces and hence must constitute itself as a party, organized internally in the same way as a State apparatus with the same mechanisms of hierarchies and organization of powers. ... I don’t claim at all that the State apparatus is unimportant, but it seems to me that among all the conditions for avoiding a repetition of the Soviet experience and preventing the revolutionary process from running into the ground, one of the first things that has to be understood is that power isn’t localized in the State apparatus and that nothing in society will be changed if the mechanisms of power that function outside, below and alongside the State apparatuses, on a much more minute and everyday level, are not also changed (Foucault 1980:59-60).

exercise of force.³¹ Anthropologist Katherine Verdery has usefully theorized three “modes of control” deployed in socialist-era Eastern European societies: coercive, remunerative, and normative (Verdery 1991a:427ff.). Coercive strategies, reliant on an extensive police and security apparatus acting directly on individuals, proved too costly and potentially alienating for most states, which instead often pursued remunerative strategies, especially market reforms enabling certain social groups to access material incentives. Finally, normative or “symbolic ideological” strategies comprised “value-laden exhortations, or attempts to saturate consciousness with certain symbols and ideological premises to which subsequent exhortations can be addressed,” including kinship norms, Marxist-Leninist values (e.g., on ‘women’s emancipation’ or ‘internationalism’), and nationalism (ibid.:427). State elites pursued mixtures of these three primary strategies, tending toward the normative and coercive in countries like Romania or Albania (cf. Culic 1999). By framing state-socialist elites’ emphasis on the cultural production of values and symbols—what Verdery elsewhere has termed the “symbolic means that forms subjectivities” (1991b:88)—the normative emerges as a strategy subject to technologies of government not wholly divorced from those developed in the liberal west.³²

31 The phrasing “actually existing” derives from Bahro 1978. In using ‘government’ in the singular here, I am not suggesting each country employed the same mode of control, but follow suggestions (e.g., Verdery 1991a or Kornai 1992) that a comparative perspective is not only possible, but useful.

32 Note that Verdery 1991 is concerned with regimes’ legitimacy, not individuals’ reproduction of personal power. Analyses of Albanian socialism often impute Party or governmental policies to political elites’ desperate, even maniacal, attempts to hold onto and reproduce their power across generations. Writing from a Marxist perspective, sociologist Göran Therborn (1999:228) dismisses this as part of what he terms a “subjectivist” position that asks what eastern bloc elites “do” with power in order to “imply that what rulers do when they rule is to maintain their ruling position,” a “trivial” and “not infrequently wrong” position. Though Therborn seeks to establish a “typology of state structures” to explain how the domination of a ruling class was produced and reproduced, his perspective at other points has certain resonances with a focus on government in Foucault’s sense. He argues, for example, that mechanisms of social-political reproduction did not legitimate the system for its citizens, but rather contributed to “the differential shaping of

In sum, I am concerned with the cultural politics that enable different social positions both to become possible under contrasting orders, and to become structured in a manner that differentially capacitates or incapacitates social bodies' potentials for political action. Here, "culture and the arts" is not a predefined area of analysis, but a domain problematized in certain ways and at particular moments by cultural and political authorities, who then implement policies imbricated in the direction of society. A focus on programs thus shifts analysis to the production of positions and the emergence of spaces for social action, whether strategic, conscious, intentional, or not, between subjects embedded within materially constituted relations. An ethnomusicology of government thus necessitates the sounding out of those discrepancies between programs aimed at "the governed" and actual programmed reality, while at the same time accounting for how musicians themselves may become "governors." In this dissertation, I analyze two primary social positions: a cultural vanguard of "creators," and the listening masses, or "art-lovers."

RESEARCHING CREATORS AND ART-LOVERS

Following an interview at a small café behind the National Museum in Tirana, a popular meeting spot for intellectuals, I stood chatting with a lyricist before we parted. Talk turned to a composer with whom he had collaborated in the 1970s, and a recently broadcast interview where the composer had made claims about his covert resistance to the state during, as it is often euphemistically put, "that time" (*në atë kohë*), meaning the socialist period. The lyricist became animated, asking rhetorically, "Where was this dissidence? Where did you demonstrate it? In what work?":

aspirations and self-confidence and in a differential provision of skills and knowledge" that ultimately contribute to the reproduction of social hierarchies (*ibid.*:236ff.).

No one says, ‘My dissidence is obvious, I refused to create good works.’ Have you heard that? A work for the Party, a song, from the text, music, interpretation, was obliged to be excellent—you gave your best. And everyone gave their best work when asked. You are not at fault for this! But then, where is the dissidence? We are speaking as intellectuals now, you understand. (Personal communication, April 2010)

The lyricist’s complaint drew together several interrelated notions that have characterized the space of the Tirana intellectual. First, an intellectual (*intelektual*) has been constructed in local discourse as a particularly knowledgeable, skilled actor. One created works, and these works have embedded in them certain values (*vlera*). The lyricist’s nameless intellectuals “gave their best,” somehow acquiescing in “creating good works.” Second, one may “speak as an intellectual,” actively making claims to a particular social space. The intellectual did not have status because of an innate creative, academic, or political quality, but because of his or her particular position or stance, *qëndrim*. When we began “speaking as intellectuals,” I sensed my interlocutor signaling that he understood my position as a researcher to be concerned with understanding an underlying “truth” about Albanian music and its producers.

An intellectual’s position depended on a related one: the art-lover (*artdashësit*). In contrast to the creating intellectual-subject, the “art-lover” has been constructed in intellectuals’ discourse as an object of “culture and the arts,” a person moved by “beauty” and contrasting with “the ignorant” (*injorant*). Concern for the art-lover permeated socialist-era periodicals and internal RTSH memos, which I surveyed in order to gain a sense of cultural bureaucrats’ concerns. As I began to acquire a measure of fluency in socialist-era creative discourses, my own speaking voice at times came to be suffused with an intellectualist argot. At one point during a coffee with two friends, one thirty (b. 1980) and the other twenty-five (b. 1985), I lapsed into this adopted tone, in place of the contemporary English-language borrowing *fan* (*fan*, pl. *fansa*), saying “music-lover.” The younger friend scrunched up his face, asking what I meant with this

strange and obsolescent term, while the older one laughed, praising me for becoming “a real intellectual” (*nji intelektual i vertetë*). At the same time, many urban listeners who came of age during the 1970s did not hesitate in describing themselves to me as art-lovers; and intellectuals, whether born in the 1940s or 1980s, often used the term in our interviews.

By the end of my fieldwork, I had developed a sensitivity to claims about the two broad spaces marked by the opposition between “intellectual” and “art-lover,” which my preliminary research plans did not anticipate. My initial questions revolved around popular musicians’ interactions with each other and “the State,” which I at first conceptualized as a shifting configuration of institutions, cultural bureaucrats, and political elites. I thus focused on the composers, lyricists, singers, and instrumentalists associated with light music and the Festivals of Song, as well as a handful of directors, Radio employees, and one high-ranking Central Committee member.³³ Here, my focus on the Festivals of Song proved fortuitous in organizing my fieldwork and, later, this dissertation’s narrative. The organization, broadcast, and critique of Festivals of Song drew together members of Tirana’s music, literary, and political fields, while the question of national popular culture’s relationship to foreign popular culture heightened both musicians’ and political elites’ sensitivity to questions of “correct” musical practice. By examining one of the highest profile cultural event of the socialist period, I was able to weave together and analyze many of the primary political and aesthetic questions that more broadly surrounded cultural production in Tirana, the majority of which have—implicitly or explicitly—been concerned with the relationship between what my interlocutors viewed as the active, creating subject and the passive, listening object of “culture.” In addition, the Festival of Song

³³ I did not conduct a formal interview with the Central Committee member, though he pointed me toward several of his recent publications. Our informal conversations influenced my research questions at key moments during my dissertation fieldwork.

has also been the only major cultural event to survive Albania's transition to capitalism. As such, the Festival provided a natural thread along which to analyze transformations and continuities between socialist and postsocialist orders.

My concern with presenting a diachronic case study, however, necessitated the cultivation of a number of research strategies, which I developed largely through common-sense attempts to solve specific practical problems over the course of my fieldwork. Between August 2009 and July 2010, I conducted primary research while based in Tirana. One of my initial research goals was to examine how national music policies were created, and toward this end, I sought out archival sources at the National State Archives (*Arkivi Shtetëror Qendror*). There, I consulted two primary groups of materials (*fondë*) filed by the Committee of Arts [and Culture] (*Komiteti i Arteve*) and Radio-Television Albania (*Radio-Televizion Shqiptare*). The former group comprised a wealth of materials related to the organization of ensembles, arts training programs, folklore collection, and district culture houses between 1944 and the mid-1960s. The latter group comprised materials related to the organization of radio-television programs, broadcast schedules, and personnel at RTSH, as well as the minutes from meetings held to organize Festivals of Song between 1962 and the early 1980s. As I completed research at the State Archives in October 2009, I began researching in the RTSH sound archives (*fonoteka*). There, I was able to listen to the original recordings of Festival of Song programs broadcast between 1962 and the late 1970s. This experience proved invaluable. While many recordings of “classic” songs have been remastered and commercially released over the past twenty years, few compositions containing what my interlocutors termed “politicisms” (*politicizëm*), meaning obviously political content, have been made available. My listening sessions thus enabled me to better situate socialist-era “hits” within broader Festival trends and music policies.

Initially, I focused the majority of my research time on archival work in order to construct a network of contacts for later interviews while gaining a better sense of socialist-era music policies, which have often been overlooked or ignored in general histories of socialist Albania. The understanding I gained of quotidian administration, conducted primarily by musicians, confirmed my initial sense that cultural policy had been formulated through debate, negotiation, and consensus among specialists, rather than through political elites' edicts. My understanding of musicians' agency proved key as I began shifting my research more toward ethnographic interviews. By June 2010, I conducted forty-four interviews with composers, vocalists, instrumentalists, studio producers, cultural bureaucrats, and light music fans. In most cases, I met with individuals at least twice to introduce myself and my project, and to conduct formal, recorded interviews. My perspectives further benefited from extended, informal meetings with a handful of intellectuals with whom I developed a closer relationship over time. My interviewing came to focus on a cluster of related issues, including the interrelationships between musicians and non-musicians, codes of artistic conduct, and the effects of political policy statements on creative practices, which did not necessarily focus on questions of "politics," censorship, or repression.

Two other research activities inflected my interviewing. First, I broadly surveyed socialist-era and postsocialist print sources. At the national library, I consulted two primary sources: *Drita* ("The Light"), an arts weekly and the creative intelligentsia's primary outlet for reviews, articles, and editorials between 1962 and the late 1990s; and *Nëntori* ("November"), a monthly academic journal with lengthy study articles on the arts published between 1955 and the late 1980s. I also selectively consulted *Estrada*, a socialist-era journal aimed at practical issues facing district variety ensembles, *Radioprogram*, a popular magazine on RTSH's programming

for general readers, *Zëri i Popullit* (“The Voice of the People”), Tirana’s main daily paper, and *Zëri i Rinisë* (“The Voice of the Youth”), a newspaper for students. Though the National Library lacked many print sources from the 1990s and 2000s, I benefited from the collection of composer Miron Kotani, who allowed me access to his personal archive of press clippings on the Festival between the mid-1990s and early 2000s. Finally, as part of my daily routine I also surveyed the headlines from the contemporary press, some of which I discuss in more detail below. Second, in December 2009 I observed preparations for the Forty-Eighth Festival of Song with the permission of the late Selim Ishmaku, then Artistic Director. This access during two weeks of orchestra rehearsals at the Radio building and five days of dress rehearsals at the Palace of Culture enabled me to meet informally with contemporary popular music producers and to gain an informal, unguarded look at the interactions between RTSH organizers, composers, vocalists, and state employees. These observations deeply influenced my later interviews with studio producers, as well as my theoretical framework for understanding postsocialist networks of patronage and influence.

At the same time, a retrospective investigation of the socialist period has exploded in Tirana over the past two decades. I found available a wealth of locally produced materials seeking to “uncover” (*zbuluar*) or “make clear” (*qartësuar*) the past. One primary postsocialist literary genre is the “memoir” (*kujtime*), which also includes the variants “reflections” (*refleksione*), “notes” (*shënime*), and “impressions” (*mbresa* or *përshtypje*). A search of the National Library’s online database returns over five hundred results for these keywords, most of which have been published since the mid-1990s.³⁴ I drew on published memoirs by Albania’s

³⁴ Among generations born between the 1940s and 1950s, I found the impulse to catalogue the past to be strong. Quite fortuitously, I met one woman who had been sketching “notes” on her life as a girl and student over the past few years. According to her, she was doing this in order to

first generation of art music composers, all of whom had died before 2006, as well as select memoirs by major political figures (e.g., Nexhmije Hoxha, widow of ex-First Party Secretary Enver Hoxha) or key non-musician intellectuals (e.g., sociologist Hamit Beqja and journalist Marash Hajati). Though I found in these sources invaluable information, I also understood “the memoir” to be a genre in which the memoirist adopts a particular, often positive, stance toward the past, writing in order to present events “as they really were.” This often entails claims to firsthand, eyewitness objectivity in the name of voicing the “truth” about socialism, and the tone of these “objective” accounts range from journalistic, to apologetic, to nostalgic.³⁵ I also used a second postsocialist genre, the “dossier” (*dosje*), through which authors seek to uncover the “truth” about the past’s repression, violence, and brutality. Daily newspapers, especially pro-Democratic Party ones (e.g., “55”), often include a two-page spread under the rubric “dossier” or “the historical record” (*nga historiku*). Items may be based on interviews with “victims” (*viktima*) or “persecuted ones” (*të përsekutuarit*) about “the terrors” of the socialist period, or on “new” evidence culled from the state archives about the machinations of top government officials at the national level. Other features often reexamine the Second World War, while more

show her university-age children (born in the late 1980s and early 1990s) what life was like before 1992—“the good *and* the bad.”

³⁵ Some memoirists, of course, have an obvious political axe to grind. Hoxha’s widow and children have written memoirs in order to expressly contradict postsocialist anticommunist books portraying her as the nation’s “black widow” or the family as inhuman. My sense is that other memoirists, especially those intellectuals who, having been at the top of their fields between 1944 and 1991, found themselves unemployed or forced into early retirement during the 1990s, also seek to write against anticommunist views to a certain extent. I did not systematically draw on a subset of “common man” memoirs that have appeared with less frequency, and which detail, for example, the experience of “the coal miner” during the socialist period. See also Paperno 2002 on post-Soviet memoir writing and memory.

prurient articles report circumstantial evidence about leading communist officials' personal lives (e.g., that a particular party member was a homosexual).³⁶

On my return to the United States, I began elaborating for myself a more critical understanding about integrating archival and published materials produced during the socialist period with ethnographic and published materials created over the past two decades. Anthropologists have recently examined a number of methodological issues about memory, “truth,” and politics raised by the contemporary ethnography of postsocialist Europe (see Kligman and Verdery 2011; DeSoto and Dudwick 2000). In Albania, the “truthful” representation of the past continues to be a terrain for contemporary political conflict, while the past two decades have powerfully shaped and reshaped individuals' perspectives on “communism.” Many feel they have stories to tell and, with only two exceptions, individuals I approached were willing, even eager, to meet with me to discuss the socialist period.³⁷ I found that older intellectuals' experiences of capitalism deeply inflected their views of the past. I met several former culture house directors who, though well-respected and financially secure during the 1970s and 1980s, found themselves near-destitute, unemployed, or even the subject of derision from younger musicians by the time of my fieldwork in 2009-10. Though these men

³⁶ These newspaper rubrics may be traced to the first independent newspapers in 1991, which often featured “new” revisionist histories during postsocialism's first years. Several television programs also seek to present socialist-era “history.” During my fieldwork, the two primary programs were *Historia nis këtu* (History begins here) on TVSH, and *Historia më e zhurmuese* (Buzz-worthy history) on TV Klan.

³⁷ A former Central Committee member met with me several times for informal conversations over coffee, but ultimately declined my invitation for a formal interview on ideological grounds, citing his objections about scholarship about Albanian socialism produced by a scholar (me) embedded in the educational system of a capitalist country (the United States) and funded by a grant from a “capitalist” organization (the American Council of Learned Societies). A performer later declined an interview with me without explanation, though a mutual acquaintance later told me the singer had worried the interview could be used as evidence portraying him/her as a “communist.”

admitted “certain excesses” or “mistakes” had been “allowed to occur” before 1991, they often expressed nostalgia for the past and stinging critiques of the present. Younger composer-producers, especially the successful ones whom I detail in Chapters Five and Six, often dismissed “communism” or “the dictatorship” as having “deformed” Albanian culture. Individuals too young to have experienced the socialist period especially often repeated just-so stories about the “terrors” of communism that have been promoted through “dossier”-style exposes.³⁸

My wide sample of composers, Radio employees, singers, and instrumentalists across several generations enabled me to assess responses to my questions by comparing them with other respondents. As my experience with different members of generational and professional cohorts grew, I was able to begin situating my individuals’ statements and ways of speaking within different modes of talk about musical practice, the role of the intellectual, and politics.³⁹

³⁸ One intellectual, for example, used the example of sculptor Janaq Paço to exemplify the “horrors” of communism to me. In the 1960s, Paço was denounced for his “erotic” nude sculptures and, following a visit to his studio by security agents, forced to smash the sculptures in question himself. He eventually had a nervous breakdown. While this story was known to a small circle of top intellectuals during the socialist period, it was only publicized more broadly in the 1990s, with the publication of several news stories. The musicologist who related the story to me had not heard it during the socialist period, and yet felt it was a compelling, even telling, example of what “communism” had “really” been like for artists.

³⁹ In some cases, I conducted interviews with individuals who spoke in ways that radically contradicted their peers. One prominent socialist-era composer, for example, discussed “communism” and “dissidence” in a manner I came to understand as a retrospectively adopted stance that told me more about his experiences and social status *after* 1992 than before. For another example of this, see the recent memoir of journalist and former RTSH director Agron Çobani. At one point, Çobani recalled watching a television program aired in November 2009. Using separate interviews from two composers, the program juxtaposed their opposing responses about creating light songs—one said, “Myself, I have never experienced [censorship], no one ever told me ‘get rid of that and put in this’”; the other, “Songs for the Party? For those there were direct orders” (Çobani 2010:144-5). The memoirist concluded, “The television conversation continued for a while. Through it I understood the core of the discussions that are made today

My close review of study articles, political speeches, and Radio memoranda further enabled me to gain a sense for socialist-era political and aesthetic registers of speech, against which I could measure contemporary interviews. I found that some aspects of socialist-era discourse remained in intellectuals' parlance (e.g., referring to audiences or ordinary listeners as "the people" [*populli*]). I also found a broad overlap between what I initially assumed to be "politicized" speech, or "officialese" (see Seriot 1992), and intellectuals' everyday parlance, which suggested to me a measure of discursive consistency across time.⁴⁰ At the same time, I found vestigial elements of these political-aesthetic discourses in younger composers' speech, which pushed me to begin exploring the continuities between past and present by considering how the socialist period provided individuals resources to both make sense of postsocialism and to "tame" aspects of capitalism they found to be "unruly."

In seeking to represent the diverse viewpoints of my interlocutors accurately and sympathetically in the following chapters, I have sought to recognize and register the contemporary political stakes for individuals seeking, in various ways, to make sense of themselves and their pasts using the means they have available. At times, I have found it useful to understand my interlocutors as speaking from a nonsocialist, if not actively antisocialist, position, a post-1989 way of recognizing the world that contains and builds on a broader history of techniques and procedures for representing "Albania" and "communism." At the same time, I integrated archival and ethnographic methods in order to recoup, reconstruct, and represent pre-1989 modes of recognizing society and self. My writing has thus privileged those professional

about history in general. For it, there must be several alternatives, that is, each writes it according to him [sic] and the others learn it as they themselves want to" (ibid.).

⁴⁰ For a contrary view, see Seriot 1992:205, who describes how it became important for intellectuals in the Soviet Union to demonstrate that their discourse was "a free space to be extended through struggle" and did not "mix" with the "language of power."

and political vocabularies, or creative and discursive practices, through which might be glimpsed the ways two contrasting political orders have shaped, positioned, and capacitated “the creator” and the “art-lover” since 1944. This strategy has especially demanded a heightened reflexivity on my part as to how a liberal-capitalist order of knowledge has shaped my personal values and assumptions, as well as ethnomusicological ones, in relation to creativity, artists’ agency, the expressive individual, and the nature of language. Further, this has pushed me to think critically about the ways liberalism, capitalism, and the Cold War influenced and continue to influence the academic study of Eastern Europe and popular music. Viewed thus, the cultural study of the socialist and postsocialist eastern bloc presents an opportunity to reexamine and revise disciplinary research paradigms and methodologies, a move that potentially decenters universalist academic knowledge claims about music, politics, and power in the modern world.

CHAPTERS OVERVIEW

This dissertation is divided chronologically into five chapters that concern the relationship between the intellectual-creator and art-lover since 1944. I link each position to shifting programs of government, from an Italian protectorate to a “dictatorship of the proletariat” during the 1940s, and from a “socialist people’s republic” to a “democracy on the road to Europe” during the 1990s. My goal is not to locate in the strategic play between individual culture producers a kind of deep or hidden agency, a form of self-making external to an illiberal political field and, in the process, demonstrate instances in which a communist totalitarianism or postsocialist authoritarianism “failed” to account for intellectuals’ creativity. Nor do I seek to show how certain individuals “supported” different regimes. Rather, I seek to sketch notes toward how intellectuals’ social space became possible, as well as its change over time.

In Chapters Two and Three, I discuss the implementation of Marxist-Leninist cultural administration in the 1950s and 1960s. I analyze the formation of a mode of socialist musical production, which rationalized “culture and the arts” at the national level, and a stratum of music intellectuals, who initiated an ambitious program of “cultural modernization.” Part of an intelligentsia charged with remaking society, composers consolidated a great deal of power by dominating a hierarchy of musicians as “creators,” in opposition to “interpreters” (singers, instrumentalists). Though subject to a political elite, composer-intellectuals structured their own significant social space by weaving together a dense web of discourses about art and society. In Chapter Four, I treat the 1970s and early 1980s, a period today considered a “golden age” for music, the arts, and sports, but also indexical of state repression. I examine the projects that composers pursued, including the inculcation of modern behaviors, “cultured” forms of personhood, and new national sentiments, in order to demonstrate the links between the constitution of a music intelligentsia disciplined by the properties of socialism and state strategies of governance. In privileging the constitutive effects of state-socialist power, I trace a history of Albanian socialism alternative to standard local historiography, and explore the relationship between the pleasure derived from light song and the legitimacy of a repressive state.

In Chapters Five and Six, I discuss Albania’s political-economic transition (*tranzicion*, alt. *kapërcyell*) between 1986 and the end of my fieldwork in 2010. I analyze the unexpected effects wrought on the music field by the introduction of non-socialist economic structures and politics following the death of Enver Hoxha (1985) and the post-1992 dismantling of the state’s cultural infrastructure. Though musicians welcomed the “transition” as a “return to a normal life,” this initial optimism has given way to disappointment as private media interests and an

emergent business class have privatized cultural production and illiberal national politics have forestalled the promise of a “return to Europe.” Light music composers, unlike some other members of the cultural field, have been able to transition from composer-intellectual to composer-entrepreneur by entering a recently created private music industry. I describe how some individuals today cultivate an entrepreneurial self by drawing on non-capitalist discourses to critique and navigate postsocialist economic structures. Though these strategies may appear to be possible points of resistance to a new economic order, intellectuals’ support of a locally hegemonic politics of European Union integration forecloses critique, and even contributes a key component of the weak postsocialist state’s legitimacy by producing the “free” subjects necessary for postsocialism’s program of democracy.

CHAPTER TWO. ADMINISTERING CULTURE

Thursday, 6 October

9.00: Meetings at the Performing Arts' High School to discuss songs, instruments, theory, and solfege.

17.00: Meeting at the Army Central House with the People's Army Band

18.30: Meeting with the Folk Orchestrina at Radio Tirana

Friday, 7 October

9.00: Meeting at the Committee of the Arts [and Culture] to discuss the organization of a section on composition, the League of Artists, a Philharmonic Orchestra, and musical activities in the district regions.

Saturday, 8 October

9.00: Meeting at the Committee of the Arts for impressions and proposals about the work of culture and art. Meetings with theater and ballet directors.

19.00: Meeting at the House of Culture with musicians, painters, sculptors, and actors for “academic conversations”

*Conversations with Grenjokov and Jakovlav about Albania's needs, strengthening of cultural links between Albania and the USSR, and scholarships for arts' students.

—“*Meetings for conversations with Comrade Khrennikov*”¹

During a 1949 visit to survey the People’s Republic of Albania's cultural institutions, Comrade Tikhon Khrennikov found an audience eager for advice. The secretary of the Union of Soviet

¹ N.d., D16/1949 CAC. In this chapter, I draw on archival sources detailing early cultural policy as formulated at the Committee on Culture and the Arts, as well as memoirs and interviews from a handful of early cultural administrators.

Composers detailed the relationship between government agencies and mass organizations in Moscow, lectured on Soviet centralized cultural planning, urged the collection of folklore, and explained the organization of Russian art music ensembles (D16/1949 CAC). After painter Foto Stami and musician Baki Kongoli reported on Albania's current cultural level, Khrennikov issued recommendations on the further development of folk and classical music (*muzika popullore, muzika klasike*) to the Committee for Culture and the Arts, and announced the creation of the scholarship fund that would bring a class of Albanian students to Russian conservatories. Several Russian instrumentalists soon assumed teaching posts at Tirana's performing arts high school, the "Jordan Misja' Artistic Lyceum" (LAJM). The following year, Albania's finest young musicians set sail for the Soviet Union.

In this chapter, I describe how elites' recognition of Albania's "backwardness" came to be instrumentalized by a postwar cultural administration targeting "culture and the arts." Founded in May 1947, the Committee of Arts and Culture (*Komiteti i Arteve dhe Kulturës*, hereafter CAC) administered "culture" from the central location of Albania's capital, Tirana. Originally charged with overseeing museums, a library system, international artistic exchanges, and cultural programs and campaigns, the CAC was restructured several times and, in 1953, united with the Committee of Radio Broadcasting (*Komiteti i Radiodifuzionit*) into the Ministry of Education and Culture (see Skendi 1956:284). In day-to-day work, CAC administrators managed the adaptation and implementation of local versions of eastern bloc procedures to rationalize, centralize, organize, and systematize "culture" at the national level. The institutionalization of a socialist mode of cultural production analogous to a material one, however, had several unforeseen consequences. In the sections that follow, I argue that procedures, discourses, and forms of organization targeting the nation-state's cultural level also enabled the emergence of

two governable social bodies: a cultural elite obligated to better society, and a “people” necessitating direction. Efforts to manage social groups, rather than totalizing society, instead articulated an assemblage of cultural production with particular tendencies—toward centralization and systematization—that remained dependent on quotidian, practical procedures to recognize and administer “culture and the arts.”

In popular usage, eastern bloc orders have often been termed “regimes.” Though I substitute the more analytically neutral word “order” here and in following chapters, the term “regime” usefully signals how actually existing socialisms comprised not only common institutional arrangements, but also a system of overlapping claims about social bodies and their management. As “regimes of truth,” Marxist-Leninist programs demanded a particular recognition of the “true” nature of society and the social individual (cf. Foucault 2004 [1977]:317). Conceived by elites as necessitating intervention, as well as direction toward teleological ends, both society and the individual were entities understood to be malleable, governable bodies that might, ultimately, be emancipated by “communism.” Ratified as a national cultural policy in Albania after 1945, this modernist conception of self and society granted “culture and the arts” a key role in the constitution and administration of local bodies.

Yet while Albanian Marxism-Leninism at the level of state policy came to obligate a social distinction predicated on the difference between a cultural vanguard and “the masses,” the implementation of a cultural administration depended on local adaptations of Soviet models. After 1948, large numbers of Soviet specialists began visiting Tirana to advise and supplement the local architects of the young people’s republic. Foreign specialists imparted much technical expertise, yet cultural administration also depended on the construction of a new infrastructure. Seeking to precisely reproduce Soviet structures in order to demonstrate fealty to Moscow, elites

quickly erected a network of schools, libraries, mass organizations, and culture houses. This infrastructure targeted “the masses” as part of an enlightenment apparatus to educate the society of the future. In theory, through participation in literacy campaigns, night school, art exhibitions, and musical performances, the Albanian peasant would liberate him- or herself from backwardness. Yet this infrastructure also organized intellectuals, as the bearers, teachers, or facilitators of knowledge and “culture,” into hierarchical social fields, whether in literature, the visual arts, media, or music. A cultural administration thus understood did not simply encompass particular organizational forms, institutional arrangements, or even practical knowledges on the rationalization of culture. A key technology of government, administration aspired to shape the conduct of the governed masses while also organizing “those who would govern”—political-cultural elites—in novel ways (cf. Rose 1999:52).

Between 1944 and 1962, certain elites transformed a prewar, nonsocialist mode of musical production into a socialist one. My analysis below examines the emergence of a cultural administration as a technology of government articulating discourses on progress and enlightenment, techniques of identification, accumulation, and centralization, an institutional arrangement of social and cultural clubs, and modes of recognizing social, intellectual, and political action. Initially, administrative projects in Albania developed along two axes—national and modern—exemplified in the music field through efforts to organize “folk” and “cultivated,” or concert, musics. While the latter indexed “civilization” and modernity for elites, the former articulated a “nation” (*komb*) and “people” (*populli*, cf. Ger. *Volk* or Russ. *Narod*) to the “state” (*shtet*). A third sphere of popular music practice initially existed outside these two complex and interconstitutive domains of social and musical knowledge, and remained only partially targeted by state agencies and elites through the 1950s. Administration, however, exercised a centripetal

organizational force on all cultural life and, by the early 1960s, enabled a diverse range of popular music practices to begin to be centralized and overseen in Tirana.

LIBERATION, 1942-1948

In socialist-era historiography, the 1944 assumption of state power by the Albanian Communist Party (*Partia Komuniste Shqiptare*, hereafter PKSH) following four years of fighting constituted the successful end to, in local terms, a National War of Liberation (*Lufta Nacionalçlirimtare*, hereafter LNÇ). For the communists, Marxism-Leninism resonated deeply with early twentieth-century romantic nationalist concerns about the nation by promising emancipation from both the bondage of foreign occupation and cultural backwardness:

[T]he education we had from our families and in school had been very patriotic. It passed down the dream of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century romantic nationalists [*rilindas*] for an independent, democratic, Albania, and for a civilized and European Albania. And we thought that precisely this road would save Albania from poverty, from backwardness, and would make it truly independent and democratic. (Liri Belishova, quoted in Fevziu 2010:282)

Modernist-nationalist intellectuals who had long worried about the backwardness of “the Albanian people” composed a preexisting basis of support for the PKSH and, beginning in 1944, contributed key personnel to its national government. Nowhere were these urban elites’ concerns about the nation’s future more apparent than in the scores of pages documenting society’s “cultural level” and quantifying its annual change in the years immediately following the end of the LNÇ (see fig. 1).²

<i>Ensemble</i>	State Chorus	Lyric Artists	Small Ballet	Dance Groups	<u>Totals</u>
<i>#/performances</i>	45	83	52	10	191
<i>#/spectators</i>	66,402	22,169	13,362	12,887	114,820

Excerpts, “Artistic Activity of the Albanian Philharmonic during 1949” (D12/1949/CAC)

2 The quantification of social-cultural progress through statistics was a broader strategy not limited to the people’s republics of southeastern Europe. See Thomas Svatos’s description of composer Miroslav Barvík’s 1950 address to the Union of Czechoslovak Composers for one analogous example (2010:8ff.).

<i>Activity</i>	<i>1945</i>	<i>1949</i>	<i>% Increase</i>
Culture Houses	0	11	1100
People's Reading Houses	0	127	12700
Libraries	3	11	366
Cinemas	30	39	130
Museums	0	6	600
Folkloric Groups	0	54	5400
Orchestral Groups	4	15	375
Choruses	6	23	383.3
Ballet [Dance Groups]	0	46	4600
Theatrical Groups	15	198	1320
Bands	6	8	133.3
Artistic Performances	89	788	885.39

Excerpts, "Relation on the 'Orientation of Cultural-Artistic Activity, 1949'" (D12/1949 CAC)

Fig. 1: The 1940s quantification of cultural progress

In rendering progress legible, these statistics evidenced Marxism-Leninism's emancipatory potential. Thus the PKSH-led government, in the speech of leading communists such as Enver Hoxha, First Party Secretary and de facto head of state until his death in 1985, could promise a future society that contrasted with previous orders even while situating the particularity of local experiences within an evolutionist scheme of "world-historical" dimensions.

By proposing a break with prior social structures, early communist elites had staked their claims to political legitimacy on the promise of future emancipation—and curried widespread initial support for having "liberated" the nation.³ Toward the end of active fighting, enthusiasm for the communist movement had grown exponentially. Though prewar Albania had a small

³ As a strategy of governance, Albanian state socialism posited a society that, in Giddens's phrasing, "lives in the future, rather than the past" (1998:94), but at the same time depended on a particular vision of the past for legitimacy—often articulated quite explicitly by communist leaders. Consider, for example, the following statement from Enver Hoxha on the founding of the communist movement: "Conscious that the working class together with the peasantry would compose the primary basis of the martial union of the people, at the same time we [members of the communist leadership] knew that the past had left marks on our society such that they were an impediment to unity and made difficult the creation of alliances. [Religious] faith had done its work, and continued to poison people's spirit and mind. The clergy, the landowning gentry [in southern regions], the tribal chieftains [in northern], had exploited, but also "pacified" and "quieted" our brave and unyielding people, which the regimes of the past had kept in a cultural and political obscurantism" (Hoxha 1984:13; cf. Hoxha 1981).

working class and only a limited, disorganized network of Marxist intellectual groups, by summer 1943 secondary schools began closing as young men and women left urban areas to join communist *çeta*, or guerrilla bands (Vickers 1999:151).⁴ Though British intelligence agents covertly funded the communist coalition, and neighboring Yugoslav cadres had organized local cells in 1942, PKSH leaders successfully promoted their movement as having succeeded without foreign intervention. With the end of major skirmishing in late 1944, crowds greeted guerrillas in many urban areas as liberators.

The communists claimed to have “liberated” the nation from foreign wartime occupiers as well as a local anti-communist coalition. In 1939, Italian troops formally invaded Albania, sending a ruling monarchy into exile, seizing major towns, roads, and media, and setting up a quisling government of local elites sympathetic to Mussolini. After several military misadventures and capitulation in September 1943, Italian occupation had transferred to German troops, who took several major towns and formed strategic alliances with several northern Albanian leaders.⁵ Anti-fascist—but also, anti-communist—groups Legality (*Legaliteti*), a monarchist group composed of elites from the prewar status quo, and The National Front (*Balli Kombëtar*), a republican group directed by right-leaning nationalists, then formed to engage both Germans and local communists. Branded “traitors and fratricides” by communist leaders (Skendi

4 For the Albanian narrative of the founding of the PKSH, which excised the role of Yugoslav emissaries Miladin Popović and Dušan Mugoša, see Hoxha 1981; for the Yugoslav account, see Dedijer 1962. On the role of northern Albanian communists, see Schwartz 2009:3-6. Vickers 1999:145-9 provides a summary account based closely on Yugoslav sources. On possible earlier links between the Soviet Union and the short-lived government headed by Bishop Fan Noli in 1924, see Austin 1996.

5 See Vickers 1999:152. Italian troops’ failed invasion resulted in Greek occupation of up to one quarter of Albanian-speaking territory in 1941, though Axis troops soon restored this territory and also incorporated Albanian-speaking areas of Yugoslavia—notably, Kosova—and launched a campaign propagandizing “the claim that Albania had at last secured her ethnic frontiers” (Skendi 1956:18-9).

1956:21), the nationalists' momentum quickly gave way with the arrival of British intelligence agents who, perceiving the communists to be more actively fighting German troops, increasingly channeled to them material and logistical support.⁶ For the PKSH, on the cusp of annihilation in winter 1943, British aid proved decisive. Rejuvenated, a communist coalition founded the Anti-Fascist National Liberation Committee at a May 1944 meeting; by October, the Committee was changed to a Provisional Democratic Government (Skendi 1956:22; Vickers 1999:158-61). With Germany's withdrawal, communist forces routed nationalist irregulars and entered Tirana on 28 November 1944.

Centrally located, Tirana provided a seat from which communists might also seek to "liberate" the nation from local social structures, a southern feudal order and northern clan-based one modernist-nationalist elites perceived as forms of social bondage.⁷ Communist leadership, composed predominantly of urban southerners, first targeted Catholic clergy and traditional tribal leaders, *bajraktarë*, based in northern Albania. Guerrillas encouraged brutality among local populations, undertaking symbolic acts of violence and humiliation especially against young male leaders in these areas (Blumi 1997:386-8).⁸ The national government then targeted southern

6 British intelligent agents embedded with both nationalist and communist forces have written conflicting memoirs about this period. Compare Amery 1948 with Fielding 1990.

7 A relatively young city, modern Tirana was largely constructed with Italian aid between 1926 and 1938 and functioned as the seat of a national government only from 1920. Three quarters of Italian aid to Albania went into the construction of the city's infrastructure, including hotels, ministry buildings, lavish homes, and wide boulevards, as part of a broader Italian project constructing bridges, roads, and harbors for strategic military purposes (Vickers 1999:121, 125). Before this period, Tirana ranked behind other cities in Albania, such as Korça, Shkodra, Elbasan, as well as cities outside Albania's post-independence borders, such as Prizren or Gjakova.

8 Catholic clergy, centered in the northern town of Shkodra and oriented toward Italy, provided an initial source of anti-communist resistance, as did clan leaders, many of whom had previously been guaranteed a measure of autonomy from previous governments and occupying forces in return for their neutrality.

areas, previously dominated by a wealthy landowning class that had provided the wartime quisling regime its ministers, with land reform policies. Property seized from feudal lords was then in turn redistributed to peasants. These newly empowered rural constituencies thus comprised an early source of government support in the south, while the systematic disempowerment of northern groups historically organized along kinship, rather than political, lines preserved order in the north.

Finally, the intellectualist character of communist movement led elites to claim to have liberated the people from the “darkness” of the past. A romantic nationalist movement *Rilindja Kombëtare*, or National Renaissance, had previously framed the nation-state’s independence from the Ottoman Empire (1912) as emancipation from “obscurantism” and “domination” (*obskurantizëm, sundim*). Communists also ascribed these qualities to their regime’s immediate predecessor, a constitutional monarchy headed by a northern chieftain Ahmet Zogu, or King Zog I (1928-1939). Several top communist officials had been part of a small civil society movement opposed to the monarchy: Enver Hoxha, who by 1948 had emerged as the top party official, had studied in France before securing a position in 1936 at the French Lyceum in the town of Korça, a center for anti-monarchist sentiment. An urbanite from the southern city of Gjirokastra, Hoxha became sympathetic to leftist politics while in Paris and emerged from the LNÇ as a war hero. The partisans’ foremost battalion commander Mehmet Shehu fought in the Spanish Civil War, the center of an expatriate anti-monarchy movement, before being imprisoned by Spanish rightists in the 1930s. He and Hoxha married fellow partisans who, as high school pupils in 1930s Tirana, had participated in a vocal anti-monarchy student movement.

At the same time, postwar maneuvering among Yugoslav officials had made Albania into a de facto province of Yugoslavia, which after 1945 administered the large Albanian-speaking

territory of Kosova. Between 1944 and 1948, Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito spoke for Albania's interests at international summits and, fearing a Yugoslav-Albanian voting bloc, Stalin did not invite the country to join international organizations such as the Cominform. Schismatic struggles within the PKSH organized party ranks into factions supportive of Tito, and ones wary of Yugoslav influence. When Tito broke with Stalin in 1948, however, Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu engineered the fall of the pro-Tito group and consolidated their power. In a symbolic change, leading cadres changed the PKSH's name to "the Albanian Party of Labor" (*Partia e Punës të Shqipërisë*, hereafter APL), and began to shift policy toward the country's new patron, the Soviet Union.

"Liberation" thus fit into deeply held narratives on independence, and elites shared a heightened sense of history shaped by a recent past where the nation-state's political future had depended on outside political and military interventions. The APL thus constructed for itself an initial political, military, and cultural legitimacy previous regimes had lacked in several ways: by framing its rise to power as independent of foreign military assistance, and its opponents as foreign collaborationists or opportunists, and by promising future-oriented policies suffused with a nationalist terminology on enlightenment. Yet this rhetoric was also inflected by the discourses of Marxist-Leninist governance: the APL was obligated to frame its nation-state as the People's Republic of Albania (*Republika Popullore e Shqipërisë*), claiming to represent the "people" (*populli*) or "the masses" (*masat*) of an Albanian nation (*komb*)—albeit one with borders excluding significant Albanian-speaking communities in various republics of Yugoslavia and disenfranchising a number of different constituencies within Albania. "Popular" should not imply that the APL was duplicitous, or faked "free" elections (cf. Skendi 1956:22-4). Instead, the term "People's Republic" indicated a key target of Marxist-Leninist government: a "people" to be

governed. I now turn to the presocialist origins of communist projects to produce a “people” (*populli*) subject to betterment through “culture and the arts,” suggesting how Tirana’s “liberation” allowed the adoption of presocialist intellectuals’ constructions of a “backward” society at the level of state policy.

CULTURE, BACKWARDNESS, AND ‘THE PEOPLE’

At the 1945 meeting founding the League of Albanian Writers and Artists (LAWA), a union of culture workers modeled after the Soviet Writers’ Union,⁹ Minister of Culture and Propaganda Sejfullah Malëshova argued the young People's Republic’s pressing need for “culture”:

One of the special characteristics of today’s situation is the necessary, absolute need to raise a new democratic State, a modern State in a country that has remained very backward by economic and cultural measures. Here, the great role of culture in our country must be seen in connection with the colossal problems that are the order of the day. ... We want to erect a modern economy on a high technical base. We need culture. We want to raise a modern Army. We need culture. In short, we want to raise a modern State, and without a modern culture this is impossible.... (D1/n.d. CAC:2)

Malëshova’s vision of culture as “property of the people” (*prona e popullit*) grounded his proposals for a modern culture constructed “not on prejudices or obscurantism, but on science and progress” (ibid.:2-3). This definition enabled elites to articulate new and existing cultural practices, institutions, and discourses into an assemblage that I describe below as a socialist mode of cultural production. While Soviet-style rationalization of cultural production differed in scope and implementation from material production, each mode shared common generative beliefs: that increased “production levels” indexed national progress; that the past was mired in “darkness” or characterized by its “backwardness”; and that targeted spheres—whether the economy or the arts—were subject to systematization and regularization by a vanguard elite.

⁹ Unions, fronts, mass organizations were organizational forms borrowed from Soviet practice.

“Modern culture,” however, also necessitated the production of belief in a population in need of emancipation.

Since the 1920s, Malëshova and a likeminded group of nationalist modernizers had imagined Albania as a backward society. In 1924, the Minister was personal secretary to the prime minister of a short-lived revolutionary government expounding a program of economic reforms and cultural modernization.¹⁰ Following a coup, Malëshova and several cabinet members entered leftist circles in Europe and the Soviet Union. While Malëshova’s communist-era political career would prove brief—first excluded from the League of Writers over ideological differences in 1946, he was purged from Party ranks in 1949 (Skendi 1956:85-7)—his cohort’s construction of an uncultured “people” provided a key justification for a cultural administration. In this section, I present prewar musical practices and discourses in order to outline a strategic prehistory of centralized cultural planning. Post-1944 concerns about an Albanian people’s lack of culture, literacy, or education resonated with earlier civil society projects diffused across several towns and cities to remake society. Though the presocialist monarchy had invested little in cultural infrastructure,¹¹ intellectuals had sought to construct a robust civil society that, between independence in 1912 and occupation in 1939, transformed the

10 Following a bloodless coup, Malëshova and several other members of the cabinet of prime minister Bishop Fan Noli fled to Moscow. Noli’s program had been based on widespread land reform, and several members of his cabinet were sympathetic to Marxist ideology. On coming to power in June 1924, one of Noli’s first acts was to recognize the Soviet Union. Progressive Albanian intellectuals were sympathetic to the USSR in part because the Bolsheviks had revealed the so-called secret “Treaty of London” (1915) in which the Great Powers had sought to partition Albania among its neighbors; “a minority group considered Lenin a savior of Albania” (Skendi 1956:76-7). Cf. Austin 1996.

11 The notion that the 1930s monarchy was against “culture” also formed a key element of post-1944 socialist historiography, which some intellectuals today believe grossly overstated the extent to which the monarchy suppressed or censored artists. My sense is that the monarchy was often profoundly distrustful of urban intellectuals for a variety of reasons, and understanding influenced especially by Mato 2004.

musical activities of many urban Albanian-speaking communities. Their loosely affiliated network of cultural societies, theater clubs, and wind bands, part of a self-reflexive modernizing movement to import “civilization,” provided socialist cultural administration a key source for personnel, instruments, and artistic discourses. By articulating these prior resources as part of a centralized project at the national level, Malëshova’s notion of “culture” proved productive of a backward “people” amenable to elite intervention and reorganization at the level of national policy.

Urban Music

Since the eighteenth century, urban professional musicians oriented to Ottoman-derived musical practices had performed a heterophonic, makam-based repertoire. In the northern city of Shkodra, *aheng* (Tk. “music”) ensembles gradually consolidated a diverse repertoire of compositions, including many adapted or “Shkodranized” from Turkish, Bulgarian, and Greek sources (Gurashi 1943, discussed in Koço 2005:187). Aheng ensembles were related to the Ottoman *ince saz* ensemble, and often included *kemençe* (a bowed chordophone, also called *qimanë*), *kavall* (an end-blown flute, similar to Turkish *ney*), *saz* (a long-necked plucked chordophone, derived from the Turkish instrument of the same name), *llautë* (a short-necked, plucked chordophone), and *def* (frame-drum). In Shkodra and Elbasan, as well as the Albanian-speaking town of Gjakova and the mixed Turkish- and Albanian-speaking Prizren, both in present-day Kosova, aheng performances could be accompanied by *çengi*, female Romani dancers and singers who performed with *def* and *çapare* (finger-cymbals).¹² In southern Albanian towns, an analogous ensemble called *saze* (Tk. “instruments”), composed of violin, *germetë*

¹² See Sugarman 2003:92-105 for discussion of these dance contexts and performers; see also Hasluck 1938.

(clarinet), *llautë*, and *def*, performed an Ottoman-derived repertoire (see Tole 1998).¹³

With national independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1912, Albanian-speaking professional musicians were among several groups to be framed by nationalists as “non-Albanian,” part of a more general trend in the Balkans obliging individuals “to submit to increasingly exclusive and totalizing national categories” (Cowan 2008:340). Nationalists, or *rilindasit* (lit., “Renaissance men”), came to view professional urban practices and repertoires as particularly indexical of the country’s “eastern-ness,” and a non-national imposition inherited from the Ottoman Empire. “Albanians as a rule look with disdain upon the professional musician,” a summary of “Albanian Music” by southern nationalists could thus report by 1939: “In Albania, it is only gypsies who play for dancing” (WPA 1939:146).

With the 1917 opening of a French Lyceum in the town of Korça, local Albanian historiography avers, “the wind of European civilization began to blow [into Albania]” (Tërpini 2003:25), as nationalist-modernists here and in other urban areas began seeking to replace Ottoman-derived urban practices with western-oriented ones. By the 1920s, Western-educated elites began intensifying their efforts to establish “arts’ societies” (*shoqëri artistike*) of concert music ensembles, chorales, and theater troupes in urban Albanian-speaking areas, and especially the cities of Shkodra and Korça (cf. Mato 2004). Organized to spread both “freedom-loving feelings” through patriotic songs and appreciation for western concert music, societies fostered

13 These ensembles were extremely popular with urban families. In the nineteenth century, southern urbanites demonstrated their economic standing by hiring saze for family celebrations such as weddings or engagements. Prominent families in Korça, for example, hired the best groups from the nearby areas of Leskovik, Ohrid (in present-day Macedonia), and Kostur (Gr. Kastoria, in present-day Greece), and as the town grew in population and wealth, professional musicians relocated to satisfy demand (Ballauri 1994:20; Koço 2002:21).

the emergence of a broad, student-based cultural movement.¹⁴ Korça's Society of Fine Arts [*Shoqata e Arteve të Bukura*], established in 1920 by American- and Romanian-trained musicians, for example, provided local youths with training in concert music, arranged concerts, and popularized urban songs created after western models, today referred to as *këngë qytetare* (urban songs), *këngë karakteristike* (characteristic songs), or *këngë patriotike* (patriotic songs). Within a decade, participants had organized over a dozen related choral groups, chamber music societies, and theater clubs in Korça alone.¹⁵ By the mid-1930s, a small cohort of musicians, some of whom were trained by these ensembles, began studying at western European conservatories and, on their return, performing recitals for urban audiences (see Koço 2000; Kalemi 2001).

Folk Music

Orally transmitted music-making in rural and urban areas, termed *muzika popullore* (folk music), has been viewed by Albanian folklorists as comprising “two primary dialects”: a northern homophony and southern polyphony (Sokoli 1965:127; cf. Shetuni 2012).¹⁶ Before 1945, significant social and musical differences existed between rural northern communities, organized into extended kinship networks, and southern ones, stratified by a feudal order headed

14 Protagonists viewed their groups as the continuation of a tradition begun by a handful of foreign-born intellectuals who founded wind bands formed during the previous two decades. Korça's “Freedom Band” (*Banda e Lirisë*), a wind ensemble of forty members attached to a patriotic fund-raising organization, “Knowledge” (*Dituria*), was founded in 1908 by a French conductor (Mato 2004:12-3). In the northern Albanian city of Shkodra, several of these ensembles had close ties to the Catholic Church's Jesuit school for boys.

15 See Tërpini 2003.

16 This division into melodically and harmonically distinguishable “dialects” paralleled the nation-state's linguistic and ethnic divisions of Gegëria, Albanian-speaking areas north of the Shkumbin River, which bisects the post-1944 state, and southern Toskëria (see Zojzi 1963). Despite differences in grammar and vocabulary, the spoken dialects *gegnisht* and *toskërisht* have remained mutually intelligible.

by an urban landowning class. Men in the north accompanying themselves on either *lahutë*, the “national” one-stringed spike fiddle,¹⁷ or *çifteli*, a two-stringed plucked chordophone with a drone string, performed epic or heroic repertoires (*këngë kreshnikësh* or *këngë trimash*), viewed during the communist period as indexical of the independent Albanian’s fighting spirit. Northern women’s vocal music was closely associated with life-cycle events, and included laments, wedding songs, and lullabies. Male and female vocal groups in the south performed polyphonic song genres generally divided into discrete ethnographic regions, and three differing vocal styles (Sokoli 1965:128-9; cf. Sugarman 1989, 1997).¹⁸ Polyphonic songs generally have two to four interlocking parts. *Lab* song, an ornate, four-part repertoire found in southwestern Albania—not coincidentally, the home area of several APL elites—came to be viewed as particularly ancient and national during the communist period.

Before 1944, intellectuals organized these rural music genres in largely unsystematic ways. Literate nationalists—in pre-independence Ottoman-governed Albanian-speaking areas, a distinct minority—initially imagined an autochthonous “nation” bound by a common language (cf. Skendi 1967; cf. Anderson 1991). The Albanian nationalist movement thus sought to establish a standardized written language, schools, and religious institutions with Albanian-language rites, and several activists utilized folk song texts as both evidence of national unity and source material for more “elevated” works in western styles. In “The Albanian Bee” (*Mbleta*

17 Cf. *gusle* and Albert B. Lord’s 1960 study, *The Singer of Tales* (Lord 2000 [1960]).

18 Sokoli identified three primary “zones” of polyphony: Toskëria, in southeastern Albania; Labëria, in southwestern Albania; and Çamëria, in present-day Greece and some southern villages within post-1944 Albania’s borders. Within each zone, he identifies three “styles”: *pleqërishte/lashtërishte*, performed by older men or “ancient” songs; *djelmurishte*, performed by young men; and *grarishtë*, performed by women (Sokoli 1964:127-9). The author described several areas today commonly ascribed their own distinct style (e.g., Myzeqe) as mixtures of the three primary zones’ characteristics.

Shqiptare, 1878), Korça-born nationalist Thimi Mitko, a merchant living in Egypt, compiled song texts from different regions into one volume—a mechanism, he wrote, for “the awakening and uniting of the Albanian people” (quoted in Sugarman 1999:423). In doing this, Mitko “imagined” a national community bound in linguistic and historical terms (Sugarman 1999:422ff.). Few other nationalists, however, sought to “develop” rural folk texts, though Gjerjg Fishta, a Catholic priest in the northern city of Shkodra, published an epic poem in the 1930s written in a literary northern Geg style and modeled on orally transmitted epic songs.

Beginning in the 1920s, several musicians began using rural folk music as source material for “elevated” instrumental pieces and songs. Thoma Nassi—a founding member of Korça’s Fine Arts Society—transcribed several “folk airs” in 1923-4, which he later arranged as short violin or flute and piano pieces (WPA 1939:145; cf. Koço 2002). More concerted efforts to elevate certain urban songs through their arrangement as art songs began proliferating (Koço 2005).¹⁹ In the 1930s, a cohort of operatic “lyric” singers (*këngëtare lirike*) and pianists trained in western conservatories began performing and recording urban song arrangements in an effort to “modernize” Albanian music.²⁰ Enthusiasm for this trend however, was not universally shared. Performers often viewed folk music as inartistic, at best an obligatory exercise needed to attract a concert-going public inexperienced with western art music.²¹

19 See Kraja 2005:12ff., 31-52 on the development of instrumental music in general during the 1930s in Korça, Shkodra, and the central town of Elbasan.

20 In a review of a March 1944 concert of this cohort, for example, a commentator writes: “Our artists interpreted opera songs and Albanian songs. It seemed as if they were trying to create a union between East and West, as if they were constructing a grand bridge where we see with joy an Albania that is being raised, an Albania being roused, and Albania that progresses!” (Vedad Kokona, quoted in Koço 2000:145).

21 In post-1944 music historiography, members of this cohort were framed as champions of folk music. In a study of one lyric soprano, however, conductor and musicologist Eno Koço writes: “It is worth reminding again that Tefta [Tashko-Koço] was a lyric soprano oriented toward

Producing ‘the People’

Before 1944, no mechanism existed to organize a coherent program targeting “culture and the arts” at the level of state policy. Though the monarchy had briefly funded a Royal Band, and in the 1930s, opened an Institute of Music (*Instituti Mbretnor për Muzikë*), government officials had tended to view civil society’s musicians, artists, and writers as potential sources of social discontent (Mato 2004:257-8). Nevertheless, a learned cognoscenti imported into Albania certain “raw materials” of cultural production—musical instruments, scores and libretti, gramophones and 78s, and so on. Arts’ societies also played a key role in training a growing, if small, urban segment to hold in common certain views about the nature of society. Communist elites’ adoption of Marxism-Leninism—and seizure of state power—enabled the ascendancy of this shared worldview on “Albanian backwardness” in practical and theoretical terms. For the first time, loosely affiliated intellectualist cohorts, discourses on “civilization,” “nation,” and “progress,” as well as a cluster of interrelated music practices, came to be articulated as a priority for the state.

Embedded within an urban intelligentsia, knowledges about culture and progress produced a “people” necessitating intervention. A phenomenon not unique to Albania, this production comprised a more general strategy for elites inhabiting the margins of “Europe.”

Describing the pre-Bolshevik Russian intelligentsia, historian Igor Narskij finds a dialectic of

classical vocal repertory. She learned urban folk song in Albania, it entered into her repertory on one hand, at the request of the listener and the suggestion made in the press by intellectual opinion of the time, and on the other hand, as a product of her vision and ethico-professional obligation to contribute to the progress of Albanian society of the time she lived” (Koço 2000:213). At the same time, artists like Tashko-Koço often felt themselves to have given up chances for more promising careers on stage elsewhere by electing to return after their study abroad to Albania, where they would only be able to give recital performances: “She had a good knowledge of the administrative and political system of the country, the cultural level of the people, the halls and towns where she would develop her art,” and so on (ibid.:211).

“progress” and “backwardness” to have been productive of “Russian society” itself (2010). “The idea of backwardness,” he writes, “not only reflected reality but also generated it, sweeping aside alternative ideologies and means of solving current problems” (2010:338).²² Presocialist Albanian intellectuals too constructed for themselves “a public that is not yet a proper public” when measured against the universal scale of western modernity (Chatterjee 2002:39), but lacking access to state institutions and financial support, these modernist-nationalist would-be governors had only been able to imagine an intellectual-directed state. With the post-1944 appointment of elites such as Malëshova to directing positions, presocialist discourses on cultural progress and the backward nation came to be elevated to the level of national policy.

Moves to identify, manage, and propose solutions to the problem of society’s cultural backwardness soon brought into being a social body subject to elite intervention, as well as structured social space for society’s governors (cf. Han 2005, Khalid 2006). ‘Vanguardism’—Lenin’s doctrine on the leading social role of the political party (cf. Lenin 1902)—thus formed a strategy of government in part necessitating not only a backward population, but also a directing elite. Beyond producing “the people” as a target for intervention, whether by literacy campaigns, cultural pedagogues, or normative linguistic policies, the implementation of a Marxist-Leninist program of government obligated the organization of predominantly nonsocialist intellectuals into a cultural vanguard.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF ‘CULTURE AND THE ARTS’

The presocialist cultural intelligentsia, bearing potentially programmatic knowledge that

22 In a related argument, Yanni Kotsonis identifies the notion of “progress” as implicated a process by which peasants were constructed as an object of rule in *Making Peasants Backwards* (1999). “‘Progress,’” Kotsonis writes, “was used to posit that most of the [Russian-speaking] population was ‘backward,’ and in the process precluded the emergence of an ideology in which peasants might understand themselves, and which they might use as a basis for participation as legitimate actors in one or another vision of a political order” (Kotsonis 1999:4).

anticipated socialism’s drives, provided an emergent cultural administration with a relatively homogenous social basis. Yet this basis needed to be organized, shaped, and legitimated. In 1949, 127 cultural centers, staffed by local directors who had recently completed month-long training courses, organized conferences, distributed books, staged performances and dances, and scheduled collective readings. By 1952, one-fifth of the state trade union’s urban membership, or approximately 17,000 political instructors and propagandists, engaged full-time in “agit-prop”: explaining government policies to peasants, circulating petitions in support of the Soviet Union, or popularizing socialist work methods (Skendi 1956:129-30). In a country of approximately 1.2 million, the exponential proliferation of opportunities for a predominantly rural, agrarian citizenry to come into contact with “culture” bearers articulated previously ignored swathes of the population to emissaries of the state, which the CAC catalogued in its reports (see fig. 2).

	<u>1948</u>	<u>1950 (#/participants)</u>
<i>Conferences</i>	2,538	3,703 (477,943)
<i>Artistic performances</i>	441	481 (147,983)
<i>Cultural evenings</i>	964	868 (68,543)
<i>Collective readings</i>	1,214	5,518 (75,601)
<i>Expositions [photog., art]</i>	---	236 (42,575)
<i>Books distributed</i>	---	28,500

Fig. 2: Excerpt, “On the cultural condition in the village in the past and present” (D41/1951 CAC)

Albania imported the notion of a “culture house” (*shtëpia e kulturës*) directly from Soviet practice.²³ Large “culture palaces” served major urban areas, while smaller “people's houses of reading” (*shtëpi popullore të leximit*), or “red corners” served less populated areas.²⁴ Intended to

23 See the UNESCO handbook *Cultural Policy in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*, ed. Zvorykin et al. 1970.

24 While these centers served semi-rural areas, the state extended education campaigns into even the smallest villages through “walking libraries” (*biblioteka ambulante*) and film screenings. One cultural worker, who traveled to northern highland areas, where villages sometimes comprised only a handful of houses, described on a program aired November 2009 on TV KLAN how excited villagers would greet him with great enthusiasm.

promote diverse campaigns, whether on literacy, hygiene, the tenets of Marxism-Leninism, or the benefits of collectivization, this “cultural enlightenment apparatus” came to extend over the entire country. In targeting “the village” as its object, the institutionalization of “culture and the arts” also obligated the identification and organization of culture specialists, demanding that musicians, artists, writers, and other individuals deemed to hold a “general culture” (*kulturë e përgjithëshme*) participate in proselytization and mass pedagogy. At the national level, a small pool of individuals with advanced foreign training and pro-Communist political credentials were assigned directing positions at the CAC, the Ministry of Education, print and radio media, and national performing ensembles. Yet an ever-expanding network of culture houses, “people’s houses of reading,” workers’ clubs, “red corners,” and libraries necessitated an entire corps of culture-workers.

Incipient moves to form a cultural administration formed a strategy to bring “culture and the arts” under state oversight, but simultaneously organized an intelligentsia. The rapid construction of spaces of enlightenment made urgent political elites’ projects to identify would-be cultural administrators, as well as to institutionalize a mechanism for their social reproduction. But where would these culture workers be found? Without communists, how could a “communist” culture be administered? Though individuals with advanced cultural training—composers, instrumentalists, lyric singers, sculptors, painters—had at times shared privileged social status with elites in prewar power structures, this in itself did not pose a problem to APL elites. Top officials themselves were predominantly intellectuals from the presocialist urban class. First secretary Enver Hoxha had taught French at Korça’s Lyceum in the 1930s, and in 1948 the leadership’s token proletariat—Koçi Xoxe, a tin-smith—was purged from the party ranks. Like Lenin, the APL’s leadership tended to view “the arts” and bourgeois cultural forms

not as an ideologically fraught sphere, but as markers of a “general culture” indexing a level of civilization socialist societies should aspire to attain (Claudin-Urondo 1977:27ff.). Unlike Marx, Lenin had viewed the proletariat as “unable to determine itself as the subject of the revolutionary process” (ibid.:69), and thus Marxism-Leninism depended on a specialist stratum to forge the consciousness, and thus emancipation, of a working class. That necessary and “advanced” cultural forms (novels, sculpture, opera) had been dominated by a small group of bourgeois specialists—“the most polished manifestation of the capitalist heritage”—did not matter to Lenin in 1917, nor Albanian communists after 1944 (ibid.:29). Indeed, viewed as more pressing in the latter case was the need for greater numbers of arts’ personnel in regional districts and at the system’s center.

Tirana’s First Administrators

When fascism fell in 1943, Abdullah Grimci, born into an intellectual Shkodran family, found himself in Rome, Italy.²⁵ Sympathetic to the communist movement's nationalist platform, Grimci interrupted his studies in composition and returned to his hometown, where he began arranging patriotic pieces for local groups. Following the war, Grimci initially held a post in Shkodra before being transferred to the newly created CAC. As its music section head, Grimci brought existing performance ensembles into the framework of an emerging national system of cultural institutions and provided logistical support to regional cultural directors. Grimci wrote performance guideline pamphlets for district ensembles, organized regional and national folklore festivals, created regional artistic commissions to identify promising artists for future training, and oversaw the collection of musical folklore. He himself transcribed urban songs, first in Shkodra and then Tirana, later editing the first postwar collections of folk music. When the local

²⁵ The material in this paragraph derives from Abdullah Grimci’s memoirs, especially Grimci 1999:121-7.

performing arts high school, Arts' Liceum Jordan Misja (LAJM), lacked faculty, Grimci even taught clarinet and trumpet lessons. In 1953, Grimci moved to Radio Tirana, where he began to organize its sound archives. Not surprisingly, Grimci prided himself on being a jack-of-all-trades—the administrator titled his 1997 autobiography simply, “the Musician.”

Folklorist and flutist Ramadan Sokoli provides a contrasting example.²⁶ Also born into an intellectual Shkodran family, Sokoli excelled at several instruments and, in 1939, received a scholarship to study in Florence, Italy. His family was politically active: an older brother had studied law in Belgrade, and Italian forces interned his father during the initial stages of the LNÇ. In 1944, Sokoli returned to Shkodra from Florence and entered the small anti-communist underground. Following a failed revolt in September 1946,²⁷ several members of the Sokoli family were imprisoned. Sokoli’s father died in 1957. An older brother did not survive twenty-seven years of prison alternating with internment, while a younger brother had a life sentence commuted only in 1990. Sokoli himself received a five-year sentence, and while in prison met the musicians whose repertoires would form the basis of his later musicological works. Released in 1951, Sokoli initially found employment as a flautist at the Albanian Philharmonic Orchestra, though a director fired him on learning his “biography.” After teaching two years at Tirana's Culture Palace, he was once again dismissed, before finally securing a permanent position as a

26 The material in this paragraph derives from Kaloci 2009; see also Sokoli 2003.

27 The “uprising of Postriba,” a neighborhood outside Shkodra, was intended to rally anti-communist fighters against the local authority and then Tirana. Twenty-one men died in the fighting, nineteen were executed without trial, thirteen given life sentences, and 123 given various jail sentences; eighteen homes were burned to the ground. See www.tiranachat.net/shqip/2008/09/lajme/politike/topi-ne-shkoder-per-kryengritjen-e-postribes/ (last accessed 5 July 2012).

pedagogue at the LAJM and, in 1967, as a researcher at the Institute of Folk Culture.²⁸

A correct “stance during the war” (*qëndrim gjatë luftës*) thus credentialed upper-level positions in the cultural administration. If one had participated in fighting, organized pro-Communist wartime cultural events, or held family ties to the partisan movement, one could be immediately identified by political elites for appointment. Barring demonstrable Communist sympathies, one could even be forgiven a non-active political background, but not pro-fascist or anti-Communist activities. Yet several non-political factors also conditioned this group’s organization. In geographical terms, southern intellectuals tended to have been more sympathetic to leftist causes, while northern ones tended to have closer ties to religious groups, which subsequently disqualified them from postwar positions. Cultural administrators also came primarily from urban areas, as presocialist rural villages and towns lacked opportunities for musical or arts’ training. Moreover, administrators were overwhelmingly men. Women tended to have musical training as pianists or vocalists, and thus were viewed as oriented toward teaching positions, while men identified as potential administrators often held degrees in composition or conducting, areas deemed broader or more versatile. Finally, lower-level positions tended to demand less strict credentialing, and political exceptions were made for specialists possessing rare but necessary expertise to work at district culture houses, the LAJM, or in performance ensembles. Instructors at the Gjirokastra state high school, for example, held degrees from Italy, France, and Bucharest—“all these were knowledgeable persons...but they maybe had a biographical snag [*kleçkë biografike*]” keeping them from directing roles in Tirana (Agolli in Fevziu 2010:269).

28 Personal connections could somewhat ameliorate an “anti-popular stance.” Soviet-trained writer L Lazar Siliqi, for example, a childhood friend from Shkodra, often arranged positions for Sokoli (Kaloci 2009).

Administrative Practice

Though Tirana's administrative cohort was not necessarily identified by their musical, literary, or artistic abilities, neither were administrators simply "politically correct" appointees. Abdullah Grimci composed small chamber works, as did Baki Kongoli, a fine violinist appointed music secretary to the LAWA in 1956. Yet administrators chiefly functioned as elite planners, seeking to organize and administer existing and potential "culture" at the center in Tirana. Administrators' successes, however, depended on delegating authority to less-qualified, and sometimes politically suspect, intellectuals at lower regional levels. Between 1945 and the mid-1950s, Albanian cultural administration comprised two primary practices, the identification (*identifikim*) and accumulation (*mbledhje, grumbullim*) of cultural materials, which in turn remained subject to the abilities and proclivities of a corps of district cultural personnel.

The collection and transcription of exemplary expressions of "popular creativity," accumulation's primary form among music specialists, for example, depended on administrators' skill in mobilizing individuals to transcribe folk music melodies in district towns and villages.²⁹ Though the CAC planned several small folk music research expeditions in the late 1950s, song collection largely rested in the hands of culture house directors, from whom administrators expected transcriptions regularly.³⁰ Stirred by patriotic sentiment, some district musicians applied themselves enthusiastically. In the late 1940s, a young Shkodran named Tish Daija

29 In creative fields such as sculpture or figurative arts, efforts were directed largely toward the translation of theoretical treatises and the accumulation of raw physical materials in Tirana studios; in theater, toward the translation of "revolutionary" plays for future performances; and in literature, toward editions of new "canons" of realist writers both Albanian (e.g., presocialist and *rilindasit* writers such as Andon Cajupi and Migjeni) and foreign.

30 East German musicologists planned one expedition in 1957 (see Stockman et al. 1965), as did Romanians in 1959. Until the late 1960s, Albania had no central institution charged exclusively with folk music research.

became enamored with southern polyphonic songs (Hajati 2006:56ff). Named high school teacher to an area surrounding the southwestern coastal city of Vlora, Daija transcribed and submitted to the CAC dozens of songs he collected from area singers. More often, however, specialists submitted patriotic songs composed in a western style or urban lyric songs. In Shkodra, workers at the city's Palace of Culture transcribed familiar urban or characteristic songs (Grimci 1999, Kalemi 2003:51-4), while in Korça, choral director Kostaq Osmanlliu simply sent pieces from his ensemble's repertoire (see *Këngë Shqiptare* 1959).

For administrators, district workers ideally would accumulate all folk music “in detail and as a whole, without exception.” Administrator Baki Kongoli advised that a

competent Commission should be named to separate [‘pure’ folk expressions] from those that have foreign influences, and then to give them to competent people for arranging. Arrangements should be done as follows: collections of instrumental or choral rhapsodies, for voice and piano and for chorus, or chorus and orchestra (for this, let Russian folk music serve as an example). ... [B]efore being played or published, a commission should approve [pieces] and those that go outside any rule (or folk influence) should be prohibited. (D17/1947 CAC)

In practice, however, collectors often accumulated only easily accessible urban material. In part, the CAC lacked the capacity to organize research expeditions to rural areas, while many district musicians expressed disinterest or distaste for what administrators termed “bruto folklore.” District specialists also often approached rural folk music as in need of “updating,” or as less worthy of collection than urban songs. In general, administrators expended much effort in scolding district specialists who—in their view—worked shoddily, or without “proper” respect for folklore. At one CAC meeting, an administrator castigated those individuals who refused to collect material, or submitted transcriptions with serious rhythmic or melodic errors; one person, he complained, continuously “fixed” additive meters, transforming melodies from 5/8 or 7/8 into compound duple (D18/1951 CAC:20).

Despite “irregularities” in folklore collection practices, district music specialists did manage to collect several hundred folk tunes each year. In 1949, local arrangers harmonized fifty, while the CAC sent abroad dozens of others to Russian, Bulgarian, Czech, and Hungarian arrangers:

<i>Collected:</i>	<i>Prepared:</i>
350 songs total	40 songs for chorus and piano
(50 harmonized in Albania	100 folkloristic songs (for publication)
50 harmonized in USSR	22 [original] compositions [e.g., marches]
48 harmonized in Bulg., Czech., Hung.)	80 harmonizations

Fig. 3: Excerpt, “On the realization of the 1949 Plan” (D3/1949:3 CAC)

These publications were intended as “a great aid in the work of cultural and artistic institutions, of schools, and so on,” and to “aid in moving forward our country’s cultural and artistic movement.”³¹ “Cuc e Radomirës” (The girl from Radomira), for example, a homophonic song originally collected during the 1940s or early 1950s, was arranged and published in two different versions. Identified parenthetically as a “Northern folk piece” (*populllore e Veriut*) in *Songs for the Masses, 1* (*Këngë për Masa 1* 1956), “Cuc e Radomires” was “arranged” (*punue*, lit. worked) as a four-part chorale. Kostandin Trako, a pedagogue at the LAJM known as a conductor and arranger of urban lyric songs, set the “tune” in the soprano. Though homophonic in its pre-choral incarnation, Trako's piece cadenced in *la* minor. More specifically identified as a “Lumjane [of the Lumes district] folk song” (*Populllore Lumjane*) in a piano-vocal song arrangement in *Albanian Songs* (*Këngë Shqiptare* 1959), the tune became a solo vocal piece with a spare piano accompaniment as “harmonized” (*harmonizue*) by pianist Lola Gjoka. Both arrangements indicated tempo markings (*allegretto moderato* and *allegro*, respectively) and dynamic markings (simply *mf* throughout Trako's, and building from *p* to *f* in Gjoka's), while the latter is more clearly in the minor key (with the raised *g#* at cadences) (see fig. 4).

31 See the preface to *Këngë Shqiptare* 1959 by Soviet-trained musicologist Albert Papparisto.

The image displays two musical arrangements of the song "Cuc e Radomirës".

Left Arrangement (Piano and Voice): This is a piano and voice arrangement. It features a vocal line with lyrics in Albanian and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Cuc' e Ra- do- mi- rës — fa- get me ni- sha- na", "Tu- e ko- rrun gru- nin n'a- rë e ko xa- nun ha- na", and "Tu- e ko- rrun gru- nin n'a- rë e ko xa- nun ha- na". The arrangement includes dynamic markings such as *p*, *mf*, and *f*, and a *rit.* (ritardando) marking. Below the score are four numbered sections (I, II, III, IV) with their respective lyrics:

- I: Cuc' e Radomirës fuqet me nishana / Tue korrcun grunin n'arë e ko xanun hann.
- II: Cuc' e Radomirës flakët kacurela / Ç' punojne shtriat v'ore tueu mbush bucelo.
- III: Cuc' e Radomirës kur prazhit ndër ara / Nak ka osqji ç'fat kohandi që t'i dal' përpara.
- IV: Cuc' e Radomirës syrin si shkëndi / Luanit ai trim i zoti që e shfjën në shpi.

Right Arrangement (Choral): This is a choral arrangement titled "CUC E RADOMIRËS (Popullore e Veriut)" by Punuar: K. Trako. It is marked "Alto Moderato" and "5/4". The lyrics are: "Cuc' e Ra- do- mi- rës fa- get me ni- sha- na", "Cuc' e Ra- do- mi- rës", "sha- na Cuc' e Ra- do- mi- rës", "fa- get me ni- sha- na", and "tu- e ko- rrun".

Fig. 4: Arrangements of “Cuc e Radomirës”
 (Pianist Gjoka’s arrangement for piano and voice (second page) left [Këngë Shqiptare 1959];
 Kostandin Trako’s arrangement for chorale right [Këngë për Masa 1 1956])

The two examples above further demonstrate the extent to which accumulation depended on a series of related identification practices that shaped material as it was collected, including the politics of transcription, the skill level of transcribers, as well as the initial determination as to what expressions were “exemplary” or “pure.” Moreover, the early socialist state depended heavily on an array of identification mechanisms that targeted the nation-state's population itself as an object for analysis (cf. Greenhalgh and Winckler 2005). In the cultural sphere, culture houses and district schools provided Tirana administrators with information about talented individuals and potential candidates for future training or arts’ positions. One of the CAC’s first commissioned reports (fig. 5) compiled information on the abilities of individuals with presocialist training:

<i>Nr.</i>	<i>Name and surname</i>	<i>[Econ.] Class</i>	<i>Talent</i>	<i>Specialty</i>	<i>Culture</i>	<i>Prospects for development</i>	<i>Age</i>
#47	Aleko Kareco	Upper	Has	Accordionist	[H.S.] graduate	Acc. soloist	1928
#53	Ali Myslim Koço	Lower	Has	Violin	3 primary grades	Limited prospects in folk music	?
#11	Maria Kraja	Urb. middle	Has	Soprano	Conservatory	Operatic soprano	1911
#154	Luçie Miloti	Urb. lower	Has	Singer	1 grade	Unique, folk sgr.	1931
#137	Rifat Shaqja	Urb. lower	Hasn't	Tenor I	Primary classes	Hasn't	1925

Fig. 5.: Excerpts from the report “The Albanian Philharmonic” (D13/n.d. CAC)

This rubric surveyed individuals’ “prospects for [artistic] development” (*perspektiva e zhvillimit*), noting their education (“culture”), class background (*shtresa*), and age as a means to “activate” (*aktivizon*) or “orient” (*orienton*) individuals into ensembles or training programs—or not.

Cultural administrators’ efforts to systematically identify individuals for activation by the CAC in Tirana, however, initially failed to comprehensively target the nation’s talent. In practice, one’s physical location conditioned one’s ability to be identified—and thus “oriented”—for a career in “culture.” Rural areas provided fewer opportunities for training than towns or cities, which provided pedagogues, instruments, and clearer pathways to specialized instruction in Tirana. The best politically unconnected or rural individuals could hope for was selection for study at district high schools, though this in turn potentially raised one’s profile, and thus the possibility of identification by the center for advanced training or activation within the cultural apparatus. Composer Limos Dizdari described how, despite growing up in a large southern village with “nothing,” only “those *sazexhinjtë* [professional Roma musicians] who made folk music...with an impoverished musical technique,” he came to be “oriented” for music training at Tirana’s LAJM in the early 1950s:

I finished the 7-year school—there were not 8 or 9 grades, like today, there was a 7-year program there in [the small town of] Delvina. After I graduated, I continued at a high school that, for that time, was very good, there in [the southwestern city of] Gjirokastra. There I had my first contact with music... A very talented person, extraordinarily

talented, the great Tonin Harapi was in Gjirokastra, and I met him there, and he became my first teacher... This is how [my training] came to be oriented. (Limos Dizdari, interview, June 2010)

Dizdari's fortuitous journey from Delvina to Gjirokastra and Tirana demonstrates the promise and limits of the postwar cultural administration's procedures to organize potential intellectuals. Had the young pupil lived in a larger city, he might have been awarded a spot directly in a Tirana school; had he not received a spot at Gjirokastra, he could have remained in his home village.

A national politics of exclusion inflected Dizdari's Gjirokastra meeting with composer Tonin Harapi. One of Shkodra's leading young musicians, Harapi nevertheless found himself exiled to a district high school because he was viewed as politically suspect for having attended seminary school in the late 1930s. Musicians in prewar cultural centers Shkodra and Korça were more easily identified for advance training in Tirana and, following Comrade Tikhon's 1949 offer to accept students at Soviet conservatories, the Soviet Union. Most musicians identified for "specialization" abroad, for example, passed through the People's Army Choir, which served as a conduit to foreign programs; all came from urban areas with well-developed cultural institutions. Thus practices of accumulation and identification also were inflected by the uneven penetration of Albania's early enlightenment apparatus in the 1940s and 1950s.

The implementation of these administrative procedures to accumulate and identify cultural materials and talented individuals raised organizational problems that, in necessitating practical solutions, obligated administrators to begin defining themselves as society's directing force. The tendency for ideologically lax or "incompetent" district culture specialists to shirk "ideo-political" responsibilities in favor of non-political, social activities, for example, enabled administrators to create novel political roles. Cultural clubs attached to cooperatives, which quickly became "cafes and gaming halls" (*bufera e salla lojnash*), prompted administrators to form

policy statements on these institutions' ideo-political functions, and to remind local intellectuals to “accumulate and activate individuals of science, art, and culture for activities and scientific, cultural, and artistic production” (D1/1949 CAC:1-2). In creating forums for administrators to direct “cultural life,” an administration provided Tirana’s elites novel opportunities to hone critical discourses on themselves and the role of the arts in a “communist” country. At the same time, administrative inefficiency and regional institutions’ refusal of “correct forms of organization,” as described in directives issued to the CAC by the Central Committee's Office of Propaganda, evidenced to administrators and political elites alike the nation-state’s “lacks.” The implementation of a Marxist-Leninist program targeting “culture and the arts” enabled the production of a “people” and directing elite, but also a socialist mode of cultural production—albeit one with structural limitations, especially as manifested within an incipient socialist mode of cultural production.

ADMINISTRATION’S LIMIT

Tirana’s primary site for musical production, Radio Albania, demonstrates the deeper structural contradictions of production faced by early cultural administrators. In the 1940s and 1950s, Radio Tirana continuously lacked qualified specialists, technical equipment, and broadcast-ready materials. Founded in 1939 to broadcast Italian wartime propaganda (Muka 2008:16), the Radio reached a predominantly illiterate population with state news, music, cultural programs, and political lectures following the LNÇ. Because only a small number of households owned radio receivers, local authorities moved quickly to erect public loudspeakers in town and village squares. On assuming control of Albania's airwaves, however, partisan

guerrillas had found little material to broadcast and few trained specialists.³² Radio Tirana's 1945 sound archives (*fonoteka*) included only twenty recordings of local “folkloric” songs or dances and fifteen “stylized” folk songs performed by lyric singers (Strakosha 1969:3). Early employees supplemented existing recordings with their own gramophone records of Anglophone popular and European concert music, and several small ensembles (*orkestrinë*) performed live, sometimes recording performances on soft decelite records for future playback, though these quickly degraded with use (Këlliçi 2003:38). Into the 1950s, Albanian-produced material continued to comprise just over two hours of daily programming, and broadcasts relied heavily on recordings of concert music ensembles and professionalized folk groups from elsewhere in the eastern bloc.³³

Repeated instructions from the Office of Agitation and Propaganda at the Central Committee to better the Radio’s “forms of organization” and to replace unskilled personnel often went unheeded due to a lack of available specialists.³⁴ Directors resorted to invoking personal relationships with eastern bloc radio station directors in order to obtain much needed raw

32 At the conclusion of the first Radio Tirana broadcast following the capital's “liberation,” the “artistic group” (*grupi artistik*) of the partisan guerrilla column “Dajti,” including Llazar Morcka, Koço Timko, Koço Uçi, Nesti Uçi, and Hysen Pelingu, who performed a short program of “Albanian songs” (Këlliçi 2003:37).

33 A typical daily ten-hour program broadcast 25 April 1951, for example, was divided into morning, afternoon, and evening emissions. The morning program broadcast music, morning physical exercises, and the reading of the lead article in the daily *Voice of the People*. The afternoon included programs for children, discussions, art music, and news. The evening program broadcast folk and art music, some dance music, live and pre-recorded interviews, and a nightly link to Moscow for its Albanian-language news program. See Appendix A for a typical program from this period.

34 The internment or execution of specialists perceived to have been sympathetic to Italian propagandists or, after 1948, Yugoslavia, caused an acute shortage of qualified personnel, as new hires had to learn “on the job” with visiting technicians, or else were sent abroad for “specialization.” Journalist Skifter Këlliçi (2003), for example, catalogues in plodding detail the ongoing concerns with employees’ “professional level” throughout his study.

materials—whether replacement parts, broadcast-ready recordings, or blank magnetic tape (Këlliçi 2003:63, 67).³⁵ Some administrators, however, found creative ways to accumulate new materials for broadcast.³⁶ In one rare success, Abdullah Grimci arranged a “Folk Olympiad” modeled on Soviet festivals in 1949, which brought folkloric groups to Tirana for a series of concerts and recordings (Grimci 1999:125).³⁷ Yet even this project to accumulate “national” broadcasting materials depended heavily on Soviet aid. A team of Russian recording engineers attended the Olympiad, bringing with them portable recording equipment and reels of tape.³⁸ This anecdote exemplifies the primary structural limit to cultural planning: administrators could only identify and accumulate a finite body of preexisting, “raw” materials. Lacking the technological or intellectual capacity to produce “original” artistic works, Albanian cultural

35 My sense is that top administrators at the Radio and CAC often found creative ways to “work around” bureaucracy or lack of funds. When Grimci needed to buy musical instruments for the Radio Orchestra, for example, he wrote to companies in countries with trade relations with Albania and paid from the CAC budget—bypassing the slow-moving Ministry of Trade (Grimci 1999:124).

36 According to one official (1951), “The issue of original material continuously preoccupies the Radio-Committee...and while time after time we transmit Soviet pieces as well as those from people's democracies, a lack of original pieces is felt” (quoted in Këlliçi 2003:71). Efforts to record high-quality performances of repertoire by local performers occupied the Radio's music editors much of the time, and—in addition to efforts to train more skilled personnel—formed the primary concern of employees seeking to provide variety and “professional” broadcasts.

37 An issue of the popular magazine *Radioprogram* (12 August 1951:4) reported on the recording of “our folk music, partisan [songs], and that [music] of peace and [socialism's] building”: “The repertoire to be recorded includes folk [*popullore*] music and folkloristic [*folkloristike*] music from all the regions of Albania. The best groups of our country will be recorded, the orchestra-s, and lyric and folk singers, the chorus and Philharmonic Orchestra and the chorus of the People's Army. This will be done in Tirana and in some of the main districts of our country. The repertoire to be recorded was chosen by a special commission assembled for this task.”

38 In 1951, the Radio received 141 magnetic tapes for recording, and the following year, one hundred reels, but also over three hundred texts of an “ideological-political character” for use in the recording of new songs (Këlliçi 2003:72-3). To this point, I have not found any other references to these texts in my archival work.

production remained dependent on non-local sources—with serious ideological consequences for Tirana’s elites.

A Means of Musical Production

Defined by their concern with raising society’s cultural level, elites found Albania's “lack”—whether of culture specialists, locally produced works, or infrastructure—deeply troubling. The local creation of national cultural products came to be viewed as indexical of Marxist-Leninist “progress,” yet a centralized cultural administration initially emphasized not the production of new materials, but—no less ambitiously—the rapid organization and systematization of existing ones. Cultural and political elites thus found in their early efforts to administer “culture and the arts” a contradiction immanent to the system itself. Though major “progress” was measured by the *creation* of new works, administrators expended the most effort in centrally organizing, with much difficulty, “raw” resources.

The strategic assemblage formed by the articulation of cultural resources, institutions, discourses, and practices might be understood as a “means of musical production.”³⁹ Here I intend to invoke Marx’s terminology as a heuristic diagrammatic of a particular configuration enabled by early Albanian socialist cultural policies. Not necessarily the result of an intentional strategy, the emergence of this means instead stemmed from the conditional and fortuitous arrangement of certain procedures and forms of organization. For Marx, the relationship of

³⁹ My account here was suggested by and shares key resonances with Katherine Verdery’s theorization of socialist cultural production as subject to the same “motor” as the socialist economic system itself (see especially 1991:430ff.), which is to accumulate *allocative power*. This insight is derived from her notion that socialist states derived their power from monopolizing the *capacity to allocate resources*. In the sphere of “culture,” this means the state sought to maximize its capacity to allocate cultural products, according to Verdery, in two ways: first, by publishing encyclopedias, dictionary, other compendia that would be utilized (i.e., as “raw material”) to produce novel works; and second (and for Verdery, more importantly), by retooling *language* as a tool of ideological production (ibid.:430-1).

individuals (or “labor”) to a means of production determined a society's mode of production. Historically situated *instruments of labor*, such as factories or infrastructure, *subjects of labor*, such as raw materials and natural resources, and *means of distribution*, a way to distribute products, comprised the social relations of production. By controlling the means of production, Marx theorized, certain social groups (e.g., capitalists) dominated society by monopolizing its economic life. While Marx intended his analysis as a critique of capitalist social relations, his theorization also grounded Marxist-Leninist policies to a certain extent. In Soviet-style societies, for example, the collectivization of agricultural labor was intended to transform both a means of production and the social relations to that means.

In Albania, a centralized cultural administration enabled the emergence of a potential *means* of production, but did not target the relationship between *creative labor* and that means. A “culture” that was the “property of the people” implied music, plays, or books accessible to non-elites, but not the transformation of non-elites' relations to a means of cultural production. The cluster of interrelated practices I termed the “administration” of musical culture fit approximately into a project to create a *socialist means of cultural production*, without expanding the nation-state's pool of *cultural labor* by, for example, training non-elites to compose, sculpt, and so on. Campaigns to train literate readers or choristers may have produced potential audience or ensemble members, but not potential *creative labor*. The problems arising from the narrow scope of administrators' projects—especially a lack of personnel able to create “original” cultural products, whether radio shows, novellas, or symphonies—thus outline the structural limits of early cultural politics. By ascribing to the nation-state a “lack” of culture and civilization, socialist-modernist discourses paradoxically injected a sense of urgency—but also an historical inevitability—into cultural planning.

The centralization of a means of cultural production unfolded across three mutually constitutive sites. Initially, culture administrators—working in concert with APL officials and foreign advisors—installed a cultural infrastructure, or cultural production's *instruments of labor*. Socialism's exemplary *instrument*, the state publishing house, posed practical limitations to administrators: local presses could not produce polished musical scores, which had to be outsourced to Romania. The state re-purposed available *instruments*, such as radio stations, but also created new ones, such as the LAJM or (later) research institutes. Radio Tirana, for example, functioned as a site for the collective production of works such as broadcasts and recordings and, until 1991, its studio remained the only facility in Albania for producing audio, effecting a monopoly on recording. More abstractly, the LAJM forged “talent” into usable forms, whether ensemble conductors or culture house directors. Indeed, the terms of pedagogy at the LAJM point to a conception of talented individuals as “raw material”: through “training” (literally, in local parlance, *formimi*), the LAJM molded or “formed” individuals to fill the positions within a mode of cultural production, rather than cultivating *labor* to work its means.⁴⁰ Sites such as the Radio and LAJM depended on a ready supply of raw materials, or *subjects of labor*, which included both a physical (recording tape, instruments, scores) and abstract (transcriptions, “talent”) material basis. The CAC expended much effort overseeing the importation of instruments, blank recording tape for the Radio, and sheet music, but also “blocked” certain materials (foreign encyclopedias, dictionaries, or other compendia) individuals might have used

40 This is not to deny the creativity of individuals who came out of these schools, but to note that they were trained in ways that prioritized their ability to “fit” into predefined roles at culture houses or as members of performing ensembles. Sokol Shupo, c. 2004-5, has made similar, albeit polemical, critiques about how the LAJM and Conservatory were founded to train performers and directors, not people with critical thinking skills necessary for musicology, ethnomusicology, and so on. See especially Shupo’s open letter to the Minister of Culture (Shupo 2004). But see also Lazri 2009.

to create novel works outside the oversight of a state-administered mode of production. Drives to produce local compendia (e.g., translations of Marx and Lenin, publications of Russian music scholarship, songbooks, folklore collections), or *subjects*, enabled potentially novel products (e.g., literature, scholarship, or compositions) that would necessarily conform to state-administered aesthetic and ideological standards, given that intellectuals generated them from *subjects* containing approved matter. Finally, the coordination of *subjects of labor* with *instruments of labor* depended on a *means of distribution*: the flexible network of institutions, culture houses, and schools, which served as bases for accumulation, but also administrators' contacts abroad, which secured materials unavailable in Tirana.

In strictly schematic terms, cultural planning relied on administrators able to manage an array of existing personnel committed across diverse contexts, but also having a second sense for the political field in order to balance ideological concerns (e.g., the pro-Italian background of any one individual personnel) with practical ones (e.g., the LAJM's pressing need for a cello instructor). Judged on their ability to “get things done,” administrators were not expected to *create* new cultural products or orientations, and their discussions, concerns, practices, and orientations revolved around organizing a means that adhered faithfully to Soviet models. Calls for original works thus stretched administrators' projects to produce a potential *means* enabling the creation of novel artistic works to its limits. This is not to say that any one individual administrator's potential to create new works was stretched. Indeed, all elite administrators composed works, though these individuals were no doubt hampered by a variety of practical constraints—a lack of time due to ensembles, committees, or teaching duties, or impoverished technical expertise due to their eclectic or interrupted training between the 1920s and early 1940s. Yet given the schematic structural terms outlined above, in Albania there nevertheless

existed a dearth of *creative labor*.

Khrennikov's Offer

Following Comrade Tikhon Khrennikov's 1949 visit, those conservatories in the Soviet Union and other eastern bloc countries that accepted Albanian students became sources for the *creative labor* necessary to Tirana's mode of cultural production. Members of a generation born between the late 1920s and early 1930s—too young to have studied abroad before the war or to have participated actively in the LNÇ—composed the cohort that went abroad for “specialization” (*specializim*) beginning in 1950.⁴¹ Tish Daija (b. 1926), born into a patriotic family, participated in local cultural societies then dominating urban life in 1930s Shkodra.⁴² Enrolled in local Franciscan schools, Daija studied solfège, took piano lessons, and sang in choirs. Informally, Daija performed Italian popular songs with friends at local dances, though Italy's 1939 conquest disillusioned many patriotic young men who had been oriented toward Italian culture. Following the LNÇ, Daija was named music teacher to the southwestern city of Vlora, where he directed several folkloric ensembles while studying the local music. After three years of service, Daija received the “right to study” (*drejtë studimi*) from the Ministry of Education—he left for Moscow in 1950. Other young men followed similar routes. Tenor Xhoni Athanas, born in Brockton, Massachusetts in 1925 before returning with his parents to their home city of Korça, had performed as a soloist in Gaço Avrazi's People's Army Chorus before being selected for study in the Soviet Union. The Chorus served as a conduit to the Soviet Union:

41 Other individuals were identified through national poetry or essay competitions, a small percentage, through personal or family connections to APL officials (see Arapi 1995). In 1930s urban cultural centers, especially Shkodra, and, as former members of prewar cultural societies, holding sufficiently patriotic credentials and nationalist outlooks, potential students were easily identified as future talent by the late 1940s incomplete cultural apparatus.

42 My discussion on Daija derives primarily from Hajati 2006, but see also Daija 1999.

Avrazi's assistant conductor Çesk Zadeja, who would become known as the “father of Albanian concert music,” won a composition scholarship in 1951, as did several other members.

One’s political background also conditioned one’s opportunities for advanced training, though several individuals from families lacking a “correct stance” during the LNÇ in time won the right to study through talent, perseverance, or personal connections. Nikolla Zoraqi, son of an Aromanian intellectual father, as well as the nephew of noted Korçar tenor Mihal Ciko, had received advanced training in Tirana from Italian musicians in the 1930s.⁴³ Though a virtuoso violinist—when a Soviet pedagogue visited the LAJM, Zoraqi served as his teaching assistant—Zoraqi's family and, perhaps, ethnic background, precluded him from winning the right to study abroad immediately.⁴⁴ Only after proving himself over several years—including composing a cantata about Sino-Albanian friendship overnight during a National Chorus tour in Beijing—did he receive a scholarship to a Russian conservatory. Tonin Harapi’s route to Moscow was similarly circuitous. The Shkodran’s Roman Catholic background, and short stint in a local seminary, made him ideologically suspect. Harapi briefly enrolled at the LAJM until—harassed by zealous classmates—he was expelled. The musician’s talent, however, was undeniable. After graduating from Shkodra's state high school, Harapi was appointed music director in Gjirokastra before receiving a scholarship in 1957 (see Kalemi 2003).

Musicians trained in the USSR became an especially close group. Many came from similar urban backgrounds and had grown up together in Shkodra or Korça; all bonded through

43 *Arumunë*, or *vllah* (Vlach), compose a small, often bilingual (Albanian and Aroman) minority in southern Albanian-speaking areas. Today recognized as an official ethnic minority, Albanian-speaking individuals of Aromanian descent may at times be framed as “non-nationals.”

44 See interview with Zoraqi’s nephew, Zhani Ciko (5 February 2010). See also Zoraqi 2006 and Ciko 2009. Robert Radoja provides another example. The class assistant in piano classes as a student at LAJM, Radoja nevertheless was repeatedly passed over for study in the Soviet Union because of his family's Catholic background (interview, 12 March 2010).

common experiences abroad. Soviet-trained intellectuals also shared key artistic and social sensibilities. Formed both by 1930s cultural societies with names like “Progress” (*Përparim*) or “Knowledge” (*Ditura*) and 1950s Soviet ideo-aesthetic training, elites came to deeply understand Albanian backwardness relative to Soviet civilization. During his journalism studies in the Soviet Union, for example, intellectual and future RTSH general director Marash Hajati described Moscow as creating “the impression that you are following the continuation of one of those artistic or documentary films sometimes shown about the colossuses of history, literature, music, painting; it seems like you have entered the film, and are trailing after Pushkin, Tolstoy, Lermontov, Dostoyevsky, Tchaikovsky, Mussorgsky, and so on” (Hajati 1998:17). Though a presocialist Albania “where sicknesses wreaked havoc, where a person died even from a mosquito bite” had been transformed into a socialist one with “doctor and nurse, as well as the beautifully packaged pills [found] in other states,” there remained much to be done (ibid.:37). Disembarking at the port city of Durrës on their return from the Soviet Union, Hajati and his fellow students could not find a car to take them the forty kilometers to Tirana. The town had only one or two, and so Hajati “passed the time waiting by observing, like some boring performance, villagers from Kavaja and Shijak who had come for some problem to the district center. They had to wait good deal of time to solve their troubles, and they repeatedly refreshed themselves with water at a well. First, they removed their *opinga*, laying these traditional moccasins [out] to dry. Then, they put their feet in the water ... and drifted into a light sleep” (ibid.:38-9).

An elite, Soviet-trained fraternity provided Albania a cohort of committed teleocrats: social engineers specializing in posing questions—and solutions—about society’s future path. With the term teleocrats, I understand foreign-trained intellectuals not only to have held

advanced technical or ideological training, but also to be characterized by a distinctive stance toward “society,” “the nation,” and “the people.” In one sense, the Soviet cohort shared with administrators an understanding of the social needs of a backward people. Such “needs” were framed differently in different spheres. In the music field, both administrative and teleocrat elites targeted the cultivation of “national” concert music and the development of folklore as a means to better society. Yet while each group imagined a malleable society amenable to rationalization at the national level, teleocrats came to have a sensibility to propose the novel ends to which elite intervention might be put.⁴⁵ These creator-intellectuals formed a powerful, and potentially divergent, intellectual bloc distinct from that of administrator-intellectuals like Abdullah Grimci or Baki Kongoli. Rather than stake its claim to social space through the administration of culture, however, this creative labor would orient itself toward the creation of new works.

CULTURAL PRODUCTION’S MARGINS

Despite efforts to fully oversee and centralize culture and the arts, aspects of musical life not recognizable as essential to either a modernist or nationalist cultural politics tended to remain at the margins of administrators’ projects to rationalize a socialist means of cultural production. In particular, a range of music practices drawing on non-local, cosmopolitan western genres were not immediately legible to administrators’ projects. Elements of a domestic and civil domain of practice cultivated by administrators and Soviet-trained musicians alike, popular music practice had to be rendered administrable, as a potential object for identification and accumulation.

Several interrelated spheres coded, for both their participants and administrators, as “private,”

45 Verdery 1991a, Feher et al. 1983, and others point out how intellectuals are often viewed as “dangerous” by regimes, because they work society's “subjectivity forming means” (Verdery 1991b), or are able to propose potentially divergent views from those of state political elites. Yet not all intellectuals are “dangerous” in this way. While teleocrats with a sensibility to create and produce alternative social visions might be, administrators were, at worst, viewed as incompetent rather than potentially disruptive.

and thus inadmissible to state administrative projects, gradually came to be incorporated into a socialist means of production over the course of the 1950s

The Urban Salon

When young violinist Nikolla Zoraqi visited Shkodra in 1947, his host, Tish Daija arranged for several “musical evenings”:

We met at the house of Miss Ilda Melgushi, a piano teacher. We called her “miss,” because she was a teacher, but also because she was a bit older and was single. She played the piano well enough, was pretty, dressed well; a true bourgeois. She put the whole little house and her hospitality at our disposal. There, Nikolla displayed all his talent and skill on the violin. He was untiring and . . . every piece he executed was [warmly] greeted by those attending, which were mostly youth [*rini*], but we also did not lack older people, neighbors from the neighborhood [*në mehallë*], who were drawn in by Nikolla's violin. When Nikolla tired, Tonin [Harapi] continued on the piano. After Tonin, I accompanied the group on accordion as they sang some of my songs [composed in an urban Shkodran style]: “Çike o mori çike” [O my sweetheart], “Me lule të bukura” [Among the beautiful flowers], “Ndal, bre vashe” [Stop, my maiden]. (Zoraqi 2006:164)

In major cities after 1945, the vestiges of a 1930s salon culture cultivated by private theater and music societies provided a learned audience and material basis for these “musical evenings” (*mbrëmje muzikore*). Yet the eclectic musics performed at semi-private salon evenings by the “truly bourgeois” of Albania’s 1940s towns and cities were conceptualized neither as a target for policy nor subject to strict oversight. Impromptu chamber ensembles performed both urban song and foreign light classical works, and their primary audience was an urban group of aficionados.⁴⁶

By the 1940s, many urban lyric songs performed at these evenings had taken on the cast of exemplary, in some cases anonymous, expressions of “national” creativity, though musicians

46 Daija alluded coyly to the “older people, neighbors in the *mehallë*” (Tk. “neighborhood”) as distinct from “the youth” (*rini*), the former presumably drawn to the sound of the violin because of their tastes for the Ottoman-derived *aheng* ensemble, not the cosmopolitan sounds of Miss Melgushi's salon. In addition to lessons on the family piano, Harapi's initial musical education came from listening to concert music and opera on their Italian-mark radio; his father Lec often read aloud from libretti so the children could follow along (Kalemi 2003:37).

continued to compose new urban songs in elevated regional styles.⁴⁷ Gjon Simoni, a contemporary of Daija also trained as a composer in the Soviet Union, both arranged older songs and composed new ones. Able to be framed by composers and their sympathizers as “national” pieces rather than regional or bourgeois expressions, several urban songs were published in 1950s songbooks alongside rural folk arrangements, including Simoni’s song “Lule-Borë” (The Snowdrop Flower). In one such early arrangement (see *Këngë Shqiptare* 1959:123-5), Simoni’s piece largely followed the mold of 1930s-era urban lyric songs. Set in 7/8 with an arpeggiated piano accompaniment, “Lule-Borë” featured two contrasting harmonic and dynamic sections: a *piano* “verse” for solo bass in the home key (g minor), and a *forte* choral “refrain” in a related key (G major, cadencing on the minor). The text, by local Shkodran writer Zef Pali, has to do with images of love and beauty; it is a love song to a young girl, the “lule-borë” of the title—though an editor placed this 1959 version under the section heading “songs for the building of socialism.”

Performed by eclectic groupings of available instrumentalists, these urban song repertoires coexisted with foreign songs learned from the radio. By the early 1950s, Italian songs popularized through the Sanremo Festival of Italian Song became especially popular with younger musicians. In Shkodra, an ensemble featuring violin, trumpet, accordion, and drumkit regularly performed the latest Italian repertoire at an outdoor restaurant.⁴⁸

There in the evenings, the passionate amateurs of Italian song assembled, old and young, and listened to the beautifully executed melodies, often accompanying them approvingly with applause, like at a concert. . . . There was not then any recording apparatus. The melodies of the songs were learned by listening to the Italian radio. (Kalemi 2003:49)

47 See Koço 2002 on analogous genres in the southern city of Korça, variously termed *pare*, *serenata* (serenades) and *kënga karakteristike korçare* (characteristic Korçar songs).

48 This group included violinist Ndoc Shllaku, trumpet player Palush Koliqi, drummer Palokë Kurti, and accordionist Kol Gjinaj.

Despite the official ban on the private importation of foreign materials, especially from “fascist” Italy, the members of this ensemble found a creative way to import the latest sheet music. Accordionist Kol Gjinaj, a passionate stamp-collector, used a personal connection with a Muscovite musician—and fellow philatelist—to secure music parts in exchange for Albanian stamps (*ibid.*:50).

The University

With the founding of the State University in 1957, these eclectic music evenings migrated to Tirana, where musicians gradually began incorporating more current, fashionable western dances into their repertoire. For participants, these evenings were coded as “intimate” (*intime*), intended to be “entertainment” (*dëfrim*) for close circles of friends. Urban students and recently returned foreign-trained pedagogues formed the audience for this cosmopolitan university culture, which began to be oriented toward foreign songs over Albanian urban lyric ones. When Moscow-trained sociologist Hamit Beqja returned to Tirana in the mid-1950s,⁴⁹ he found himself part of a diverse social group cutting across regional origins and professional affiliations:

We didn't have any work ties, nor any professional character [to our friendship]. Simply social. All of a young age—around 25. All single. . . . Our society, as it can be said, was a “table” society. After work, or on days off, we got together at a cafe. There we got a little something, stayed, drank a glass of *raki*. We talked freely, about everything. Sometimes we stayed whole hours. . . . At that time those things we called 'dance evenings' were in fashion. The biggest ones were held in restaurants or public bars of this nature, or at work centers. The smaller ones we made at the house of a friend, that had any good-sized room, for 15-20 people. The girls, as usual, were students, the majority dorm students. Generally, they were emancipated girls and very dignified. We behaved very respectfully towards them. (Zoraqi 2006:196-7)

“Dance evenings” (*mbrëmja vallzimi*), student-organized parties for mixed groups, further provided a non-state administered mechanism to identify to listeners in Tirana exemplary

49 This information derives from a memoir of Nikolla Zoraqi’s family in Zoraqi 2006; I excised Zoraqi’s name simply for reasons of clarity.

vocalists and instrumentalists, several of whom gained a measure of local fame and performance experience. The most popular of these singers was Vaçe Zela, a young woman from the district town of Lushnja. Zela had quickly risen to prominence as a performer of arranged folk songs at her hometown culture house. Having relocated to Tirana for high school, Zela began performing a diverse repertoire of “light music [i.e., popular] songs and, especially, foreign ones, the Spanish, French, Italian, and Latin-American ones, [which] gave her a great popularity in artistic student circles and at the various performances that were being organized in the capital” (Agolli 2001:22).

The ‘Modern’ Orchestrina

Dances in large villages, an outgrowth of salon culture, came into fashion just before the war and provided a second source of popular music practice understood as outside the purview of a national administration. Incompletely integrated into state-administered institutions and policies, the instrumental groups that performed at prewar dances were later formed at culture houses, pioneer houses, and secondary schools, as well as Radio Tirana and Radio Shkodra. These ensembles were understood as “modern”:

In the period before the war, evenings were organized in a [large southern] village near ours, in Hoçisht. There, young people put on balls [*ballo*], or tangos, which is what they were, women and men together. Hoçisht was maybe an hour and a half away from our village. We, guys in the village, went there especially in the summer, where we had picnics, too. We had a group with mandolins, an accordion, and we played these like the moderns [*modernet*]. (Dritëro Agolli in Fevziu 2010:267)

Immediately following the LNÇ, Shkodra's State Gymnasium began organizing similar “modern” ensembles under the direction of local instrumentalists who, overseen by local officials, performed weekly dances for returning partisans (Hajati 2006:48-9). Officials at Radio Shkodra organized a “folk orchestrina” (*orkestrinë populllore*), presumably playing stylized arrangements of folk songs, in distinction to a “modern orchestrina” (*orkestrinë moderne*),

directed by composer Prenkë Jakova, which presumably performed European-style dance music for live broadcasts (ibid.:49). At Radio Tirana, similar ensembles performed semi-regularly; it is not clear how formal these groups were.⁵⁰

Not part of a coherent policy on popular music, “modern” orchestras nevertheless began to be included at government-sponsored events targeting an emergent social segment, *rinia*, or “the youth.” In the 1930s, a number of cultural organizations founded sports teams, theater troupes, and choral ensembles for “students” (*studentë*) and “young men” (*djelmuria*, lit. “[male] youths”)⁵¹ that, following the example of the Soviet Union, were later consolidated into a government-administered “youth” movement.⁵² At a Youth Congress in Tirana during the summer of 1946, for example, students in Shkodra assembled a small orchestra featuring a violin, trumpet, trombone, saxophone, clarinet, cello, and double bass, which performed seven songs composed by ensemble members.⁵³

50 At Radio Tirana in 1948, Këlliçi lists the following groups: an “orchestra” of twenty musicians, some of whom later became original elements in the Radio's concert music ensemble; a saze ensemble; a “characteristic group,” composed of northern Albanian performers (including the future star folk singer Luçie Miloti); a “Shkodran group;” and an “amateur group,” composed of Korçar musicians (2003:62). My sense is that the final two ensembles probably performed urban songs or popular music, though this is not clear from the source.

51 There may also have been some relation between these groups and western-style “boy scout” movements, which became extremely popular from about 1910 into the 1930s and aimed to instill “civic responsibility” and patriotic values young men in Britain and the United States. Youth scouting programs were imported to Albania in the early 1920s, without wide success.

52 During the Bolshevik revolution, “the youth” emerged as an important social category for future communists. The Komsomol (“Union of Communist Youth”) became incorporated increasingly into the structure of the party, but in its early years also functioned as “a site of agreement, negotiation, and resistance between and within generations about what a communist should be and how best to make one” (Gorsuch 2000:42).

53 Bandleader Prenkë Jakova, a Shkodran composer, led an ensemble composed of Ndoc Shllaku and Injac Zamputi (violin); Zef Gruda, Tish Daija, and Muhamet Grimci (saxophone and clarinet); Tonin Zadeja and Tonin Harapi (trumpet); Abdullah Grimci (trombone); Kolë Gjinaj (cello); Çesk Jakova (double bass).

In Tirana, the concert of Shkodra had indescribable success. They were obliged to give many concerts to youth organizations, in work centers and ... military depots, and at Radio Tirana. With this orchestra they created a model, and later many cities made such musical organizations, which were applauded and well-liked. (Hajati 2006:50)

The notion that the Youth Congress group was the precursor to future ensembles may overstate its importance; I found no materials linking this particular ensemble to other groups. Yet youth organizers' impulse to link "dance" music to "the youth" (*rinia*) remained a commonsense strategy local directors often deployed. Throughout the 1950s, administrators outside the CAC also oversaw several attempts to gather and publish western-style popular songs. In 1957, for example, the Central Council of Professional Unions published a series of songbooks "[w]ith the purpose to come to the aid of artistic amateur groups of clubs, culture palaces, red corners, and all other cultural institutions" (*Këngë për Masat I* 1957:1). This particular song collection was created in advance of the Sixth International Festival of Youth and Students, held the following year in Moscow. Union administrators hoped amateur music groups from work collectives would compete at regional and national song festivals to select a group to represent Albania in the Soviet Union under the direction of Bedri Dedja, a professor of education and psychology in Tirana. These efforts, however, remained ad hoc, and fell largely outside the official purview of music specialists at the CAC and LAWA.

The Estrada

Following the LNÇ, the state recognized two kinds of theatrical companies, each based on presocialist and wartime theater clubs or societies. Ten large, urban theater companies, such as the national *Teatri Popullor* in Tirana, staged traditional plays, while fifteen smaller "variety," or *estrada*, companies performed diverse programs with songs, acrobatics, and skits. Cultural societies had staged plays with political and social themes since the 1910s, and during the LNÇ, an underground partisan theater movement embedded with partisan columns performed semi-

improvised satirical skits and songs for the communist guerrillas (Papagjoni 1997:36). Postwar “estrada” groups were based on elements from both of these sources that, in practice and personnel, often overlapped. The term “estrada” derived from Russian practice, and indicated variety or music-hall performance.⁵⁴ After 1917, the Soviet state institutionalized and “elevated” a variety of pre-Bolshevik circus acts and “fair-booth” activities popular since the nineteenth century. MacFadyen (2002) relates the Soviet incarnation, which was largely standardized in the 1950s, to pre-revolutionary “cafe culture” and bourgeois, salon aesthetic tastes. Though similar in some respects to pre-Soviet Russia, 1930s Albanian theater had been not a form of mass entertainment, but part of an intellectualized project to create a “civilized” Albanian culture. Coded as dramaturgical rather than musical, the eclectic postwar repertoire of western-style popular songs, partisan songs, and arranged folk songs that dominated estrada performances did not concern administrators like Kongoli or Grimci.

Self-taught estrada singers often had only on-site musical training oriented to the tastes of local audiences. Rudolf Stambolla, an actor at the State Theater in Tirana whom I discuss in the following chapter, sang in a crooning style following the practice of Italian and Italian-American vocalists. Qemal Kërtusha, a 1950s “star” vocalist and actor with the Durrës estrada troupe, learned western light classical or popular pieces that showcased his impressive range—“several octaves, from the *do* below to two *do*-s above!”—and delivery (*impostimi*): “For example, I liked Italian songs, which were close to us. I liked all the great Italian singers. I really liked Claudio Villa, who had such a brilliant voice. I can say I listened [to him] a hundred times a day. I was listening in the morning, at lunch, when I got up from the afternoon nap, during dinner, just listening, listening, listening” (interview, 10 May 2010). Musical stars like Kërtusha cultivated a

54 Russians, in turn had adopted it from the French word *estrade*, “platform” or “stage” (see MacFadyen 2002:10ff.).

repertoire of foreign “show stoppers” that catered to particular audiences’ tastes, and the song “Granada” became Kërtusha’s signature piece.⁵⁵ Kërtusha recalled to me how his voice used to especially impress locals’ or visiting tourists’ foreign-born wives—women from Central Europe or the Soviet Union who, he implied, had more worldly tastes than the average *durrsakë*, or Durrës resident.

Dance Music’s Illegibility

Yet the musical practices, performance contexts, and repertoires described in the previous sections remained largely illegible to a national cultural administration throughout the 1950s, unable to be recognized in the light of a Marxist-Leninist programmatic knowledge or identified and managed through expert procedures of accumulation. Qemal Kërtusha, for example, tried and failed to secure a spot at the LAJM in the early 1950s. In Durrës, Kërtusha had consistently sought to better himself as an “artist,” seeking out vocalists with advanced conservatory training for guidance. Soprano Maria Kraja, a lyric singer trained in Austria (1930-4), worked with him when she visited his hometown, as did the urban lyric song composer and arranger Pjetër Dingu, assigned to direct the Durrës Culture Palace when Kërtusha was thirteen-years old. Yet Kërtusha's artistic pretensions notwithstanding, estrada performers did not fit into the programs of the state's music institutions. In the mid-1950s, Kërtusha auditioned before a state commission composed of operatic vocalists recently returned from the Soviet Union. The audition required a stylized folk song, a romance, and an operatic aria, all pieces Kërtusha had in his estrada repertory. For the romance, he sang Dingu's “Natën bilbili këndon në vetmi” (The nightingale sings at night); for the folk song, “O bilbil o more i mjerë” (O my poor nightingale), a Shkodran urban song popularized by 1930s lyric singers (see Koço 2004). At the estrada, Kërtusha

55 Skendi 1956:224 reports that during the 1950s, many Czech and Russian tourists began vacationing in Durrës.

performed a number of light opera “hits”: for his audition, he chose the dramatic “tears aria” from Friederich von Flotow's opera, *Martha* (1844), “Ach! so fromm, ach! so traut.” The commission—though duly awed, according to Kërtusha—found no program for him. Not viewed as potential candidates for musical training, estrada singers and others who performed this popular or “light” repertoire fit more readily into the theater fields. Vaçe Zela, for example, was also not admitted to the LAJM's vocal studio. After graduating from one of Tirana's academic high schools, Zela returned to her home district of Lushnja as the general music teacher to its surrounding villages. She soon returned to Tirana to audition for post-secondary programs, and was finally admitted—into not the music course, but the acting program (Agolli 2001:22-3).

Practical exigencies, however, inspired several administrators—and especially ones employed by the Radio—to begin compiling song collections. Between 1956 and 1962, cultural administrators edited and contributed to a number of songbooks of “Albanian dance music” (*muzikë vallzimi shqiptare*) featuring foreign tunes with Albanian-language lyrics. In 1957, the Ministry of Education and Culture published three volumes titled *Muzikë vallzimi nga Autorë të vëndit* (Dance music from local Authors). Volume III features sixty compositions by a variety of musicians, including directors, singers, and instrumentalists in state ensembles, high-level administrators, and district culture house directors.⁵⁶ Though compositions lack indications about instrumentation or arrangements, each melody has indicated above it appropriate harmonies and, without exception, a western-style popular dance rhythm, including foxtrot, tango, rumba, or “slllov” (meaning a “slow song”), and several varieties of waltzes (*vals lento* or simply *tempo di valzer*).

56 The first group included Hysen Pelinku, Koço Uçi, Llazar Morcka, Kostandin Trako, Gaço Avrazi, and Vath Çangu; high-level administrators included Baki Kongoli and Abdullah Grimci, and district culture house directors included Muharrem Xhediku and Leonard Deda.

Easily adapted to ensembles at smaller, regional culture houses and requiring only small expenditures, these songs proved attractive to administrators. Demanding only a violin, accordion, and guitar, easily found in most districts, and less-specialized musicianship skills (e.g., notational literacy, a conductor, or sheet music), the accessibility of the “modern orchestrina” accelerated the spread of “light” or “dance” compositions. The composition “Kur gjethët bjen në vjeshtë” (When the autumn leaves fall), composed by Leonard Deda, the music director at Shkodra's local culture house and recorded at Radio Tirana, provides one example of a typical 1950s “dance” song (*Muzikë vallzimi* 1957:26). Identified as a “tango,” “Kur gjethët...” has two contrasting sections in g minor: a verse, comprised of two four-bar phrases; and a refrain, comprised of three four-bar phrases. The first-person text, written by the composer in an elevated Shkodran dialect, narrates the loss of a lover, using the seasons as metaphors for the author's pain at being “abandoned”:

V2: T'kujtohen ty pranverat
 ah, puthjet me pasion
 kjo zemër s'i harron.
 Në qoftë se gjethët ranë
 të vyshkuna mbi dhe
 at'her kam me besua
 se sa e pabes je.

Do you remember those springs?
 Ah, those passionate kisses—
 this heart doesn't forget.
 If the leaves were to fall,
 withered, on the ground,
 only then will I believe
 that you are so unfaithful.

In its published version, only a vocal line with chords indicated (e.g., “sol-” for a g minor chord) above was notated; ensembles performing this or other compositions in this songbook would have created their own arrangements with available instrumentation.⁵⁷

Dance music songs gradually came to be understood as a sphere to be targeted at the level of national policy. Popular song nevertheless retained a certain ambiguity, especially with regard

57 An ensemble of guitar, clarinet, accordion, and double bass accompanied the actor-singer Rudolf Stambolla in a late 1950s recording. The recording began with an introduction of the guitar performing the verse material, before Stambolla performed the verse and refrain; a clarinet then performed the refrain as an orchestral interlude.

to their legal status. The intellectual property law of 1956, drafted in part under the advisement of Abdullah Grimci, listed the following categories of copyrightable materials under the article concerning texted musical pieces: suites of cantatas; choral songs with orchestra; mass songs and marches with piano accompaniment; songs for children; choral songs; songs in a folk style.⁵⁸ Though the 1956 law did not mention specifically any popular genres as copyrightable, a law the following year did set a pay scale for recorded pieces by “singers, actors, and interpreters” that listed “light” and “dance” music along with the categories mass songs, folk songs, songs for children, and “all other kinds.”⁵⁹ Yet the publication of dance songs also fit quite unambiguously into administrators’ projects to accumulate and organize cultural materials for small ensembles, or to create recordings for use at the Radio. In this way, the close imitation of foreign models demonstrates administrators’ practical efforts to form a repertoire for local use without necessarily proposing novel ideas about how an Albanian popular music should sound.

CONCLUSION: TIRANA, THE CENTER

As a kind of “nerve center” for culture and the arts, postwar Tirana came to provide elites a site for what intellectual Sadik Bejko described to me as a “propaganda system” characterized by a “vertical centralization ensuring unity of message from one institution to the next” (p.c., Sadik Bejko, 5 October 2010). Over coffee, the poet took me on a virtual “walking tour” of the early 1960s capital. The “system's monuments” occupied Tirana's center in Skanderbeg Square, from which a five-minute walk in any direction brought one to other primary institutions. The center housed several key edifices: the Theater of Opera and Ballet (TOB), Palace of Culture,

58 See <http://qpz.gov.al/doc.jsp?doc=docs/Vendim%20Nr%20324%20Dat%C3%AB%2010-08-1956.htm>, accessed 10 October 2011.

59 See <http://qpz.gov.al/doc.jsp?doc=docs/Vendim%20Nr%2038%20Dat%C3%AB%2014-06-1957.htm>, accessed 10 October 2011.

and National Library, all planned in the 1950s by Soviet engineers; Ministry buildings, erected by Italian troops in the 1920s but now topped by APL slogan-billboards. Nestled within these buildings one found the Ministry of the Interior—better known as the home of the Sigurimi, Albania's secret police, and its archives, or *dosje*—just south of the TOB complex. A short walk to the west along Durrës Street led to the CAC/Ministry of Education building; a block to the south down Kavaja Street brought one to a mansion that had been converted into LAW A headquarters, just steps from another imposing three-story home, this one adapted for use by Radio Tirana.

The installation of an apparatus to centralize, rationalize, and plan “culture” at a center in Tirana resulted in the emergence of new technologies to form a cultured social body, with both the nationalist and modernist tendencies of elites' teleological program resting on a foundational theoretical distinction between intellectuals and non-intellectuals, a vanguard and “the masses.” Yet if the terms “program” or “plan” seem to indicate a concerted, if not totalizing, attempt at social engineering, administration in practice—as a technology to recognize and reorganize society in terms of its cultural level—remained ad hoc, emergent, and subject to structural limitations.

As a “center,” Tirana also remained peripheral to Moscow, though this would soon change. Kenneth Jowitt has proposed two explanatory models for Soviet-style orders. Leninist “consolidation regimes,” or orders with a “castle-and-moat” profile, represent an earlier organizational phase contrasting with “inclusion regimes,” which tended toward supranational integration (Jowitt 1992:221). While Stalin's Soviet Union, a “consolidation regime,” was secure in its power to govern, it remained obsessed with the problem of its “identity,” and wary of “contamination” from outside. Until Stalin's death in 1953, the Soviet Union maintained what

might be thought of as mechanical relationships with other “castle regimes,” inducing the creation of self-contained, Soviet Unions-in-miniature throughout its sphere of influence. Stalin’s successor, Nikita Krushchev, initiated processes to integrate the eastern bloc’s “replica regimes” by moving the USSR from a “consolidation” model to an “inclusion” one. The bloc’s political-economic order nevertheless remained grounded by a key “founding myth” of Soviet primogeniture. Conflating the Bolshevik Revolution with the “sacred” political center of the USSR, Lenin had symbolically founded an order defined by the Soviet regime and experience, in the process obligating other Leninist parties to recognize this center as “the source of their primary institutional definition,” often through acts of “genuflection” (ibid.:165).

In Albania as elsewhere, this had key practical effects.⁶⁰ Local attempts to reproduce Soviet-style cultural institutions and programs resulted in the creation of a “castle regime” that replicated as faithfully as possible Soviet models of cultural, political, and economic administration. Indeed, the People’s Republic of Albania came to look very much like Jowitt’s “consolidation regime”: concerned with the problem of its “backwards” “identity,” the party-state obsessively sought to document and produce evidence of its modernization, especially in cultural terms.⁶¹ At the same time, Albanian elites’ “contamination anxiety” about external and internal “enemies of the people” attenuated domestic power struggles within the APL. As Krushchev began moving the Soviet Union toward an “inclusion” model by seeking to integrate the bloc’s disparate elements into a cohesive Soviet sphere, Tirana balked. Tensions between Moscow and Tirana further increased following Krushchev’s rapprochement with Tito’s

60 On the relationship between local cultural programs and the Soviet Union in Central Europe, see Jakelski 2009 on Poland and Svatos 2010 on Czechoslovakia.

61 Elsewhere in the bloc, issues of “identity” came to revolve primarily around national ideologies, especially in countries with sizeable ethnic minorities.

Yugoslavia (1955), and especially after Soviet proposals to utilize the country as the eastern bloc's "granary" leaked. The notion Albania would serve as an agricultural source, rather than a self-sufficient "castle regime," infuriated APL leaders deeply invested in "modernizing" the nation-state.⁶² In 1962, buoyed by an agreement with the People's Republic of China, the APL cut diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union.

In symbolic terms, this break allowed Tirana to emerge as a center in its own right—with far-reaching consequences. At Radio Tirana, for example, political orientations on Soviet "revisionism" were accompanied by instructions to stop broadcasting recordings of Russian or other eastern bloc ensembles, singers, and compositions. A push to purge the airwaves of non-Albanian-produced materials led to a new work plan stressing the reorganization of existing sound recordings, the accumulation of new gramophone records or the re-recording of degraded records, and the "enrichment" of repertoires of classical and popular music (D5/1962 RTSH). A new music commission, named in April, included administrators Grimci and Kongoli, conductors Efthim Dheri and Gaqo Avrazi, and instrumentalists Vath Çangu, as well as Soviet-trained composer Tish Daija and literary critic Shaplllo. Singers and song repertoires formerly at the margins of administrators' projects would, over the course of 1962, play an increasingly prominent role in intellectual debates, as employees sought to make Radio Tirana independent of

62 Party Secretary Enver Hoxha's personal authority rested in large part on his symbolic association with Stalin, which he cultivated himself over the next several decades. Hoxha's 1981 retrospective *With Stalin (Me Stalinin)*, provide the culminating example of this phenomenon. Because no photos existed of Hoxha and Stalin together, the photo on the cover had to be doctored to remove two individuals standing between the two leaders. Eastern bloc contemporaries recognized and even satirized Hoxha's symbolic link to Stalin: the Russian poet Yevtushenko, for example, published a mocking poem in 1962 including the following lines: "It seems to me, as though a telephone has been installed in his coffin: To Enver Hoxha, Stalin gives his instructions" (*Pravda* 21 October 1962). See www.osaarchivum.org/files/holdings/300/8/3/text/60-4-47.shtml, translated by Katherine von Imhof, for this version (accessed 11 October 2011). In Yevtushenko's official complete works, the explicit reference to Enver Hoxha is excised.

foreign musical material by creating a corpus of “national” popular music. Change enabled the production of novel forms of musical knowledge—and a genre that came to be known as “light music” (*muzikë e lehtë*). Indeed, when I asked 1950s estrada star Qemal Kërtusha when he began to be known as a “light singer,” he corrected me, saying: “Light music, light music. We did not put titles like ‘light music’ then [in the 1950s], we said, ‘singer of Albanian song.’ True [*mirëfilltë*] light music started in 1962, with the Festival” (interview, 10 May 2010).

CHAPTER THREE. INTERPRETING SONG

A song is not at *all* a simple thing. In three minutes, to express a clear thought—how is this possible when the composition is over before it has even begun? ... For my diploma, I created a cantata. Okay, with four movements, what happens if you do not create a clear thought in the first movement? You develop it in the second movement. And if it is not fully realized there? Okay, there is a third movement. And again? So you finish it in the fourth movement, you crystallize the thought. But if you do not arrive there? You have a finale. And it is not finished there, still? Okay, you have the coda. A piece like this has ‘waves,’ do you understand this word? It is a metaphor, of course—I mean a composition has waves, going up and down, until you reach the end. Like the sea, you have the entire ocean to construct one clear thought. But this is why, no other reason, that a song must be a professional work. Write down three big P-s in your notebook. Okay, now what does this mean? It means PRO-FESH-UH-NUL—professional. This is how a song must be created: professionally.
—*Composer Shpëtim Kushta, fieldnotes, 18 January 2010*

In fall 1962, the director of the music editorial office at Radio Tirana, Abdullah Grimci, began organizing a popular music song competition. With co-organizer Vath Çangu, Grimci invited eighty spectators and, fearing the hall would be empty, scheduled the four concerts for a small conference hall at the League of Artists and Writers building. As demand for tickets grew, Grimci moved the concerts first to the large theater of the State Estrada, then the Palace of Culture, and finally Tirana's largest hall at the State Conservatory. The response from young listeners

overwhelmed even this space: spectators found standing room only. Musicians' enthusiasm, too, surprised organizers. Songwriters deluged the Radio's music office with submissions following an open call for new compositions, prompting Grimci to organize an ad hoc selection commission. In late fall, several instrumentalists from the Radio Orchestra met at the club of the People's Theater to select twenty songs for the inaugural edition of what would become known simply as the Festival of Song.¹

Modeled after the Sanremo Festival of Italian Song (*Festival della canzone italiana di Sanremo*, est. 1953) and inspired by a similar contest organized the previous year in Shkodra,² the Festival of Song exemplified administrators' projects to organize and systematize music and the arts. A means to accumulate performance- and broadcast-ready material, Grimci's concerts fit more broadly into strategies tending to centralize and institutionalize cultural production. Intended to provide recordings for Radio programs and compositions for regional ensembles, the Festival also convened individuals from across multiple social fields, and its organization provided contexts for the formation of musical knowledge that, over the following decade, would come to restructure the music field. Previously tangential to music intellectuals' concerns, popular song soon dominated musicians' meetings as it catalyzed debate, competition, and novel practices of positioning among different social blocs.

In this chapter, I examine the emergence of the position of composer-professional—in local parlance, the creator (*krijues*)—through debate about the Festival's compositions.

Following the first Festival, the exemplary administrator Grimci seems to have recognized his

1 My description derives from Çangu and Grimci 1986 and the Festival's review in *Drita*, 23 December 1962.

2 Estrada director Mark Kaftalli and composer Prenk Jakova had organized a song contest the previous fall.

administrative cohort's falling fortunes vis-à-vis the "professionals":

There are some composers among us who present themselves with words as champions of the national character in music, but in practice act differently. ... I am sorry to say that some comrade composers and musicians³ do not judge our works by their real artistic values, but from the name [of the] school from which the composer graduated.⁴

Within twelve months, Grimci had lost his prominent position at the Radio to Soviet-trained composer Nikolla Zoraqi. By the close of the 1960s, the new "creator" had succeeded in articulating as his—and, more rarely, her—purview an apolitical sphere of musical creativity (*krijimtaria*) by divorcing popular music from the quotidian concerns of cultural administrators and institutionalizing a previously unstated corpus of guidelines on "correct" musical practice.

Yet the path to creator arose in an ad hoc, "aleatory" manner, a local response to Tirana's 1962 diplomatic break with the Soviet Union and subsequent lack of locally produced broadcast material.⁵ More broadly, the strategic interplay among competing musical practices, forms of expertise, programmatic knowledges, revolutionary political orientations, and international politics enabled the emergence of the novel position of "creator." I first describe claims to expertise made during the first two editions of the Festival of Song, examining how discursive practices, including discussions, critiques, and study articles on popular music, reorganized the

3 Here Grimci, like my musician-interlocutors in Tirana today, distinguished between "musician" (*muzikant*) and "composer" (*kompozitor*). The former term often implies "instrumentalist." Throughout this dissertation, I employ this distinction in order to register the constitution of these two, in local terms, separate and separable positions.

4 Abdullah Grimci, quoted in *Drita* 14 July 1963, "*Në plenum...nga diskutimet*" [At the plenum...from the discussion period].

5 My argument in this chapter draws broadly on the methodological insights of Foucauldian scholars who have located key shifts in policy or direction in small-scale, local struggles. Miller and Rose, for example, caution "there is no smooth path of development or evolution of policies, but ... lasting inventions have often arisen in surprising and aleatory fashion and in relation to apparently marginal or obscure difficulties in social or economic existence, which for particular reasons have come to assume political salience for a brief period" (1990:3).

space of the music field. I then trace how composers accommodated aspects of Albania's so-called "cultural revolution," selectively adopting elements of revolutionary orientations that reinforced their own practical sense for a progressive, national music. Finally, I describe how local perceptions about the nature of musical knowledge enabled particular claims to expertise that produced distinctions among social groups with competing interests.

MOSCOW AND TIRANA

Following Albania's diplomatic break with the USSR in 1962, Tirana's music field convulsed with change. Just as the state expelled foreign specialists, students' return from training at Russian conservatories concentrated music intellectuals in the capital, prompting administrators to either shuffle Soviet-trained intellectuals into existing institutions or to create new ones. Lacking arts programs to train advanced students, for example, the Ministry of Education and Culture rushed to approve courses in drama, figurative arts, and music. Tensions quickly emerged. Administrators perceived Soviet-trained colleagues, in whom the state had invested heavily, as threats. "Scandal mongers," Moscow-trained sociologist Hamit Beqja later recalled, referred to his cohort as the "red professoriate," in contrast to themselves, the "whites," trained predominantly in prewar western Europe (Beqja 2004). Writers factionalized into an "old" and "new" guard sparred, and young writers blocked from established print outlets founded their own publications (see Arapi 1997).⁶ In the music field, the establishment of new institutions such as the State Conservatory (1962), State Ensemble of Folk Songs and Dances (1957), the Theater of Opera and Ballet (1960), however, forestalled competition by providing newly arrived elites positions as well as resources alternative to those claimed by an administrative "old

⁶ Chief among these was *Drita*, an arts weekly I surveyed during my dissertation archival research. Much of my data on and understanding of cultural debates during the 1960s and 1970s derives from this journal.

guard.” Thus while administrator-intellectuals initially retained key posts at Ministries and the state Radio, Soviet-trained composers assumed posts as ensemble directors and at the Conservatory.

The diplomatic break also presaged a local ideological stiffening that branded the Russian-trained “reds” now composing the cultural field's new guard as politically suspect. Portrayed by Enver Hoxha as an issue of Marxist-Leninist truth, the break had damned the USSR as “revisionist.” Yet foreign-trained intellectuals had often “won the right” for study by expressing admiration for the Soviets; many students had married Russian women. Known Russophiles were obligated to temper their ardor for Tolstoy, while divorces broke up families.⁷ Further, political change encouraged the proliferation of non-Soviet discourses as Tirana, formerly peripheral to Moscow, emerged as a “center” in its own right, and one that no longer translated now-“revisionist” lines, but could produce its own. As political elites moved to establish a post-break alliance with the People's Republic of China founded on the exchange of material aid from Beijing's side, and on ideological support for Mao's line on Tirana's, the influx of novel political and cultural discourses increased exponentially.⁸

7 Several major writers and composers left Russian wives and, in some cases, children. *Koha Television* (May 2010) aired a short news report with interviews from several intellectuals' “Russian brides,” some of whom had been interned or imprisoned.

8 Historian Isa Blumi has hypothesized that in order to maintain their political authority, political elites manipulated domestic social dynamics through the eclectic, even chaotic, adoption of ideological positions culled not only from Chinese politics, but also from global Marxist movements more generally (Blumi 1997:304ff.). My sense is that while Blumi's analysis is compelling, he ascribes too much conscious intention to political actors. Among my interlocutors, there exists a strong notion that the Chinese alliance resulted in no exchange beyond financial aid because China is essentially “eastern” and Albania “western,” and thus could not have had a “true” alliance. Aesthetics professor Alfred Uçi, however, expressed to me his belief that the idea of a “personality cult” occurred to Hoxha from Mao's example (p.c., April 2010, Tirana). Hoxha's affinity for Josef Stalin (see Hoxha 1981) certainly also contributed to the form and practice of “personality” cult successively developed in Albania from the late 1960s on, which I do not treat in this dissertation.

A local version of the Chinese doctrine on “redness and expertise,” the notion that the ideal communist would demonstrate equal parts political rectitude and technical proficiency, enabled “reds” to potentially negotiate space for themselves. On the one hand, Soviet-trained music specialists were viewed as embodying a technical expertise indexed by their training in concert music practice, which political elites deemed to be both “advanced” and necessary to the state, as well as a facility with Marxist-Leninist aesthetic discourses.⁹ In contrast, “whites” held eclectic or incomplete musical training, an expedient know-how coupled with a functional understanding of Marxism-Leninism acquired from pamphlets read during the LNC or the practical grind of bureaucratic work.¹⁰ Yet by equating all things Soviet with “revisionism,” Party elites had politicized the former group’s expertise and put into question its political credentials. On the other hand, the ideological turn shifted cultural policy’s primary thrust away from the organization of “culture and the arts” at the district level to the production of new symbolic-ideological content at the national level. Deemed to require the “redness” and “expertise” claimed by foreign-trained intellectuals rather than the practical, sometimes *pro forma* ideological knowledge and musical know-how typical of cultural administrators, a policy

9 Unabashed Russophiles were both enchanted with Soviet levels of “culture” as well as deeply politically conscious. During my fieldwork, for example, I met a former CC member at an opera performance at the Theater of Opera and Ballet. He reminisced to me about the opera performances he attended while in Moscow during the 1950s, waxing nostalgic about how “advanced” Russian society had then seemed to him. He later declined an interview with me on ideological grounds, citing his objection to scholarship about Albanian socialism carried out by a scholar (me) embedded in the educational system of a capitalist country (the United States) and funded by a “capitalist” organization (the American Council of Learned Societies).

10 Anthropologist Alexei Yurchak (2006), for example, describes the practical work of a bureaucrat in the Soviet Union who kept a Rolodex of quotations from political speeches for his reports; my sense is that most administrator-intellectuals used analogous methods, as many were trained at short night courses on dialectics. It is not clear if any older composers, for example, read the translations produced by Russian-speaking reds during the 1950s, or if they viewed these as important or foundational to their work.

emphasizing cultural production prevailed.

Tirana's break with Moscow pushed Soviet-trained composers to not only elaborate novel theoretical issues, but also to propose their solutions. Scholars have recently begun untangling how Eastern European socialisms often enabled unforeseen or novel turns at the intersections between politics and cultural policy.¹¹ Here, I am concerned with the effects within the music field of discursive and practical claims to “intellectual knowledge,” a teleological form of knowledge-power “concerned with values that a society deems pertinent for orienting and regulating the behavior of its members” (Konrád and Szelényi 1979:30). A programmatic knowledge legitimizing state-socialism's vanguard, intellectual knowledge underpinned questions about the form and social utility of “culture and the arts”—“What is good? What is bad? How are we to act?” (ibid.)—that composer-creators progressively came to monopolize.¹² At the same time, “society deems pertinent” or “accepts as having cross-textual validity” intellectual knowledge (ibid.:30, 31), suggesting how ideas about “correct” culture must be recognized by certain authorities as legitimate. In Tirana, I view the legitimation of intellectual knowledge as a process occurring in distinct phases, examining in this chapter how claims became recognized both within the intelligentsia and among elites more generally. Consensus

11 Historian Sheila Fitzpatrick and graduate students she has trained have led efforts to critique the notion that Stalinism was the “historically inevitable outcome” of early Soviet history (Fitzpatrick 1986:357; see also Fitzpatrick 1992). In another vein of scholarship, ethnographic works have investigated novel social, historical, or political turns by refocusing analysis from the level of elite national politics to the quotidian (e.g., Yurchak 2006).

12 In their path-breaking work *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, Hungarian sociologists George Konrád and Iván Szelényi (1979) described their theorization of “the dictatorship of the proletariat [as] a myth, an ideology which legitimizes the power of an oppressive new social force”—the socialist intelligentsia. Resonant of the Foucauldian concept of programmatic knowledge, which “renders reality in the form of an object which is programmable” (Gordon 1980:248), the authors wrote that “[k]nowledge is power” implied a dual process: “Knowledge creates its own kind of power, but at the same time power also brings into being its own knowledge” (Konrád and Szelényi 1979:28)

among key members of the cultural and political fields as to what constituted the creative processes and products that might correctly shape an Albanian society of the future grounded the legitimacy of creator-intellectuals and their teleological projects.¹³ Yet the ascendancy of intellectual knowledge over the post-1962 cultural field facilitated change accomplished not by political directive, but through an accumulation of creative practices conditioned by, if not wholly reducible to, the structuring effects of state-socialist power. This power itself proved productive of a “creator” position to direct the music field.¹⁴ In recouping a sense of the strategies and tactics available to members of Tirana’s music field below, I trace but one narrative among several that might be written. This particular story begins at a moment

13 This notion of consensus about the validity of knowledge claims I adopt from sociologist Shyon Baumann (2007:49). Baumann describes how within art worlds, “Legitimation [of cultural productions as ‘art’] occurs when the unaccepted is made accepted through consensus,” and distinguishes between two categories of legitimacy. “For external legitimacy, consensus must exist among the general public. For example, for sculpture to be considered art, there must be consensus among artistic consumers, broadly defined, that this is the case. For internal legitimacy, consensus must exist among the inner members of an art world. For example, for abstract sculpture to be considered a valid genre of sculpture, consensus must exist among sculptors and art scholars and critics that this is the case” (ibid.). Cf. Bourdieu’s notion of “collective belief” (1993:Chapter 4).

14 I invoke the terms “field,” “positions-taking,” or “practical sense” from the later work of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (e.g., 1993). Writing on intellectuals, Bourdieu elaborates a conception of intellectual space as constituted through “struggles” among individuals making competing claims to positions within its hierarchy. While this terminology describes and assumes the framework of a capitalist order, I find his abstractions useful as a starting point (cf. Verdery 1991b). In Bourdieu’s theorization, various “fields” (literary, musical, and so on) articulate as part of a general “field of cultural production,” linked itself to broader structures of political-economic power. In Bourdieu’s analysis two poles (“high”/non-commercial and “low”/commercial) largely determine the contours of the “cultural field” (Bourdieu 1990:80), while positions within the field depend on the sensibilities of producers and consumers (Bourdieu 1993:30). “Producers” (i.e., composers, artists, and so on) position themselves within their given field largely through unconscious means—not necessarily strategically, but through an artistic sensibility, or habitus, that generates practices consonant with particular positions (Bourdieu 1990:89). In Tirana, political elites—and, in particular, APL leader Enver Hoxha—played significantly more determinative roles in structuring the cultural field than would be possible in a capitalist society. Moreover, categories such as “commercial” or “non-commercial,” as well as the role of consumption, had no bearing on local cultural production.

articulating several social fields: the close of the First Festival of Song in December 1962.

INTERPRETING THE FESTIVAL OF SONG

Between 21 and 26 December 1962, listeners gathered around radio sets at cooperative clubs, culture houses, or private homes tuned in to Radio Tirana for the inaugural broadcasts of the Festival of Song. Recorded live for an audience composed of participants and Tirana's university student song enthusiasts, the concerts' audio reels were rushed uptown by an employee each night for broadcast from the Radio building, then located in a three-story home seized from a bourgeois owner in 1944. Listeners heard twenty compositions broadcast over two nights of competition, with those deemed best by a panel of experts advancing to a third and fourth concert. Following the practice at the Sanremo Festival of Italian Song, two singers interpreted each composition, and the jury awarded prizes to participants' compositions—not singers. Jury head and writer L Lazar Siliqi concluded the Festival on 26 December with a short speech: “Bravo to our precious fatherland, that this fruitful Festival of Song and its dance rhythms gave impetus not only to experienced composers, such as Baki Kongoli, Agim Prodani, or Abdullah Grimci, but also to others, such as Tahsim Oshafi and Kristo Kote, and to the younger ones, Mark Kaftalli, Kol Gjinaj, and Agim Krajka[...].” Unable to decide on a first prize, the jury instead awarded second place to three compositions, while vocalist Vaçe Zela received a special award as “best interpreter.”¹⁵

15 My approximate transcription of Siliqi's speech, taken from a recording deposited in Radio Tirana's sound archives. Avni Mula's “I sing” (Këndoj), Mark Kaftalli's “Lule të bukura sjell pranvera” (Spring brings beautiful flowers), and Koço Uçi's “Vashëzo” (Young girl) received second prizes, while Vath Çangu's “Mos më qorto” (Don't scold me) and Grimci's “Fëmija e parë” (The first child) received third.

Most participants had close ties to the Radio as current or former employees of the music office, orchestra musicians, or ensemble directors, while others were cultural administrators employed by government agencies (see fig. 1):

<i>Ensemble Directors/Conductors/ Instrumentalists, and Students:</i>	<i>Administrators:</i>	<i>Others:</i>
KOÇO UÇI*	Mark Kaftalli*	Avni Mula*
ALQI KARECO	AGIM KRAJKA	Tish Daija
KOL GJINAJ	TAHSIM HOSHAFI	Baki Kongoli
LLAZAR MORCKA	Gaqo Avrazi	Kristo Kono
Vangjo Novo	Nexhmedin Doko	
Agim Velaj [?]	Agim Prodani	

Key: **Soviet training;** RADIO EMPLOYMENT; *winning composition.

Fig. 1.: Participants at the inaugural Festival of Song

Excepting composer Tish Daija and operatic vocalist Avni Mula, both Shkodrans trained in the Soviet Union, as well as composer Kristo Kono, a recent “Artist of the People” laureate, these songwriters shared the eclectic musical know-how and compositional sensibility characteristic of the administrators’ cohort. Winning songs, written by individuals oriented toward “smaller” genres—operettas, marches, folk arrangements, and song—thus largely followed a 1950s “dance music” aesthetic. “Kam një mall” (How I long),¹⁶ submitted by the People's Army Choir director Gaqo Avrazi and performed by actor Rudolf Stambolla, was similar to other songs the conductor published in 1950s songbooks. A simple tango with two contrasting sections, periodic vocal phrases, and a standard harmonic structure, “Kam...” suited Stambolla’s crooning style and limited register. An early member of Tirana's post-1945 state variety troupes, Stambolla was known for his sweet, lilting vibrato and liberal rubato, much in the style of Italian and Italian-American singers popular not only in Europe and the Americas through the early 1950s, but also

16 Radio Tirana recorded at least ten performances by Stambolla in tango, waltz, or rumba styles sometime between the late 1950s and early 1960s, including a version of “Kam një mall” (available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=dgWqDplpda4, accessed 6 July 2012). A compilation of these songs has been commercially released without permissions from RTSH ca. 2006.

in the eastern bloc.¹⁷ Punctuated by breathless pauses and glissandi (e.g., the drawn-out, ornamented turn at the phrase “sweetness itself” [*ëmbëlsia vetë*]), Stambolla's legato style owed much to foreign radio stars who, by 1962, had begun to sound old-fashioned not only in the west, but also in Tirana.¹⁸ The tango's lyric expounded sentimentally on the singer-narrator's lovesick yearning—“you rise and rise, you rise without break/O heart's longing, burning since the dawn!”

In addition to showcasing musician-administrators' compositions, the Festival also accumulated suitable broadcast materials able to “compete” with foreign broadcasts for young urban listeners.¹⁹ Yet like similar projects, the Festival's execution was subject to organizers' administrative acumen and dependent on personal relationships among participants. Ad hoc rehearsals, for example, began only one month prior to the concerts in a cramped rehearsal space shared with small ensembles and folk singers preparing for live broadcast. Organizers themselves coached singers. Songs were distributed anonymously, though singers “figured it out”: “We understood,” top estrada vocalist Qemal Kërtusha reminisced, winking, “which composers were coming around to ask about their songs, you know? ‘Do you like this one?’ ‘How about that

17 On Italian and Italian-American crooners, see Rotella 2010 for one popular history. Leonid Utyosov, the Soviet variety show performer and singer, also performed in a crooning style. He toured throughout Europe in the 1930s with Soviet big bands during the era of “red jazz,” performing a light, popular style (cf. Starr 1983:152 and Stites 1992:74). His vocal style can be heard in the following performance: www.youtube.com/watch?v=knDkPoN7UYY (accessed 6 July 2012).

18 During a meeting discussed below, for example, a musicologist criticized Stambolla for his performance “full of an old and unfashionable [*demode*] sentimentalism.” See the plenum on light music, discussed below.

19 See interview with Morcka (c.2002?), www.forumishqiptar.com/showthread.php?t=1215&page=2, accessed 4 August 2011. “At that time, it was the desire and need for individuals to have their music, especially the youth,” organizer Llazar Morcka later recalled, continuing, “then, just as in Tirana, local radios were created in Korça and Shkodra, which transmitted [songs] and had a need for light music—Radio Tirana, above all.”

one?” (interview, vocalist Qemal Kërtusha, 10 May 2010, Durrës). Not surprisingly, then, top estrada “stars” such as Kërtusha and State Estrada vocalist Vaçe Zela performed the prize-winning songs composed by Radio employees. On the Festival’s completion, however, its evaluation and discussion transformed the event into a forum on correct musical practice, a strategic site for criticism and discourse productive of new orientations and positions.

Creative Discussions

In 1956, administrator Baki Kongoli had criticized the LAW for failing to organize discussions among intellectuals and meetings between music elites and listeners (1956:167). If in the mid-1950s so-called “creative discussions” (*diskutime krijonjëse/krijuese*) occurred infrequently, by the 1960s they were firmly established as an obligation for the intellectual.²⁰ For administrators, discussions functioned to formally endorse artistic activities. Asked for impressions on light music following the 1962 Festival of Song, Kongoli thus reported, “Music has become an essential need for people. In the hall where the festival was held, or wherever it was listened to on the radio, there was liveliness, fiery discussions. The cultural level of the masses is being raised. Individuals are making interesting judgments about the various songs, defending their opinions with passion.”²¹ Yet critical evaluative practices, or the “struggle for the monopoly of legitimate discourse about the work” (Bourdieu 1993:36), could also potentially be instrumentalized by musicians toward strategic ends (cf. Silverberg 2011).

Two weeks following the conclusion of the Festival of Song, Baki Kongoli published a

20 A key practice in 1930s-40s Soviet musical life, the notion of “creative discussion” was imported from Soviet practice. Olkhovsky 1955 describes in detail these discussions and meetings. The 1937 meetings organized by the Soviet Union of Composers to discuss Shostakovich’s opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtensk District* provides the most infamous example in the musicological literature (see Wilson 1994:110-4).

21 Quoted in a brief notice on the conclusion of the Festival, *Drita* 30 December 1962, 4.

formal review in his capacity as Music Secretary to the LAWA (Kongoli 1963). Asking how “national” the Festival songs had sounded, Kongoli proposed two strategies, or “roads,” correctly used by participants. First were compositions with “colors of a pronounced national style,” which “utilize[d] the intonations of folk music”; these songs were understood to sound generally “folkloric.” Second, several pieces were “not based on folk music intonations, but [which remained] contemporary and understandable” (ibid.:1-2). Describing in prose harmonic and melodic features of the “first road,” Kongoli identified as exemplary one composition with “a plagal cadence typical of [songs from] Shkodra” (see fig. 2).

Ku dashnia je, o vashë! për mu/ Je burim i lumtunisë ...
 i iv ii i
 [Where are you love, o girl! For me/ you are the source of happiness...]

Fig. 2: “Lule të bukura sjell pranvera,” an example of the First Road (adapted from Kongoli 1963²²)

He also described a composition that cited an instrumental dance tune previously collected from a northern village (see fig. 3).

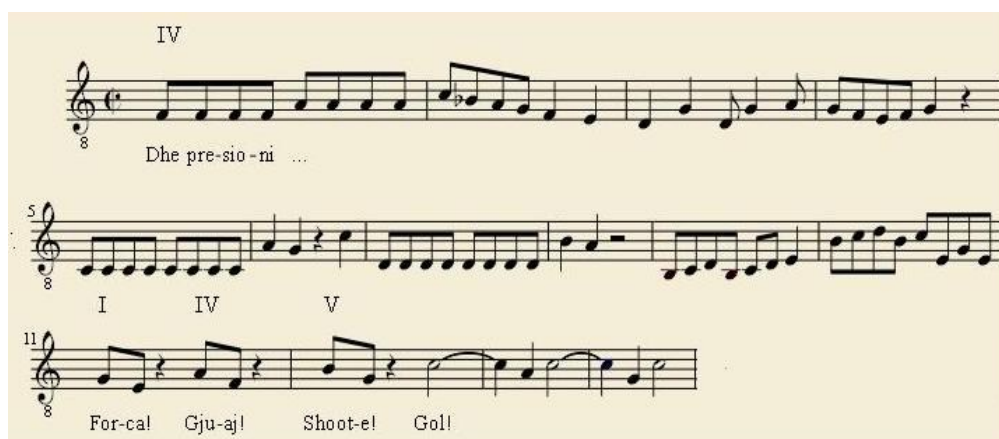
Based on the “first dance variant of Zerqani, #2,” collected by Muharrem Xhediku from this northern village and published in the 1952 volume *Këngë dhe valle popullore* [Folk Songs and Dances]. In the figure below, the top line is the folk melody, while the bottom is the opening line to the light song. Kongoli wrote, “The author has changed the rhythm from 7/8 to 5/8 [sic], reworking and developing the motive in some ways, and has made a joyous fox[trot] in 2/4 [i.e., duple] appropriate to the comprehensible, very attractive text.”



Fig.3: “Mos më qorto,” an example of the First Road (adapted from Kongoli 1963)

²² The musical transcriptions are mine. Though Kongoli discusses these examples in prose, *Drita*, Tirana's arts newspaper, was not able to print musical examples in the 1960s.

Songs on the “second road,” despite lacking identifiably local musical signifiers, were “national” in the sense that Albanians had composed them. Kongoli also emphasized that these Festival compositions filled a need for local songs that would be popular with urban listeners (see fig. 4).



And the pressure is strong, careful, goalkeeper!
 Pass it, shoot it, quickly, cross!
 The situation is looking quite bleak,
 We need a dramatic intervention!
 Come on, guys, *forca*, kick it, shoot it, goal!

“Në stadium” (At the stadium): A fast-paced, lively ‘novelty’ song about a football match.

Fig. 4: The Second Road (derived from Kongoli 1963)

Committed to the practical concerns of daily administrative work, Kongoli, like the Radio employees or estrada instrumentalists who submitted the majority of compositions, nevertheless failed to ask how “national” music *should* sound. The “two roads” thesis nevertheless structured ensuing debate, providing a terminology with which future observers could elaborate new positions. Kongoli’s colleague Trim Gjata, a poet and writer, responded first, confirming the validity of the “two roads” thesis in a study focused primarily on song texts (Gjata 1963). The idea that song was an “intimate” genre (*intime*), connoting texts about love or romance, pervaded critical discourse and provided critics a way to feminize and subsequently dismiss the genre as “trivial,” or potentially suspect as an expression of bourgeois sentimentality. Through “serious”

textual exegesis, Gjata thus sought to defend light music by recouping for song a measure of purposefulness and social import. In a nod to then-developing concerns among Soviet-trained specialists, Gjata concluded his two-part study with an affirmation of Kongoli's discussion of “national” compositional practice.

Debate then exploded, as a group of Soviet-trained composers, ignoring Gjata’s discussion of lyrics, portrayed the poet's analysis as deficient and superficial. Citing Russian and Soviet writer Maxim Gorky, Moscow-trained composer Çesk Zadeja argued for a conception of light song as musical “art” vis-à-vis its creator: “The role of light music in [composers'] oeuvre and in [listeners'] aesthetic education is not divorced from the purpose of 'serious music' [i.e., concert music]. And so the “nationality” or “international-ness” cannot be sought differently in one than in the other genre” (Zadeja 1963:2). In sprinkling stiff neologisms like “psychic-national expressive force” over his prose, Zadeja at once reframed the song debate in Marxist-Leninist terms and posited the need for expert analysis analogous to that required by “serious” music. Indeed, Zadeja especially derided the poet Gjata's musical discussion. Gjata had cited a cadence in the song “Lemza” (Hiccups) by bandleader Agim Krajka, newly enrolled in Zadeja's composition class at the Conservatory, as evidence of “national” style. The composer dismissed this point categorically:

Comrade Trim Gjata believes in a practice that theory quite correctly denies. As is known, cadence cannot be conceived of outside the general style of song. Only in the event that it derives from the logic of one’s synthetic development can this element (cadence) then in its entirety consolidate the national style (of which I spoke above). Thus in this case, it appears to me out of place to use the Latin words that Comrade Trim Gjata invoked, 'Taste is indisputable.' The principle remains a principle.... (ibid.:3-4)

To Zadeja, “taste,” or one’s immediate, visceral impression upon hearing a piece, remained subordinate to “theory,” or expert analysis, which was accessible only to certain individuals.

Indeed, the composer did not argue for specific compositional techniques, but for a

conceptualization of song as subject to composers' normative discourses on concert music and complexity.²³ Thus Soviet-trained Tish Daija's composition “Erë pranverore” (A spring breeze)—despite its use of “the Latin national rhythm” that, according to Zadeja, sounded “like a Spanish pasodoble”—sounded best. “This composer's talent and mastery,” Zadeja concluded, “are known from his deep, emotional-national [concert music] works” (ibid.).

Three further months of light song debates²⁴ concluded in an official plenum, organized in July 1963 at the LAWA by the Ministry of Education and Culture and attended by members of the APL's Central Committee (CC).²⁵ The meeting solved nothing. “This is a hugely important issue,” concluded Soviet-trained musicologist Albert Papparisto, then head of the State Conservatory, adding, “Thus we must remember the order of the party continuously and try untiringly to sing with the language of our people, to arrange and to develop even more this

23 On the appropriateness of tango, foxtrot, or waltz rhythms, Zadeja concluded that to question these forms was analogous to asking whether Tchaikovsky should have composed waltzes.

24 More broadly, composers throughout Tirana began weighing in on the question of “the national,” and *Drita* published a new rubric: “How do you understand the problem of the national character in light music?” Zadeja's classmate in Moscow, Simon Gjoni replied, “The more armed the composer is with general culture, and, especially, with professional culture, that much more deeply will he express in art these [national] things....” (quoted in *Drita*, 16 June 1963, 1). Nikolla Zoraqi, recently returned from the Soviet Union, wrote: “When we discuss opera, symphonies, chamber music, or song, we are overseen always from Marxist aesthetics for healthy contexts, a national base... [It is a problem] that many of the young people with talent are professionally unprepared, not knowing the laws for the development of music...He who desires to write light music should obligate himself to know the mastery of composition no less than he that writes operas or symphonies” (ibid.). Few responses from Festival participants, however, were published, and those that were contained platitudes. Festival organizer Abdullah Grimci restated, “The national character is objective of all composers involved with light music,” while Vath Çangu answered, “Our listeners thirst for art. Our people desire to sing, so let more beautiful songs be composed. As it [the people] wants to dance, then more beautiful dance music should be created” (quoted in *Drita*, 26 May 1963, 3).

25 High-ranking officials who followed cultural issues, such as Ramiz Alia, Manush Myftiu, and the Fadil Paçrami attended, as did comrades Nexhmije Hoxha and Fiqrete Shehu, representing their spouses, Party leaders Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu.

language, and to raise it that much higher to the level of a true art” (Paparisto 1963:2). A high-ranking cadre charged with “cultural matters” closed with some words on the duties of the composers, and the vice-minister of Education and Culture opened a formal discussion period. The general line on light music contained in Paparisto’s report satisfied few older composers: Grimci and Kongoli defended themselves during the Plenum’s concluding discussion period, while other musicians simply sniped at one another.

Plenary sessions permitted little play between blocs within the intelligentsia. In delivering his pre-approved report (*referatë*), the musicologist Paparisto formalized political elites’ endorsement of the Soviet-trained bloc’s prerogative to frame debate over popular music repertory in terms of “professional culture,” meaning concert music—a domain over which composers claimed a superior knowledge legible to political elites.²⁶ At stake here were not simply specific compositional techniques, however, but the recognition of composers’ monopoly on “expert” ideo-aesthetic discourse about musical sound over non-composers’ eclectic, practical know-how. This monopoly in turn depended on elites’ acceptance of the light music composition as an artwork or “expert object,” implying that songs “require help in interpreting even though they may appear legible to a layperson” (Dumit 2004:112).²⁷ By taking the Festival as the primary indicator of the level of popular Albanian music, elites elevated this event to an issue of

26 In the previous chapter, I noted that many art music composers were from the northern city of Shkodra, while most political elites were from the south. Notably, however, the only high-ranking northerner in the 1960s, Ramiz Alia, was charged with overseeing “cultural matters.” I am not sure who sided with the Soviet-trained Shkodran composers or chose Paparisto (a southerner) to deliver the main report, but Alia certainly had personal ties to Shkodrans like Zadeja. This line of inquiry, however, would require further research.

27 Dumit 2004, an ethnographer of science, investigates how contemporary brain scans function as such objects. I find this conceptualization useful here as a way to think about how song’s framing as “art” required not necessarily “collective belief” in Bourdieu’s terms, but instead relied on the active practices of particular interpreters as part of a broader framing process.

national import. Requiring the “activation” of a number of intellectuals, major artistic events, from the publication of novels to the staging of operas, obligated members of the intelligentsia to come together in collaboration and critique, organization and evaluation. The Festival of Song became such a site, articulating musical, literary, and political fields.

Reorganization

At an organizational meeting following the light music plenum attended by representatives from the Ministry of Education, LAWA, the Central Committee for Youth Affairs, the Professional Unions, and the TOB, the Festival ceased to be directed exclusively by Radio employees. LAWA emissaries questioned compositions’ subject matter, suggesting the League hold a meeting for lyricists to ensure they understood the “needs of the time.” Representatives planned prize amounts, created guidelines for the selection of compositions and performers, and agreed on a Festival *tematika*, or set of themes: “[Texts should] be sung not only to life, as happened in the first festival, but also ... to the new person, our new life in our country, to the Fatherland, the creative work of our workers” (D5/1963 RTSH). Delegates declined to confirm specific compositional techniques, suggesting only that “music should be supported in the intonations of our folk music, and [participants] should consider that it will be sung by the masses” (ibid.). Specific musical elements, however, remained the domain of participants, Radio bandleaders, and the Festival’s several organizing commissions. While the lack of explicit direction as to what constituted “correct” song compositional practice provided participants’ space to sound their own interpretations of the above directives, the Festival’s incorporation into formalized structures of critique overseen by non-song specialists in the music and political fields set strict limits. After the Second Festival, problems arising from the illegibility of “light music” across three different constituencies, audience members, expert jury members, and

political elites, emerged.

Audience reception

Over four nights in December 1963, Radio Albania broadcast thirty songs selected by the Second Festival's artistic commission, now predominantly composed, with the exception of the artistic director Grimci and Radio Tirana director Petro Kito, of musicians oriented toward concert music performance and composition. Competing songwriters, however, remained the same as before: most were administrators, bandleaders, directors, or instrumentalists, again excepting Soviet-trained composer Tish Daija and operatic vocalist Avni Mula. As at the previous Festival, each song was performed in two variations, one arranged for the Radio Orchestra, conducted by young bandleader Kristo Kote, and one for Agim Krajka's "rhythmic complex" (*kompleksi ritmik*), composed of an accordion, saxophone section, brass section, and rhythm section. Notwithstanding months of discussion on the nature of light song, participants presented compositions largely conforming to dance song models, while others, especially in Krajka's arrangements for his jazz ensemble, showed the influence of one of the previous year's hits, "Lemza."

Young listeners in Tirana eagerly anticipated the Festival, which the artistic director Grimci had "updated" by asking presenters to banter on stage, in the style of the Sanremo or Eurovision Song Contests, and by including younger singers. Before "Ëndrra ime" (My dream), composed by Baki Kongoli and interpreted by Vaçe Zela with Kote's swing orchestra, for example, host Vera Zheji said, "With the People in power, 'my dream' *can* now come true." The lilting waltz musically depicted the "dream" of love in "the new socialist village" with swung eighth-note rhythms and a swing-band influenced, brassy orchestral interlude. The inclusion of non-professional singers also thrilled the hall's audience. Ballet student Fatbardha Bengu

delivered enthusiastic if untutored performances, providing a raucous counterpoint to the crooning of vocalists like Qemal Kërtusha, or the lyric style of Zela. Clipping short her words in Llazar Morcka's "S'di të vallëzoj" (I don't know how to dance), Bengu's carefree, syncopated rhythmic inflection complemented the song's improvisatory feel and maracas-punctuated Latin rhythm.

Without flouting official directives on "national" music culture, participants nevertheless followed exhortations to create compositions to "be sung by the masses" more closely than ones to be "grounded in folk intonations." Light song enthusiasts had taken little part in debates, which developed mainly among elite composers and administrators in Tirana, and some no doubt assumed their compositions followed a "correct" line.²⁸ Pleased their songs had proved such "hits" at the first Festival, participants primarily competed with one another for popularity among listeners and, on this point, largely succeeded. Agim Krajka's "Djaloshi dhe shiu" (The young man and the rain), interpreted by Vaçe Zela and amateur singer Besnik Taraneshi, created a "boom" in the hall and streets following the concerts. Festival presenter Skiftër Këlliçi later reminisced:

Vera [Zheji] goes on stage and presents "Djaloshi dhe Shiu," this time sung by Besnik Taraneshi. The hall greets him not only with shouts, but even with some wolf-whistles. That is all Besnik needs, the young joker, who begins to sing Agim [Krajka's] "Djaloshi" joyously. The gallery rocks, its resonance crosses down into the hall below to the select

28 No doubt, as elites debated light song over the preceding year, some individuals followed these discussions more closely than others, while opponents of Zadeja perhaps deliberately dismissed the "line" proposed by his cohort. Not all participants necessarily recognized which viewpoints were politically ascendant, nor could one know how other participants would interpret those pre-Festival orientations. As sociologist Anthony Giddens writes, "Agents positioned in some sectors of a society might be quite ignorant of what goes on in others; actors might believe that the outcomes of their activities are different from what they in fact are; and the redescription of a context of action in the concepts of social science [or here, aesthetics] might represent what is going on in ways different from those with which the agent is familiar" (1984:341).

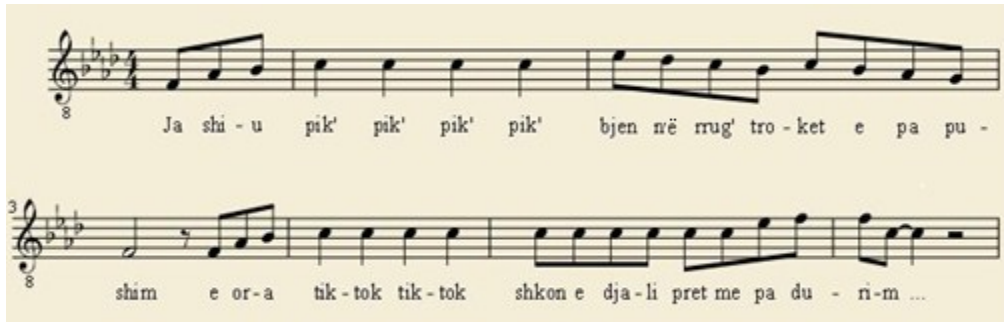
guests, some even from the Central Committee.²⁹

In contrast to Zela's crisply enunciated technique, Taraneshi's idiosyncratic and unpolished pronunciations, which were inspired by his hometown dialect, evoked the composition's youthful fervor.³⁰ A love song about waiting in the rain for a date, the song's insistent melody reflected the narrator's impatience: drip-drops fall and the clock tick-tocks, as he waits—for “you, you, you, you!” (see fig. 5). According to Këlliçi, the cheers lasted so long that the host was obligated to quiet the audience in order to introduce the next song, Tish Daija's “Flakë e borë” (Fire and snow), which fifteen-year-old singer Nikoleta Shoshi stood nervously waiting on-stage to perform.³¹ “I was young, a bit too euphoric, twenty-three years old,” Taraneshi later recalled, “I was ready to go nuts for the applause of one girl, never mind hundreds” (Taraneshi, quoted in Zhilla 1991). In just under three minutes, Tirana's youth had affirmed a new star.

29 See Skifter Këlliçi's reminiscences titled “Vaçe Zela, Besnik Taraneshi, Nikoleta Shoshi, dhe unë në Festivalin e 2-të të Këngës në Radio Tirana, Dhjetor 1963” [Vaçe Zela, Besnik Taraneshi, Nikoleta Shoshi, and me at the 2nd Festival of Song on Radio Tirana, December 1963], posted to groups.yahoo.com/group/memedheu/message/20781 (accessed 6 July 2012).

30 In a 1991 interview, Taraneshi described his interpretation as follows: “A dialect-ism. I was competing with Vaçe, who was tops at that time. I wanted to do something special against my competitor and I interpreted a recitative and, completely intuitively, I pronounced the line 'shiu bie pikë pikë pikë' [*peek*], as 'shiu bie pëk pëk pëk pëk' [*puck*] as in the Dibran dialect, which is where my mother is from” (Zhilla 1991).

31 Again, Këlliçi reminisced: “How long do these cheers last? ...Almost two minutes...and in this time, Besnik does not turn from the stage. Now it is my turn to present the next song,. [...] As soon as I arrive on the stage, pronounce the title of the song and 'sung by Nikoleta Shoshi....,' again the cheering, again for, 'the rain falls drip-drop with no end.' And Besnik, intoxicated by the success, comes back on stage, forgetting that he is a singer at a festival where songs are not encoed. [...] It is truly a vexing situation. Luckily, one of the main Radio directors indicated I should remain on stage. So, raising and lowering my hands, slowly I calm the unrest in a hall that is drowning in a whirlpool of clapping (ibid.).” On the recording of this performance, one can hear audience members bursting into spontaneous applause several times during the course of the song, and erupting following its conclusion.



Ja shiu pikë-pikë-pikë-pikë/
Bjen në rrugë troket e papushim...

Ja shiu pëk-pëk-pëk-pëk/
Bjen në rrugë troket e papushim...

Yeah, the rain falls drip-drop-drip-drop/Knocking on the road without break,
And the clock's tick-tock tick-tock/Keeps going, the boy waits impatiently...

**Fig. 5: Excerpt from the verse of “Djaloshi dhe Shiu;”
Zela's pronunciation (left) versus Taraneshi's (right)³²**

Jurors' evaluation

Before the two final concerts, the Festival's panel of experts, which included a concert pianist, an operatic baritone, a Radio employee, one musicologist, and two Soviet-trained composers, headed as before by writer Llazar Siliqi, convened to evaluate the performances.³³ Following the third evening's concert, the jury's discussion turned to prizes, with participants expressing serious consideration for four compositions deemed “definite” as prize-worthy:

32 Taraneshi's version (www.youtube.com/watch?v=iLgBtcaBEU) may be compared with that of Zela (www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqtkhNT8SQU); the line above in both comes at ca. 1'00. Last accessed 6 July 2012.

33 Handwritten minutes from several meetings are included at the end of D8/1964 RTSH (Central State Archives); I derive the material in this section from these sources. This jury unanimously dismissed fourteen songs, approved nine, and discussed the remaining seven, to arrive at a total of fifteen compositions for the third and fourth nights. The jury retained a wide degree of autonomy, even though—as discussed in the chapter text—political elites attending the performances seem to have begun voicing concerns privately about the performances, even communicating with jury members. Llazar Siliqi, for example, proposed that “some observations be made to the singers, and to be made to the orchestra directors as well,” while composer Simon Gjoni worried, “Orchestrations we do not have at all. There are imitations of Italian and foreign music.” It is unclear in archive materials if these criticisms came from jury members themselves, or if they were being repeated from discussions members had had with elites—my sense is the former.

“Dëgjo o hânë” (Listen, o moon), by Avni Mula, “Djaloshi dhe shiu,” by Krajka, “Flakë e borë,” by Tish Daija, and “Mos vono” (Don't be late), by Soviet-trained violinist Pjetër Gaci. Liri Çeli, an employee at the Radio, proposed a vote on her proposition: first prize to “Flakë e borë,” first second prize (“2/1”) to “Djaloshi dhe shiu,” and second prize (“2/2”) to “Dëgjo o hânë.” Debate ensued:

Selman Kasapi: Too, the audience opinion is for “Flakë e borë.”

Çesk Zadeja: “Flakë e borë” is better constructed, which is the thing that makes me “pro”...but let's start with the melody. I do not see anything all that national.

Ramiz Kovaçi: I am with Tish Daija's [song]. It sounds national motives in our festival. The melody is typically Albanian. ...

Simon Gjoni: The problem is this: to put it bluntly, when I hear “Djaloshi dhe shiu,” I remember it, while with “Flakë e borë,” no. ... It would be good if we could hear them again. There are short phrases, ... the composer is detached from the characteristics of a simple song. This makes [Daija's] song difficult. While “Djaloshi dhe shiu” is simpler. The two songs are both national. If we are discussing [overall] effectiveness, it is the technical ornamentation of the author (meaning, Tish). But if we are discussing which is more a hit song, “Djaloshi dhe shiu”. ...

Ramiz Kovaçi: I say that we can be proud that either song is Albanian. ...

Llazar Siliqi: ... I am for “Flakë e borë” because it is both modern and Albanian. We must keep in mind the opinion of the public during the three concerts. [Yet] I am not sure if “Djaloshi dhe shiu” would have had this storm [of applause] if not for the orchestration. It appears then we also have the personality of each person. In this song, there is the originality of Tish.

Paparisto: ... We request in Tish Daija for our light music even more synthesis [*kërkim*], which he continues in his work. In this festival, the song of Tish Daija sounded like an Albanian song. I think that what Tish gave us will leave an imprint on the [other] composers, it will open a kind of road. (D8/1964 RTSH)

Discussing neither song lyrics nor subject matter, the jury members conceptualized these compositions primarily in musical terms. Neither the vocalist, Kovaçi, nor poet, Siliqi, raised song lyrics for discussion, and the jury did not award a prize for best text. Yet jury members also did not discuss specific musical elements. Though individuals debated compositions based on

perceptions about national qualities, no clear consensus emerged about what this meant.³⁴

Finally, jury members discussed songs' popularity, but did not make this a primary criterion for a prize. According to Festival accounts, the song “Nuk e fshehim dashuri” had been among the most loudly applauded, yet was not included in the jury’s deliberations, and if appeals to a song's “national quality” or popularity accompanied jury members’ proposals for prizes, they only supported individuals' personal preferences. In concluding that Tish Daija's composition would serve as a positive example—to “open a road” to future composers—Paparisto validated his Soviet-trained colleague's aesthetic sensibility, seeking to orient future light music compositions in symbolic terms through the jury’s affirmation.

Discussion of prizes for best interpreter further suggests how inclinations to consecrate “correct” performance practice arose not necessarily from explicit directives, but instead from jury members’ creative sensibilities, which could parallel political elites' recommendations. Following the unanimous decision to award first prize to Vaçe Zela and second to Qemal Kërtusha, discussion centered on ballet student Fatbardha Bengu for the third prize became contentious. Raising Bengu for discussion, writer Llazar Siliqi lauded her and Besnik Taraneshi, saying, “With Fatbardha, it seems to me there is something original with her. ... I think we would not err if we help that girl.” The music specialists immediately contradicted Siliqi. “With [Bengu's] way of singing she brought nothing,” Zadeja argued, continuing “she must be more controlled in her singing—and precisely to close [a road to] this bad group, I am with Selman [who said, ‘If we allow it a little, we will have others’].” Musicologist Albert Paparisto then suggested young singers Bengu and Taraneshi could be taught a proper technique, prompting

34 Members did dismiss instrumentalist Vath Çangu's composition, “Babo shkon ti në shkollë” (Go to school, Dad!), about a young village girl chiding her conservative father to give up his “backward” ways, for “folklorism,” or too simplistically citing a folk melody.

baritone Ramiz Kovaçi to remind the group of Radio director Petro Kito's admonition that several singers—including Bengu—had taken “turns for the worst” during the concerts. At last, composer Gjon Simoni concluded the discussion summarily: “We [the jury] must be very careful not to legalize an incorrect interpretation ... [as] we have a duty to give the audience an education.” The jury awarded the prize to the schoolgirl Nikoleta Shoshi for her precocious interpretation of Daija's “Flakë e borë.”

Denunciation

Only political elites' criticism of the Second Festival's “cosmopolitan tendencies” rivaled the audience's acclamation in its fervor. In January, Radio employees were instructed to discuss the re-orchestration and re-recording of compositions with members of the jury and invited experts—two songs were deemed wholly unusable, as “weak, and with foreign reminiscences.”³⁵ Jazz-influenced dance songs, such as “Nuk e fshehim dashuri” and “Djaloshi dhe shiu” suffered pointed criticism as “simple copies or general rhythms of foreign songs heard on the radio.” Found to be particularly troubling was “[t]he tendency of strong, rhythmic orchestral effects of brass instruments of the jazz kind [i.e., horn backgrounds, ‘hits,’ or comping patterns] backing the melody of the song and singer, [which] often results in a deafening noise that hurts the ear” (D5/1963 RTSH). Commentators detected problematic elements in singers' interpretations, some “vulgar” and others exhibiting foreign “fashions” [Ital. *maniera*], and texts, particularly “a tendency for the exclamations ‘oh, oh,’ ‘yes, yes,’ ‘no, no,’ or ‘tra, la, la,’ taken especially from

35 This section draws on undated notes from a January meeting at the Music Editorial Office at the Radio, “On the discussion of the re-recording of the songs of the Second Festival of Song on the Radio” (D5/1963 RTSH). Musicologist Albert Papparisto and Radio official Petro Kito, along with the members of the jury, LAW music secretary Kongoli, and young composer-orchestrators and bandleaders Nexhmedin Doko, Kristo Kote, Agim Krajka, and Vath Çangu, attended. In the minutes to this meeting, individual speakers are only noted in certain places, which I indicate where available in my text.

foreign songs.” The Radio meeting resulted in the official denunciation (*dënim*) of interpretations by amateurs Bengu and Taraneshi, who were absent from the proceedings, as well as the censure of orchestrators, composers, and Festival organizer Grimci, each of whom responded at length with self-criticisms.³⁶

Following the meeting, Çesk Zadeja and TOB operatic vocalist Gjon Athanasi published analyses of the Festivals’ compositions and interpretations as complements to these behind-the-scenes measures. Most compositions, Zadeja opined, “brought nothing new” and failed to “answer the spiritual demands of our masses” (Zadeja 1964:1). He identified the primary problem as “the contradiction born between melody and rhythm, [where] in many cases the melody, the most concrete element in a musical thought, lost its national characteristic”:

[T]he orchestrator was not able to preserve the cantilena, which is typical of our [national] melody, and divorced it from [the song’s] content. Orchestrated in this way, [the orchestrator] supported our melody on an artificial rhythmic base and, according to this rhythmic schematism, then also sought an orchestra formation with four trumpets, four trombones, five saxophones. The question arises: what function did these instruments have? As we have heard often in this [kind of] repertoire, we can say: only to make noise. ... The orchestrators, unfortunately, were not able to imbue the idea of the song with orchestral colors, and this damaged [the Festival] very much. In many cases, they did not utilize the rhythmic figures of the melody and the harmonic base. Not only that, but they also transformed completely the orchestral formation into accompaniment, rhythm. As a result, an artificial dualism was created among these elements, which should help one another and leave always the melody in the most privileged place, in that the melody concretizes the thought, the spiritual world. (ibid.: 2)

Although Zadeja did not identify the orchestrators, bandleaders Krajka and Kote, he did critique the singers by name, criticizing the “false interpretation of Besnik Taraneshi” and “lack of talent

36 Though composers were charged with coaching these singers incorrectly, they were not punished: “[Besnik Taraneshi] was left to his own devices and [so] acts by imitating singers he hears on the radio. For [Fatbardha Bengu], it was emphasized the fault of [her songs’] authors Avni Mula and Llazar Morcka, who encouraged her to interpret their songs in an ostensibly modern way, thinking this would make more of an effect. Avni, too, instructed her [personally] and secured her western clothing and [choreographed] a stage presentation influenced by Italian movies, such as *Appuntamento a Ischia* [1960], and by television.”

of amateur Burhan Mesi,” while citing the positive example of Vaçe Zela, who “presented herself most nobly...[w]ith a beautiful voice, with the timbre of the genre, with an inner force, and somewhat exact treatment” (ibid.). Moscow-trained Athanasi echoed Zadeja’s endorsements, adding that audience approval did not signal “correct” performance practice: “Besnik Taraneshi, for example, without taking account of the applause, which was not objective, I think could sing Albanian light music if he did not start from superficial effects and foreign imitations. If the preparatory commission of the festival would have helped him with concrete, principled observations, some of the foreign, ‘fashionable’ manifestations would have been noticed” (Athanasi 1964:4).

Professional Distinction

In proximate terms, fallout from the Second Festival of Song obligated light music composers to adopt several new stylistic parameters. Notwithstanding appeals that Taraneshi be better educated as a vocalist, he never again saw the stage. Jazzy arrangements were effectively prohibited at the following Festivals, as orchestrators—denied brass and saxophone sections—scored increasingly complex works for the “orchestral colors” of a larger symphony orchestra. Composers replaced administrators, instrumentalists, and bandleaders, as both the Festivals’ primary participants and prizewinners, though the composers’ cohort initially had little personal sympathy for song and discussed canceling the Festival or replacing its light songs with folk arrangements.³⁷ By endorsing “official” exemplars, such as Daija’s composition “Flakë e borë” over “simple” tangos, or Vaçe Zela’s full-voiced, controlled technique over crooning, art music composers guided a “national” popular music of the future in ways simple prohibition, or light

37 Organization of the Third Festival did not get underway until almost November; it was not canceled because composers did not want to “set an example.” My sense is that individuals probably feared criticisms for not “correcting” the faults of the Second Festival of Song, though some would rather have been done with the event.

music specialists, such as Morcka, Kote, Grimci, or Çangu, could not. More broadly, debate enabled the discursive production of new orientations, as three theoretical spheres of practice—folk, light, and art musics—came to be interwoven in intellectuals’ speech. Struggle over the definition of “national” song interjected both the folk music elements, as vaguely defined source material, and concert music’s compositional techniques and performance practices, as the correct means to exercise one’s “professional culture,” into popular music practice.

At the same time, the break with Moscow coupled with the inauguration of light music at the national level compelled the production of novel discourse about practices previously external to “official” concerns. Fluent in a Marxist-Leninist aesthetic language legible to political elites, who themselves viewed music as a domain necessitating “expert” exegesis, Soviet-trained intellectuals became able to create a position for themselves at the head of the music field. Despite not composing light songs, elites such as Zadeja articulated a space to enact musical expertise, demonstrating “the ability to use language to index and therefore instantiate already existing inner states of knowledge” (Carr 2010:19). By invoking “expertise,” or in local parlance, a cluster of related discursive and musical practices deemed “professional,” Soviet-trained specialists asserted a distinction from administrators within an intellectual “space of differences” (Bourdieu 1998:12).³⁸ Intellectual space in 1960s Tirana, however, remained overseen by elite political discourses to which even the most “expert” music specialist remained subordinate. During Albania’s mid-1960s “cultural revolution,” political orientations radically restructured the music field for composers, albeit in contradictory ways.

38 Discussing social class, Bourdieu proposes that “what exists is a social space, a space of differences, in which classes exist in a state of virtuality, not as something given, but as *something to be done*” (Bourdieu 1998:12). The notion of a “space of differences” seems to me apt in describing the space of strategic, practical, and conditional alliances through which certain composers, themselves organized by a cultural apparatus obligating the transformation of abstract sounds into discourse, reorganized the music field.

THE CULTURAL FIELD TRANSFORMED

Fully one year before the “official” declaration of the APL’s adoption of cultural revolution in 1966, Ramiz Alia outlined key elements of Tirana’s Mao-inspired revolutionary campaign to the XV Plenum of the Central Committee of the Party of Labor. A rising voice in Party leadership and a specialist in cultural matters, Alia presented his October 1965 report “On the raising of the role of literature and the arts for the communist education for the masses” to CC members and “invited artists and intellectuals” (Alia 1970 [1965]). The Plenum shocked the intelligentsia as conservative. On one hand, Alia’s report called for culture producers to “present a deeper and wider reflection of life” and to “correctly represent” its positive aspects, especially the new “positive hero.” On the other hand, Alia directed intellectuals to be “vigilant against foreign influences” and to raise the artistic level of works, creating “true values” with a clear basis in “the people’s creativity” instead of “the cosmopolitan.” Each issue—the form of artistic products, and their execution—depended on “a deeper knowledge” (*njohje*) of Marxism-Leninism’s laws of social development as well as of “the people.” Alia concluded with orientations: for cultural institutions to be better overseen by the Party’s ideological demands, for the quality of work and “artistic mastery” to be bettered in popular spheres of theater and estrada, for the “aesthetic tastes of the masses” to be better educated, and for amateur artistic movements to be better organized.

Taken singly, each orientation did not necessarily surprise artists. Statements on “foreign influences,” the Party’s leading role in cultural life, amateur arts movements, and the relationship between intellectuals and the people had long circulated within artistic and political circles. Yet in drawing these diverse statements into a coherent line, Alia signaled closer APL oversight of “culture and the arts.” Further, the XV Plenum radically destabilized the intellectual’s position,

explicitly subordinating the cultural intelligentsia in structural terms for the first time. In orthodox political language, Alia reaffirmed that “the masses,” as bearers of “ignorance” or “un-knowledgeableness” (lit., *paditura*), must be educated. Yet though the corollary theoretical point (“tastes are learned,” *shijet edukohen*) promised to preserve the intellectual's position as enlightener, Alia complicated this notion by ascribing to the intelligentsia its own unique form of “ignorance” or “mis-recognition” (lit., *mosnjohja*). In “mis-recognizing” the true nature of society, artists and writers themselves thus labored under a form of darkness, which new intellectual practices (e.g., engaging in physical labor, living in rural areas, meeting with non-intellectuals) were in turn prescribed to solve. By bearing distinguishable forms of “ignorance”—*mosnjohja* versus *paditura*—intellectuals and the masses continued to occupy theoretically distinct social spaces. Even so, the intelligentsia remained defined by its collective “mastery” (*mjeshteri*), now legible explicitly in relation to Marxist ideological knowledge, termed “recognition” (*njohja*).

While composers' claims to expertise enabled the emergence of a leading position within the music field, knowledge claims in 1960s Tirana remained not fully transferable between fields, and cultural elites' space, subject to transformation by revolutionary political discourse.³⁹ Alia's words alone, however, lacked the ability to reshape social fields. Indeed, First Secretary Enver Hoxha concluded the XV Plenum in an exegetical mode exemplary of his status as a “master” who “legitimizes ideological discourse from a position external to it, publicly commenting on the correctness or incorrectness of ideological statements and evaluating them

39 With ‘enactment of expertise,’ I utilize the phrasing of Carr 2010, discussed above.

for precision against an external canon to which he has exclusive access” (Yurchak 2006:40-1).⁴⁰

“Allow me to reemphasize some thoughts expressed in the report, as well as the discussions,”

Hoxha began, before invoking Marx on the material relationship between truth and doctrine:

It is not consciousness that defines the being, but the being that defines consciousness. In looking at the issue through a Marxist-Leninist prism, we can fathom in its greatness, in its diversity, in its difficulties, the leading role of the Party in the forging of consciousness... . [...] We say “class consciousness,” “proletarian consciousness,” “bourgeois consciousness,” “capitalist [consciousness],” we say “he has a pure consciousness,” or “a vague and heavy one” and so on. This means that persons in life and in struggle are not equipped with a standard consciousness; consciousness reflects various world-understandings, which derive from the developing economic condition. (Hoxha 1977 [1965]:133-4)

Lecturing on the material basis of class consciousness, Hoxha simply outlined a substantially orthodox Marxist-Leninist explanation of the relationship between base and superstructure. He neither discussed nor theorized the intellectual’s role in society, an absence suggestive of the instability of intellectuals’ space in political discourse.⁴¹ Yet Hoxha’s theoretical exegesis served a performative function, and his endorsement of theoretical revisions

40 Several scholars have described how the institutional innovations of Stalin’s Soviet Union, coupled with his charismatic authority, transformed the nature of knowledge production across social fields (e.g., Vucinich 1984, Pollock 2006).

41 Hoxha’s speech in general, for example, often included inelegant circumlocutions that excised active agents (e.g., “Ideas expressed in [artistic] works” rather than “Ideas expressed **by intellectuals in their** [artistic] works”). Hoxha also discussed specific individuals in two ways: by situating individual artists within a larger collectivity by listing long series of “exemplary” artists, or through personal anecdotes. In the former manner, Hoxha thus stated: “Many beautiful, realist works have emerged from the hands of our people. The novels and writings of Dhimitër Shutëriqi, Shefqet Musaraj, Llazar Siliqi, Jakov Xoxe, Sterjo Spasse, Kolë Jakova, Nonda Bulka, and Ismail Kadare; the artistic works of [composers] Tish Daija and Kristo Kono, Baki Kongoli, Çesk Zadeja, [sculptors] Odhisë Paskali and Janaq Paço, [painters] Nexhmedin Zaimi, Vilson Kilica and Guri Madhi, and tens of others of these categories [i.e., literature, music, sculpture, and painting], to whom I apologize for not mentioning...” (Hoxha 1965:145). In the latter mode, he stated: “Several weeks ago, my friend, the well-known composer Kristo Kono, sent me a new composition of his [E]ven though he had begun this work, and was considering the theme of Prometheus, I made a few suggestions. ... He gave me his word, and I am convinced he will keep it” (ibid 159-60). These linguistic strategies exemplify certain characteristics Vehbiu 2007 terms “totalitarian Albanian.”

restructured social fields. If Hoxha's approval of the XV Plenum's new line could reorganize artistic life, the Plenum's orientations nevertheless also depended on the practical work of ideological campaigns, the implementation of new forms of organization, and the practical translation of political speech into products and performances. Brigades of young people modeled on Mao's Red Guards soon filtered through the countryside, destroying or defacing churches and mosques following a ban on religion (1967); individuals posted public denunciations (*fletë-rrufe*, lit. "lightning sheets," modeled on Chinese *dàzìbào*) of neighbors or coworkers, a destabilizing influence on social life until 1991. Related campaigns to insert working-class non-specialists into specialized fields (through "workers' checks," *kontrolli punëtor*) and to bring intellectuals into rural areas (through so-called "circulation" policies, *qarkullim*) challenged aspects of social stratification. In obligating intellectuals to reform their relationships to themselves and their works by better "recognizing" or "knowing" society, revolutionary discourse also pushed the intellectual to engage in new processes of self-making within an emergent politics of cultural revolution. In the following sections, I analyze several lines of interaction between "revolution" and its implementation in musical composition and performance, suggesting how "knowledge" (*njohja*) articulated to elite music specialists' aesthetic sensibilities in a manner that paradoxically reinforced the ascendancy of Soviet-trained, "red" composer-creators.

Cultural Revolution

Political elites' discursive inability to mark space for artists presaged the cultural field's transition from one predicated on a Leninist conception of the intellectual-as-educator, to notions imported from the Chinese Cultural Revolution framing the intellectual as a potential object of education. Until 1965, local definitions of "cultural revolution" had hewed closely to orthodox

Marxist-Leninist theory, albeit with borrowings from presocialist modernist-nationalist discourses. “The cultural revolution,” Soviet-trained sociologist Hamit Beqja had written in a 1962 primer on the subject, “influences directly on the liberation of the people from darkness and ignorance [*padituria*]” (Beqja 1962:7). “Backwardness” here stemmed from a “petty bourgeois psychology,” which had inculcated incorrect views on property, poor labor discipline, “fanaticism,” and “backward” customary laws (ibid.:18-25). This illuminist-Leninist conceptualization of cultural revolution played a key role in legitimizing the vanguard role of intellectuals. Bearing knowledge (*dituria*), postwar intellectuals were liberating the masses from the past's “darkness,” characterized by a deficiency of education, into the future's “light.”⁴² In spatial terms, “the masses” thus occupied a social position subordinate to the intelligentsia, but as the nation's cultural level rose, so too would “the people's” cultural “demands,” in turn prompting new artistic duties for the conscientious intellectual. This theoretical cycle would successively inculcate in ordinary individuals higher levels of “enlightenment” (*ndriçim*). In practice, the doctrine underpinned diverse ideological campaigns (literacy, hygiene), institutions (schools, culture houses), and policies (sending teachers to “backward” areas, standardizing linguistic diversity). Published on the cusp of the Soviet break, Beqja’s account of cultural revolution cited above concluded with notes on local prospects for an Albanian society of the future, which rested, the report's Moscow-trained author had asserted, on the ideological “purity” of the APL's line and its “basis in the rich experience of the Soviet Union and its guidance in all matters” (Beqja 1962:61ff.).

42 Much of this imagery comes from presocialist nationalist movement discourses, which I introduced in the previous chapter.

With a Soviet line branded “revisionist,” aspects of non-Soviet ideological discourse began entering Tirana via Beijing.⁴³ Soviet-trained music specialists and their Conservatory students, however, had deeply internalized the teleological tenets of Lenin-inspired cultural policy. Just as the future-oriented language of heavy industry and five-year-plans came to suffuse cultural life, these “culture workers” who “produced” compositions through mental labor framed musical culture increasingly in evolutionary terms. Proudly describing how post-1945 works had “passed from the simplest songs, to musical tableaux, to operettas and operas, to [tone] poems and cantatas, to instrumental pieces and the first symphonies in the culture of our art” (Shaplo 1960:191), commentators measured musical progress in terms of formal complexity.⁴⁴ For composers, cultural “progress” became equated with one's ability to “bring new things” to the listener (*sjell të reja*). In critical discourse, new compositions thus demonstrated “a step forward” (*një hap përpara*); cultural production in general experienced “a burst” (*një hov*). The cultural work shaped the “backward” listener's premodern tastes, while the music intellectual's own taste and knowledge provided the sole check on compositional methods that could suffer from a range of capitalist, bourgeois, or revisionist aesthetic dead-ends—whether dilettantism, folklorism, archaism, modernism, romanticism, or Europeanism.⁴⁵

43 Maoist revolutionary cultural discourse differed sharply from the Leninist doctrine, though it paralleled local political trends: mistrust of (Russophile) intellectuals; emphasis on ideological purity; the cultivation of a leadership cult, and subsequent notion of the infallibility of political pronouncements; and the politicization of everyday life.

44 See Kraja 2005 for a recent example of this enduring narrative, here in relation to instrumental concert music.

45 These 'isms' derive from my review of issues of *Drita* weekly editions published between 1962 and 1972, as well as selected critical articles in the publication *Nëntori*. From time to time, each 'ism' inspired mini-crises that had to be dealt with through discussions, study articles, or even plenary sessions.

By negatively defining compositional methods through prohibitions, music specialists had largely let stand the issue of what constituted “good” musical practice. Exhortations to “bring new things” encouraged new compositions and underpinned requests for funding, but provided no definitive aesthetic statements beyond simplistic overtures on “realist” aesthetics.⁴⁶ Indeed, almost any commentator could plausibly claim that a work “raised the cultural level of the masses,” because no consensus existed on how a composition might accomplish this—except through the composer's own level of “professional culture” or “values.” With the selective adoption of elements of Maoist cultural theory and policy, this ideological knot came undone. In the music field, composers became obligated to frame their practices within the bounds of revolutionary discourse. Paradoxically, these same individuals were also asked to translate revolutionary political orientations into forms able to be implemented in compositional and interpretational terms. Having successfully framed musical practice as amenable to oversight only by their own expertise, composers’ sensibilities thus came to be reinforced through the cultural revolution. This occurred by and large in practical terms. As composers and their students increasingly participated in Festivals of Song, they audibly translated revolutionary orientations into song compositions.

Revolutionary Musical Practice

In preparing a November 1965 report on the utility of XV Plenum's orientations to the music field, cadres at the Ministry of Education largely repeated Alia’s criticisms. Despite praise for “professional music”—here, meaning concert music compositions by Tirana composers—the

46 To this point, I have not invoked this aesthetic doctrine by name simply because local commentators on music rarely discussed “socialist realism” in printed works. My sense from speaking with composers who were students during this period is that their pedagogues did not lecture on “realism” in theoretical terms, but instead provided examples of “correct” and “incorrect” compositional methods with examples played at the piano or from records.

report noted that “in some works, the professional musical language lacks support in the intonations of our folk music, [and that] the source of [this lack] is the superficial and insufficient ideo-professional maturity of the composers” (D12/1965 CAC). In response, the Ministry ratified the following measures: an April meeting to define the “primary direction on the utilization of folk music intonations in the works of our composers,” to be presented in a report by Çesk Zadeja; a commission to investigate why the LAJM and Conservatory failed to instill “love of our folklore and works of our composers”; and the creation of small folk orchestras at Houses of Culture, and large folk orchestras in Tirana, Korça, Kukës, and Vlora (ibid.).⁴⁷

In choosing individuals like Zadeja to translate the new orientations, officials largely reinforced the aesthetic sensibilities Soviet-trained elites had been championing. A month prior to the XV Plenum, for example, Zadeja had linked “professional” culture (i.e., concert music) to one’s understanding of folklore in a widely read article that, despite lacking the ideological “keywords” (such as *mosnjohja/njohja*) soon incorporated into post-Plenum creative discourse, had anticipated these new directions.⁴⁸ In this sense, the music field received ideological

47 The Ministry also planned to send students at the Conservatory and pupils at the LAJM on ethnographic expeditions, to invite “folk music virtuosi” to perform at each institution, and to find a luthier to produce instruments.

48 My sense is that Zadeja would not have known about the orientations in advance, as intellectuals’ memoirs uniformly describe the Plenum as a shock. Yet foreshadowing both the Plenum’s orientations and the Ministry’s plan, Zadeja had recently called for younger composers to be better “educated with these life-giving sources” of folklore, especially at “Jordan Misja’ Performing Arts High School and the Conservatory course, [where] folklore and its problems should be studied in a more scientific manner, and not in a schematic way” (Zadeja 1965:2). As conceived by Zadeja, an aesthetically correct relationship between concert and folk music required not only knowledge about folk music, but also a strong “technical-professional level,” instilled through advanced, formal training: “This in no way denies the fact that in many [concert] works like those of [composers with prewar training,] [Kristo] Kono or [Pjetër] Dingu (mainly in instrumental works like rhapsodies, dances, and so on) it often occurs that the folkloric element does not find an appropriate development, but remains too obvious in a way, thus making the work very stale, where, sometimes, the works with formal demands, sound relatively close to a potpourri. The use of simple folklore in its ethnographic primitiveness,

orientations not simply as a narrowing of creative space, but also as a confirmation of Soviet-trained composers' aesthetic sensibilities. If the XV Plenum transformed the nature of the cultural field, these changes suited those “reds” then ascendant in the music field. These composers and their Conservatory students found themselves to have a remarkable “practical sense” for the transformed field, a “feel” for a game that now disqualified older administrator-intellectuals from leading positions. At the Seventh Festival of Song (1968), elites displayed this sense in navigating revolutionary orientations across four sites: its organization, the selection of “correct” song texts, vocal performance practice, and compositional practice.

Organization

Plenary orientations spurred new efforts to expand the Festival of Song’s organization to include amateurs and regional musicians, while also encouraging its organizers to be more “vigilant” in overseeing its subject matter. Post-XV Plenum directives further institutionalized the event, which by 1968 came to be overseen by several artistic commissions dominated by “reds” and operating throughout the year. The Seventh Festival of Song's timeline extended from January to December, and comprised meetings, discussions, reports, and ancillary singing competitions (see fig. 6).

<u>Jan-March</u>	Discussions with listening groups, organized by the Radio. Composers' meeting in Tirana. Call for compositions published. More discussions with professional composers in Tirana.
<u>March</u>	
<u>April-June</u>	Meetings with composers organized in Durrës, Shkodër, and Korça.
<u>July</u>	LAWA meeting with poets and composers. Meeting of amateur composers in Tirana. “New voices” contest held to select amateur singers.
<u>September</u>	Song selection and creation of ensembles. Text commission meets.
<u>October</u>	Radio's music office decides what songs are still needed. Printing of programs. Plan is made for orchestration; lead sheets are sent to the singers.
<u>November</u>	Composers hear their songs interpreted by singers with the orchestra over two days.
<u>December</u>	Singers arrive in Tirana. Songs are heard by a commission and invited guests. Festival held at end of the month.

divorced from the strength of professional mastery, that is, without an intensive development, especially in orchestral works and forms, has made it so the works, lacking an emotional side, hold no interest for the listener” (ibid.:1).

Fig. 6: Timeline of preparations for the Seventh Festival of Song⁴⁹

Extended preparations spread duties across diverse groups, diluting individual responsibility and “activating” individuals within and outside Tirana. This decentralization, however, remained to a certain extent *pro forma*, even illusory, intended in part to demonstrate the intelligentsia's “mobilization.” In practice, certain key stages, such as the September selection of songs, concentrated real power among the Radio-employed composers who had replaced the musician-administrators following the first two Festivals of Song.

Radio elites nevertheless found their directing role challenged by ideological campaigns encouraging amateur artistic movements. Organizers became obliged to identify and activate non-professionals, and the Radio's music office arranged meetings outside Tirana to advise district musicians, find new vocalists, and gauge listeners' interests. These meetings, however, yielded few concrete results, and the “amateurs” reported on in the press tended to be students at the LAJM or Conservatory. At the Seventh Festival, for example, individuals working or studying in Tirana composed fifteen of twenty entries, and five composers presented multiple songs. Only one participant was a woman—a lack especially notable in the midst of a campaign then seeking “the full emancipation of woman in society.”⁵⁰ Radio employees also organized singing contests to find non-professional singers and, based on the recordings of “New Voices” concerts, generated lists of potential participants. Though the music office invited several young singers and two factory choirs,⁵¹ these “amateurs” also included performing arts pupils on the cusp of professionalization, such as Ema Qazimi and Kleopatra Skarco, both of whom debuted at

49 Material in this timeline derives from documents in D3/1967 RTSH.

50 Mira Maleta, an “amateur” working at Fier's House of Pioneers, presented the Festival's first female-composed song in her sole appearance.

51 One vocal ensemble came from a workers' collective at the Durrës Sseaport, and the other from Tirana's “Kombinati” Factory.

pre-Festival contests shortly before finding employment in professional estrada ensembles.

Without strategically resisting Plenary orientations, composers often found ways to work around them, which within the music field was not considered to be a “political” act. Framed as an event that provided evidence of light music's current state of “progress,” in addition to providing a corpus of pieces to be expertly debated, dissected, and analyzed, each Festival came to carry enormous symbolic weight across political and music fields. Diverse constituencies closely watched the Festival as a site itself potentially generative of new musical orientations. As suggested at the Second Festival by Simon Gjoni, in 1968, employed by the Radio's editorial office, the Festival could even “legalize” interpretations, compositional techniques, or subject matter with awards, or even the simple fact of broadcast. The stakes for organizers thus militated against openness to new voices, even if Radio policy following political orientations emphasized the “activation” of amateur participants.

Text themes (*tematika*)

Following the initial selection of songs and the deliberations of the text commission, the Seventh Festival's organizing commission met in mid-October to approve a *tematika*, or program of themes and texts. Guidelines distributed the previous March along with the call for compositions had only sketched subjects that might fit into a “correct” *tematika*: “The songs of the festival will express in all aspects the revolutionary will of our people, the heroism of the working class, and our youth, the revolutionary solidarity of our people, the joy of their labor and of their life” (D3/1968 RTSH). Relations among organizers, composers, and poets complicated the selection and ratification of a *tematika*, but also created a space for negotiation. Translated to a program of twenty-five songs, the *tematika* approved for the Seventh Festival of Song resulted in two major categories: songs on social and martial themes (see fig. 7).

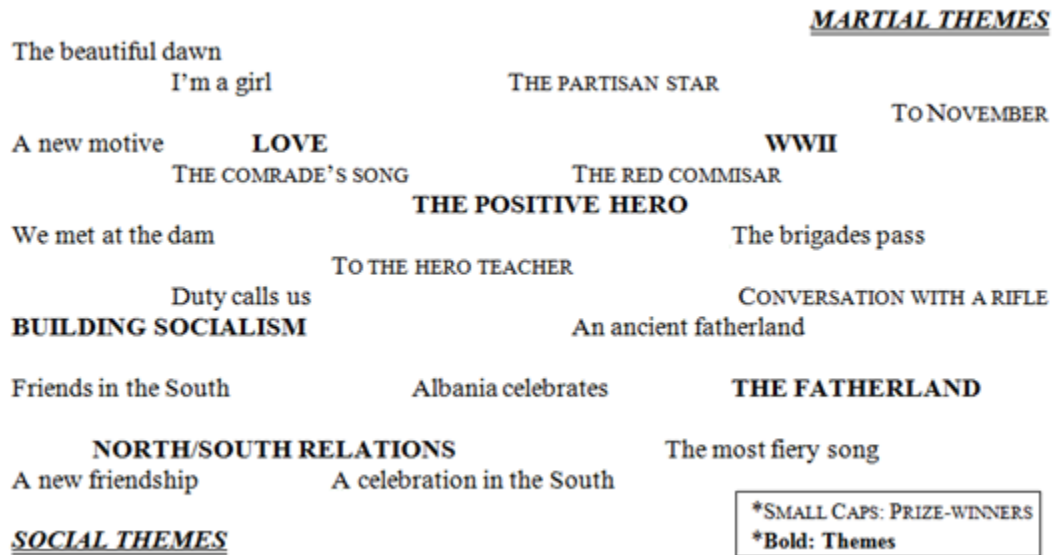


Fig. 7: A “correct” tematika from the Seventh Festival of Song

Narrower sub-themes composed each broad category, including both perennial subjects (on “love” or “the Fatherland”) and references to more specific campaigns. In 1968, these themes included “friendship” between northerners and southerners, and tributes to teacher Ismet Bruçaj, then the current “positive hero from the working masses.”⁵² Not all songs fit neatly into a single thematic category. The Seventh Festival song, “U njohem në digë” (We met at the dam), a song about falling in love with a fellow worker at a state enterprise, would have been considered by organizers as both a love song and a commentary on the building of socialism. In the figure above, I have indicated thematic convergences in spatial terms, with each song placed near or among multiple relevant themes.⁵³

52 In 1969, Ismet Sali Bruçaj, a teacher assigned to a remote village in the northeastern district of Kukësi, died, initiating a campaign celebrating his service to education. He was posthumously awarded the title “Hero of the People,” a mountain pass was renamed in his honor, and in 1969 a stamp bearing his likeness was issued.

53 By the late 1970s, tematika had standardized to such an extent that texts’ editor Zhuljana Jorganxhiu simply wrote short phrases on each “approved” lyric noting its theme. Following this practice, I have tried to imagine what categories each song might have fallen under. Surprisingly,

The broadcast of an approved, ideologically “correct” tematika demonstrated obedience to an ever-shifting political line. Juries awarded prizes across sub-categories, tending to recognize diverse subject matter, though first prizes, only rarely awarded to love songs, usually went to compositions with ideologically current themes.⁵⁴ At the same time, the relationships between poets and composers complicated Radio employee’s construction of a balanced tematika. Composers often submitted melodies without texts, or with self-composed texts the professional commission deemed artistically weak. Literary critics began deriding “the mania of the composer to become a poet, [which] has begun to manifest itself even in many composers who are known for their [light music] creations...like [Mark] Kaftalli, [Kristo] Kote... and tens of others” (Filja 1968:2). Composers even strategically submitted untexted compositions, some critics charged, waiting for the Radio commission’s approval before taking the time to approach a lyricist:

[Then the composer will] immediately pick up the telephone and, after some cooing and caresses, which both sides expect, like “Please! I don’t have time!” and the answer, “Come on, you can do it!,” at last come to the decision that the text will be figured out

no attention seems to have been paid to a distribution of musical types, termed “epic,” “lyric,” or “rhythmic” in 1968.

54 Today, a highly developed discourse exists about “politicized” songs, often proposed by self-styled “love song” composers. In print and television interviews, rhythmic song specialist Agim Krajka, winner of a record seventeen second-place awards, often states that “the Central Committee decided the tematika in advance.” He told me, “if there are twelve songs, three would be for the Party, three for the working class, three for the village, two for defense, and only one for the youth” (i.e., the “un-politicized” song he would present) (interview, 22 September 2009). See also the interview on “Albanian Waves” available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqGVbB30dHY (accessed 13 July 2012). At 5'05, Krajka discusses the CC in similar terms. Though Krajka views his songs as not “politicized” (*i/e politicizuar*), this does not mean that the inclusion of “love songs” was not to an extent ideologically determined. To be “correct,” a tematika had to include several “boy-meets-girl” lyrics, though the protagonists often met while working at the hydroelectric plant.

that afternoon at Café Sahati,⁵⁵ or first thing the next day. The poor song... (ibid.)

In practical terms, songs selected in September thus often received new texts at an October meeting in order to “fit” political themes (e.g., on the socialist village, or internationalism), but also to complete half-finished submissions.⁵⁶ Thus while revolutionary politics conditioned subject matter by promoting lyrics about “heroes,” social issues, or political subjects, composers could potentially beg *non*-expertise in poetry in order to extract themselves from the potentially ideologically charged issue. At the same time, the turn to “grand” socio-political themes created opportunities for singers and composers with particular “grand” or “epic” artistic sensibilities to participate.

Interpretation

Despite calls to include non-professionalized participants, the promotion of “epic-lyrical” subject matter necessitated the “activation” of lyric opera singers, especially male soloists from the TOB, and enabled the emergence of a new cohort of light song specialists. Baritone Ramiz Kovaçi (1929-1994), tenor Gaqo Çako (1935-), and choristers from the national opera were increasingly activated to perform pieces composed in a sweeping, late romantic symphonic style typical of Albanian concert music, as were young women with big voices. Ema Qazimi, an LAJM student activated for the first time at the Seventh Festival, described this period as having “caught” her, meaning her career began just as compositions suited to her large range and dramatic delivery became dominant. The composers with whom she worked “were not simply

55 Café Sahati, so named for its location next to the nineteenth-century clocktower (*Kulla e Sahatit*) in Tirana’s central Skanderbeg Square, was one key meeting place for intellectuals in Tirana. It stands across the street from the TOB and National Library.

56 The two winning songs “Mësuesit hero” (To the hero teacher) and “Komisari i kuq” (The red commissar), composed in tribute to Ismet Bruçaj, were certainly not completed by the September selection. Bruçaj died in November.

specialists in song, but were overseen [*udhëhoqen*] by the motive of the work [*vepra*, distinct from “song,” *këngë*].” They created “lyric” or “epic-lyrical” songs with musical material and motivic development typical of their classical works—songs that were “not simply ABA, or strophe-refrain-strophe,” but more structurally complex compositions (p.c. Ema Qazimi, 9 January 2010, Tirana). Yet the epic-lyrical turn also disqualified vocalists with smaller ranges, a crooning style, or lack of technical facility with complex musical passages. While Durrës estrada star Qemal Kërtusha, who had long incorporated light operatic pieces into his repertoire, remained present on the national stage for several years, actor-singer Rudolf Stambolla, a committed crooner, did not.

Qazimi’s “epic-lyrical” vocal style stemmed from her emulation of star vocalist Vaçe Zela as well as the practical work of rehearsals, directed by composers and young Radio Orchestra conductor Ferdinand Deda. Though she had been trained as an actress, Zela “created a school of singing, especially of light music” (Agolli 2001:18).⁵⁷ By the late 1960s, Zela had become the model younger vocalists followed, and Ema Qazimi’s experience is representative: Qazimi refused to “copy” performances of foreign radio stars, instead taking her own voice and Zela’s as a “reference point” (*pikë referimi*). She learned Zela’s repertoire by heart, but sought to perform these in her “own way,” in order to create an artistic “individuality” (interview, 9 January 2010, Tirana).

⁵⁷ Zela proved an especially attractive model because she received top prizes each year as part of a Radio policy to promote her vocal style over those of less-polished singers or crooners. This is my sense from informal conversations with personnel employed by RTSH during the 1970s and 1980s, as well as light music vocalists. Between 1962 and 1972, Zela won seven top prizes. One composer (rather ungenerously) told me that Zela “always sniffed around composers’ studios,” keenly aware of which songs were “for prizes,” whether in artistic or political terms. In general, a mythology concerning Vaçe Zela makes it difficult to figure out to what extent her success was due to RTSH’s promotion. This is not to deny that Zela was certainly popular with many listeners, and light music’s first “star.”

Elite composers, who began to treat light songs as “works” worthy of serious rehearsal time and creative labor, reinforced this “grand” aesthetic. While the music editorial office distributed ordinary compositions “according to professional [i.e., musical] demands,” the elite composer usually selected his own vocalist.⁵⁸ Following initial rehearsals with the composer, a vocalist began work with the Festival's conductors at the piano. Qazimi considered herself particularly lucky to have worked primarily with Deda—a “multi-sided work, including interpretation of both the text and the manner of interpretation.” Largely accomplished “by intuition” (*me intuitë*), rehearsals were “work linked by a chain” between composer, conductor, and vocalist. “Singer A will be in the small studio at this time, then with the orchestra in the rehearsal hall at this hour, and everyone was very exact,” Qazimi described (p.c., 9 January 2010). “It was extremely professional, and needed a huge amount of discipline. There was no question of coming late or not being prepared. Everyone there was very professional and put in late hours of work.” In this sense, concert-music specialists' strict emphases on diction, phrasing, intonation, and rehearsal protocol gave rise to an emergent “discipline,” to invoke Qazimi's term, by inculcating in light vocalists the rigorous aesthetic sensibility of the art music vocalist.⁵⁹

Composition

The promotion of “grand” (*të mëdha*) or “epic” (*epike*) themes, the increased discipline of

58 A composer might submit a song with a note indicating a particular vocalist. In many cases, a composer worked with a vocalist while composing the piece. With the exception of Vaçe Zela, who chose her own repertoire, other vocalists jostled to sing the second variant (*dublim*) of the songs performed by Zela, or sometimes operatic tenor Gaqo Çako (p.c., light music vocalist, January 2010).

59 Today, vocalists and orchestra musicians refer to this period's “discipline” with a large measure of nostalgia. When I observed rehearsals for the 2009 Festival of Song, for example, several instrumentalists who had performed at socialist-era Festivals approached me during breaks to apologize for the group's lack of collective discipline, reminiscing—without any prompting—about how smoothly rehearsals had been conducted before 1991.

rehearsals coached by expert specialists, and the activation of “disciplined” vocalists, converged in mutually supporting ways to inflect compositional practice. Some commentators began criticizing the “tendency to complicate the form of the song, to approach the cantata, or the dramatic monologue, or in some cases the romance” (Stringa 1969:2). Nevertheless, large-scale “epic-lyrical” compositions by Conservatory pedagogues and their students increasingly predominated at Festivals of Song.

Conservatory student Limos Dizdari’s first-prize winning composition “Mësuesit hero” (To the hero teacher), inspired by “positive hero” Ismet Sali Bruçaj, exemplified these trends. This “epic-lyrical” work incorporated musical material from a film soundtrack Dizdari had recently scored, *Horizonte të Hapura* (Open Horizons, 1968). The film, like the song, portrayed a positive socialist hero, dock worker Adem Reka, who had died after refusing to abandon his post at the port of Durrës in rough weather.⁶⁰ In a thesis written in partial fulfillment of a Conservatory degree, Dizdari’s classmate Kujtim Gjelina described how “[w]ith the use of [the film’s] intonations in the song ‘Mësuesit hero,’ the author has sought to make a generalization of the figure of the hero of our days” (Gjelina 1969:16), an analysis Dizdari confirmed with me (interview, June 2010). Indeed, Dizdari composed and orchestrated “Mësuesit hero” as one would an art music piece, and Gjelina analyzed it as such:

[The composition] begins with a figure in the double basses, which prepares you for something heroic that comes later. ... [Dizdari] here puts in material taken from *canto* for the clarinet. ... Later, ... we see in the trombones the figure the double basses played, but

60 “The high waves threatened to sink the floating crane on which Adem Reka worked. Although he had ended his night shift, he rushed to the assistance of his comrades in the early hours of the morning, aware of the danger menacing people’s property. Four hours in succession he and his comrades struggled against the unleashed waves to rescue the crane....” (*Portrait of Albania* 1982:189). Many “positive heroes,” individuals who had sacrificed their lives for the good of society, were proposed and publicized during this period (Prifti 1978:117-8). At the Sixth Festival of Song, several pieces written for a fifteen-year-old girl, Shkurte Pal Vata, received awards.

more developed and fragmented, with smaller note values that raise the pulse and emotion of the work, until the explosion of notes at the culmination. (Gjelina 1969:20-1)

Gjelina's analysis, stressing how Dizdari musically linked the orchestral and vocal parts, owed as much to an ideal of organic thematic unity as Dizdari's musical setting did to his late romantic style. The song opened with an introductory swell of strings followed by a recitative-like verse over sustained strings. Constructed on the development of a three-note figure—*fa-mi-fa*—the rising vocal line's motive indexed a heroic “bugle call,” an impression reinforced with the entrance of trumpets doubling this figure in the refrain.⁶¹

Composers also presented “smaller” songs that “correctly” developed folkloric materials, exemplified at the Seventh Festival by Agim Krajka’s composition, “Jam një vajzë” (I’m a girl). At early Festivals, Krajka's innovative, jazzy songs owed much to his experience as a practicing musician at “dance evenings,” but by 1968, he had begun incorporating “folk” elements into upbeat rhythmic songs in a manner that deeply influenced later composers. This song's introductory pentatonic riff, for example, referenced what Gjelina referred to in his thesis as “the intonation of the South” (1969:30; see fig. 8). Commentators considered Krajka's song “Jam një vajzë” to reflect “the dynamism and optimism” of the masses by integrating musical elements, typically melodic or scalar material, seen to index the “national” folklore of southern Albania.⁶²

61 I confirmed several of these notions with the author. I cannot find audio examples online, and rely here on my quick scratch transcriptions from one listening in the Radio Tirana sound archives. The aesthetic conception of light song as an elevated work (*vepra*) instead of “song” (*këngë*) also denied the validity of more functional conceptions of light music compositions as mere entertainment, or simply “dance music.” Composers of “epic” or “lyrical” songs distinguished themselves from those “song composers” who wrote “maybe hundreds of rhythmic songs”; “lyric composers” thought of themselves as intimately involved in the crafting of a small work of art, polishing a “diamond” (*xhevahir*), not transcribing and arranging an “inspiration of the moment” (interviews, Shpëtim Kushta, 10 January 2010; Limos Dizdari, June 2010).

62 Krajka's primary innovation might be seen as foregrounding “the national” element so obviously (e.g., an introductory riff; the opening measures of a vocal line) that it could not fail to be analyzed by commentators.



Fig. 8: “Jam një vajzë” opening riff figure

Whether creating grand paeans to the new “positive hero” or incorporating “national” intonations, neither composer thought of himself as “obligated” to create particular kinds of works. At our initial meeting, for example, Dizdari introduced himself by stressing that he was oriented (*orientohem*) to film music, music for children, and lyric songs—genres or song types he considered meaningful and necessarily concerned with “grand themes” (p.c. 7 January 2010). The romantic notion that “one is oriented” through an internal artistic sensibility largely outside one’s conscious control permeates composers’ discourses, even while posing an implicit challenge to external (e.g., state-produced) orientations.⁶³ Similarly, Krajka, whose career trained him uniquely in folk, light, and concert music spheres, conceptualized his use of folkloric material as a commonsensical, even natural, element of his personal maturation as a composer. He entered the Conservatory the year it opened, though he continued to work at the state estrada and as a practicing accordionist at night to earn extra money. Like his peers in Çesk Zadeja’s composition studio, Krajka considered the composer a “colossus”: “All of my pedagogues had graduated from Tchaikovsky [Conservatory], in Moscow; the whole system we had was Russian [...] completely, totally Russian. But *ama*, but *ama*, we were taught to take the people’s theme.”

N.T.: Why—?

A.K.: [Interrupting.] How why!? We have the most wonderful folklore in the world, second to none! Twenty-four thousand square kilometers, three million people, different

63 In the next chapter, I treat these composers’ discourses on professionalism and artistic self-identity at length. Here I simply sketch these two particular composers’ notions of professional selfhood in order to register their perceptions of their 1960s work.

rhythms between zones, villages, and so on, more diverse than anywhere else! (Interview, 22 September 2009, Tirana)

A 1968 appointment to the National Ensemble of Folk Songs and Dances made the study of folklore part of Krajka's official duties, and reinforced his self-image as a composer dependent on composing "with the soil" (*me taban*). To this "support in folklore," he ascribed his success.⁶⁴

The Composer's Practical Sense

By early 1969, Albania's experiment with a Chinese-style cultural revolution had ended. Revolutionary ideological orientations had not just reorganized social groups, but had altered fundamentally the relationship between different social strata. Most notably, the hierarchical relationship between intellectuals and the masses came to be reversed in theoretical terms, as political elites challenged artists' privilege in shaping the consciousness of the masses. In the revolutionary formulation, "the people" (specifically its rural cultural forms, historical-political events, and, more ambiguously, "experiences") generated raw material that formed the only ideologically correct basis for intellectuals' cultural work. By accessing this experiential knowledge, artist-intellectuals exercised a form of knowledge—"recognition" (*njohja*)—on themselves, achieved through contact with "the people," whether in actual villages or through scientific study of ethnographic materials. The cultural products forged through one's intellectual

64 Krajka described this "support" (*mbështetje*) in practical terms: "[I]f we needed a Çam dance [a southern Albanian ethnographic zone located in Greece] to go to the competition in Dijon, France [in 1970], I was obligated to go to Çamëria for a month with a team, to see how they used the clarinet, the other instruments, what motives they used, or if I needed a dance from Devolli [a region in southeastern Albania], I went to Devoll, or to Kukësi [a northeastern area]... I went on expeditions for almost thirty years, and so I knew the folklore of the People. So, I also had great success in light music. Why [asking himself, rhetorically]? Because I wasn't up all night writing a melody, but just took a folk melody [sings] [...] *Aman, aman*, we were supported in our folklore [raps the table with his knuckles]. Our song thus gave a great pleasure to the people" (interview, 22 September 2009). With "Çam," I believe Krajka must have been referring to Muslim Albanian-speaking individuals who were forcibly resettled from Greece to several Albanian cities after 1944.

“mastery,” however, continued to function as a form of knowledge—“education”—for those objects of enlightenment, and bearers of “ignorance” (*padituria*), “the masses” (see fig. 9).

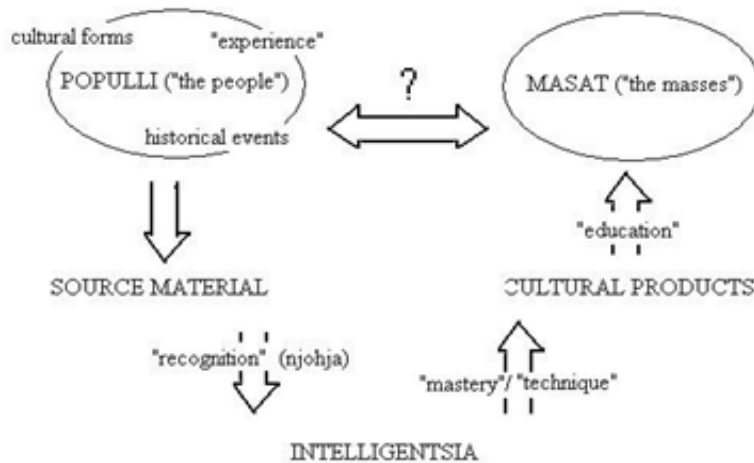


Fig. 9: The revolutionary field

The cultural revolution's theoretical paradoxes nevertheless remained numerous. Were *masat* and *populli* synonymous? How could *populli* exercise a directing role in society—as a source of experiential knowledge—if backward or ignorant *masat* needed expert direction? Theoretical concerns were imbricated in institutional structures as well. Did not the intelligentsia, which headed an elaborate, recently installed system of cultural production itself oriented toward identifying, selecting, and developing its folklore, exert an outsized, if not simply unequal, influence over society? Could some fields (e.g., music) require specialized forms of expertise (e.g., fluency in notation, or performance skills) that effectively disqualified *masat* from participating?

Composers sharing two key aesthetic and ideological premises—development and complexity as compositional techniques, and concern for educating “the masses”—found themselves uniquely placed to navigate Tirana's post-1965 music field. Further, the above examples demonstrate how key tenets of the state's revolutionary cultural orientations, whether

to create pieces about the “positive hero” or to make folklore the basis of creative works, came to be implemented. Though each composer received prizes at this Festival and later ones, the compositional techniques sketched above do not demonstrate strategic attempts to secure recognition, “follow” policy, or accommodate politics. Instead, the restructuring effects of the cultural revolution tended to reorient the cultural field in a manner that rewarded composers holding specific aesthetic sensibilities that paralleled political orientations. Employing a range of compositional strategies, and drawing on techniques or materials from concert and folk music spheres, composers in turn began to elaborate and internalize a cohesive sense of artistic selfhood that, as I will describe in the following chapter, provided a range of techniques of self-government through aesthetic codes of conduct.

THE CREATOR

The emergence of the “composer-creator,” which took form as a profession, also had to be constructed vis-à-vis other groups that might potentially have claimed to direct the music field. Yet by the late 1960s, the institutional and ideological conditions of Tirana's post-Soviet order enabled Russian-trained composers to initiate processes of professionalization with far-reaching consequences. As composers forged new senses of aesthetic-professional difference as more “expert,” professional, or educated than other groups, they consolidated themselves as a distinct social bloc sharing novel codes of conduct. The first step on these intellectuals’ road to professionalization, their recognition by political elites as bearers of intellectual knowledge, seemed, however, self-evident to musical and political elites alike, and prepared by the Soviet break and Tirana’s subsequent vacuum of foreign expert authority. At the same time, music agents actively claimed marks of distinction. Due to the rarefied forms their specialized codes of knowledge too (i.e., notational literacy, solfege, piano proficiency), the new professional

especially valued Conservatory training as foundational to a conception of artistic selfhood, as well as a means to consecrate and credential status. Invoking a paternal discourse about one's "responsibility" to the "people," the professional creator-composer began to view himself (and, later, herself) as having a status apart from the listening masses, while specialized discourses about legitimate claims to intellectual knowledge produced key forms of creative distinction within the music field.

By producing themselves as members of a profession, some music elites claimed recognition as the only legitimate bearers of a musical form of intellectual knowledge (cf. Tomoff 2006). Tirana's highly centralized social order, predicated on the APL's monopoly on ideological truth, itself fostered the formation of professional sub-groups by concentrating individuals with a similar worldview and radicalizing ideological and aesthetic debates, which in turn created or deepened rifts.⁶⁵ In encouraging blocs of like-minded individuals to convene themselves, Albanian socialism conditioned new forms of social and musical organization predicated on concert music aesthetics and compositional complexity. As composers performed their professionalism by generating new aesthetic norms and defining the parameters of composition as an inviolate discipline, these intellectuals came to dominate the music field by disqualifying other groups who might have proposed counterclaims, in effect "spoiling" potential alternative sources of expertise. In describing composers as "spoilers," I am suggesting a certain kinship between the nature of the power of these individuals and that of the socialist state itself as theorized by sociologist Jan Gross (1988). Gross has described how the Soviet state's power derived from incapacitating forms of association that could have provided potential alternatives

65 Rivalries among 1940s Soviet geographers, for example, were often fought on scholarly grounds as much as ideological ones (Shaw and Oldfield 2008). Applied here, it would thus be incorrect to read "political" and "artistic" or "academic" issues as separate, because they often overlapped.

to the state, such as the church, civil society institutions, or trade unions. I am suggesting that just as the classic “spoiler state” inhibited, criminalized, or strictly regulated potential competition, composers acted as “mini-spoilers” through their strategic deployment of forms of expertise and a monopoly on key posts in Tirana's cultural production apparatus. This notion ascribes a specific agency to intellectuals, as well as a space in which key elements of elite political discourse could be confounded, while also indicating the multifarious ways the logic of state-socialist governance came to permeate the music field through an emergent, specifically socialist habitus among music intellectuals.

Performing Professionalism at the Festival

By 1970, the Festival of Song provided composers a site to enact their expertise through “professional” collaboration on complex pieces. Unlike the light songs presented at the first Festivals, these “lyric” songs relied on extended harmonies, motivic development, a wider, sweeping melodic ambitus, and complicated forms. The opening to this chapter reproduces part of a conversation I had during my fieldwork on “professionalism” with composer Shpëtim Kushta. A Conservatory student in 1970, Kushta received first prize for his song “Mesnatë” (Midnight) at the Tenth Festival of Song. Kushta’s collaboration with Fatos Arapi, a poet and active member of Tirana’s “young guard,” and orchestrator Robert Radoja, a virtuoso pianist and the composer’s classmate at the Conservatory, resulted in a soaring work, especially as interpreted by vocalist Vaçe Zela. Tempo and meter continuously shifted. A methodical, *rubato* first verse, for example, became metered and faster in the second verse with the addition of a double bass and piano figure; the bridge featured an *accelerando* leading to a climactic *a tempo* at the refrain. Melodically, Kushta developed in the bridge an upper neighbor figure, first foreshadowed in a wistful figure linking the first verse with the second, as it built to the

culminating refrain. Kushta was relatively adventurous in harmonic terms as well: the verse featured a flash of chromatic color in a passing tone (2-b2), while the end of the refrain juxtaposed an A minor sonority (iv) with a brilliant F# major (V/V), cadencing on the dominant before returning to the minor tonic in the third verse. Radoja orchestrated the piece using the full complement of the Radio orchestra, his introduction outlining the tonic minor with woodwinds, horns, and *divisi* strings.

The relationship between the music and text also belied an artistic conception of song. Poet Fatos Arapi's text may be read as a love song, but also a subtly ideological paean to socialism's "new life" (*jetë e re*). Verse 1 set the poetic scene, a silent town at midnight, and introduced the characters, two lovers on a date. Verse 2 continued to describe the date, yet shifted the narrative, or *fabul*, from an emphasis on the lovers' relationship to their position within society. Kushta's musical setting followed this text. The colorful descending chromatic passing tone here emphasized the "voices of the new life," while earlier the same device had highlighted the stillness of the city and the lover's magnificence. The text of the bombastic bridge then shifted as well, from an ode to young love to the "love" of a young vanguard generation with the entire world in its purview. Symphonic in conception (see fig. 10), the relationship between text and score indicates something of the creative backgrounds of the song's creators: Kushta's collaboration with Arapi the following year, a lengthy symphonic poem titled *Alarme të Përgjakura* (Bloodied alarms) won him several prizes in concert music competitions and assured him a prime position in Tirana as a pedagogue.

0:00	Introduction: i-VI-V	An orchestral introduction featuring strings, horns, woodwinds, and piano outlines the tonic (d minor; simple duple meter).
0:18	Mesi i natës mbi ne ja tani sa kaloi. i iv I Qetësi, qetësi...qyteti flen edhe v (2 - b2) iv	<u>Verse 1a</u> : Rubato, romantic vocal delivery with free strings accompaniment. Vaçe Zela's delivery varies between 48 and 60 bpm. There is a moment of chromatic coloration

pieces would not be “understandable” or popular outside Tirana, suggesting elaborate pieces were suited more to “academic evenings” than Festivals. Few district estrada commanded the instrumentation for a piece like “Mesnatë,” nor did such a song fulfill the “demand” that songs be easily spread. Pieces similarly difficult in terms of vocal technique, contemporary reports remarked, were often too challenging for amateur district singers to perform well. Despite tendencies toward stylistic and discursive homogenization and incipient moves to establish professional codes, the space of professional composers itself remained subject to potentially schismatic debate. Yet such compositions nevertheless succeeded in framing light music as necessitating exegesis from individuals able to render legible the potentially arcane, especially in terms of the composition’s heightened aesthetic language, framed as necessary in revealing the inner emotional state of a song’s figures. Put more simply, such a “professional” composition, to invoke Kushta’s own designation, not only necessitated the elaboration of composer-specific practical-aesthetic codes, but also enabled the production of key forms of creative distinction between the composer-creator and other groups.

Creating Distinction

The emergence of a professional status, examined here as the position of “creator-composer,” cannot simply be viewed as the “natural” result of composers’ own claims, nor as following directly from local policies. North Korea, for example, poses a powerful counterexample. Though North Korean elites following a Chinese example adopted similar revolutionary policies and discourses on art, this resulted in composers being stripped of most creative agency through the “collectivization” of composition. In certain cases, pieces were composed in committee, and individual authors were often not identified in scores (Howard 2005:36). In Tirana, an “ideology of creation” emerged through institutional arrangements, such

as the founding of a conservatory and the replacement of administrators with composers at the Radio, especially as articulated by exegetical practices deemed necessary in rendering musical knowledge legible beyond the music field.⁶⁷ Unlike in the Soviet Union or elsewhere in the eastern bloc, in Albania no composers' union existed,⁶⁸ and thus markers of professional distinction emerged among small groups headed by powerful Soviet-trained pedagogues as much as in open debate. Composers' own strategic claims to "expertise" disqualified would-be professional groups, and specifically, listeners, vocalists, and non-Conservatory trained songwriters, from ascendancy in the music field. By bringing together these groups, light music and the Festival of Song provided composers key sites to propose new forms of professional distinction. Such claims had to be negotiated against competing ones from three classes of would-be "creators": listeners, vocalists, and non-composer songwriters.

Listeners

The term "light music amateurs" (*amatorë të muzikës së lehtë*) initially referred to young, urban aficionados of dance and rhythm music, and in 1965, organizers began incorporating these listeners into the Festival's evaluation procedures. To ensure that the prize selection at the Fourth Festival of Song was "more correct and more democratic" (D3/1965 RTSH), organizers

67 In using "ideology of creation," I mean to invoke Bourdieu's discussion (1993:76ff.) on the "belief" in the value of a work that underpins a capitalist field of cultural production and focuses analysis—incorrectly, for the sociologist—on the *producer* over the circumstances of *production*. This is one potential power effect of the position of author, that "privileged moment in individualization in the history of ideas, knowledge, literature, philosophy, and the sciences" (Foucault 1994 [1969]:377). Here, however, my analysis traces not a transformation of cultural capital into economic capital, but rather a discourse of "creativity" as a resource for practices of position-taking in the music field, which I further develop in the next chapter.

68 On the Soviet Union of Composers, see Tomoff 2006 for a key related argument emphasizing not knowledge, but access to resources. In Bulgaria, Buchanan describes the powerful role of the Union of Bulgarian Composers in hiring personnel in related fields (2007a:163), but also—channeling the perceptions of the individuals she worked with, I believe—as a "mafia concerned only with turf, money, prestige, and power" (ibid.:209).

discussed adding factory workers to its jury and soliciting listeners' opinions through ballots placed at the hall, regional culture houses, and the Radio building. Though plans to include "amateurs" proliferated, in practice, organizers placed listeners on a jury with "a consultative character, [with] the final decision for prizes given by the Radio Office in support of the proposals of the jury."⁶⁹ As musical events came to be predicated on having "met the ever rising demands of the listener," amateurs' participation as "popular critics" endowed jury results and composers' winning compositions with a measure of ideological legitimacy by providing evidence of light music's success recognizable to political elites. At the same time, as one of Zadeja's Conservatory students argued in a late 1960s thesis, Radio employees could not blindly answer listener requests:

[W]e must not transmit without any criteria the immediate demands of one category of amateurs, [for] we simultaneously influence them in the development of aesthetic tastes. Before the music editorial office employees stands a difficult duty: on the one hand, to fulfill these [listeners'] demands (which are many), and on the other, to educate the radio listeners' taste in the widening of their musical horizon... (Strakosha 1969:8).

Though employees moderated meetings with listeners at factory clubs or the university to gauge non-specialists' "demands" for musical events, I found no archival evidence that reports generated by these meetings influenced events in concrete ways.

Instead, theoretical elaborations among Conservatory students and professors about the educational role of art in society progressively contradicted efforts to cast the "light music amateur" as a meaningful critic, as composers and their students began to elaborate a conception of song as a "form of communication." Composers came to view musical composition as a process where the composer, inspired by the creativity of the people, which has "its own

⁶⁹ Moreover, composers with whom I worked recalled no instances when this policy effected concrete changes. By incorporating non-specialists, Festival organizers may have even demonstrated compliance with explicit political directives without ceding creative control to non-musicians.

[inherent] values” (*që ka vlerat e vetë*), “selects” from among these. The “values” one might choose for a three-minute song needed to be “clear and easily communicated, because there is not enough time to develop them further,” and the success of a song's development depends on “the selection and raising up of a distillate of values” (p.c., Limos Dizdari, 7 January 2010). Conceptualized as a “distillate of values,” song—in this formulation—depended not on listeners' appreciation, or even acceptance, of the light song-as-artwork, but rather the composer's aesthetic intention and technical skill in working “values.”⁷⁰ In a related argument, composers also came to understand the successful Festival song as one fitted to listeners' cultural level through a natural social logic. Whereas few listeners were perceived to have had the cultural level to appreciate, for example, an opera, the Festival provided more easily comprehended songs for “simple listeners” who might have struggled with symphonic fare (p.c. Shpëtim Kushta, 5 January 2010). Music intellectuals, and especially Tirana's first student cohort, thus imagined into existence a generic light music amateur, conceiving this individual as an object of their own, elevated music values. Paradoxically, the politicization of amateurs obligated young composers to think about and discuss the relationship between specialists and non-specialists, which they remade theoretically into a site further elaborating notions of social difference. Even as listeners' judgments on song remained formal exercises, specialists' notion of light music as an edifying instrument to be exercised on the masses became integral to discourses on professionalism.

Vocalists

Difference among the music field's primary subdivision—vocalists and composers—was

70 One composer critiqued my interviews and archival work, suggesting I instead simply analyze composers' songs in order to assess “the artistic profile and values that each composer was trying to create in his work” (p.c., composer, January 2010). Suspicion about my methods often turned on this point: that a composer's “values” (*vlera*) could be accessed only through a technical musical analysis.

built into the Festivals' organization following the example of the Sanremo Festival of Italian Song:

Usually, invitations [to the Festival] were made out, 'Comrade Composer, we are doing these kinds of songs, send us your creativity with national intonations.' ... It was not sent to the singers, just to composers, because the song was the main thing. Afterwards, the Editorial Office [for Music] had a long list of singers, and separated songs for them, with input from the composers, too.... But the singers were secondary. (Interview, composer Aleksandër Lalo, 25 February 2010)

The Festival's focus on compositions, in local parlance, “creativity” (*krijimtaria*), placed emphasis primarily on the work itself rather than a performance. The distinction between composer and vocalist implied a “natural” division between the composition of a song by its creator (*krijues*) and its performance by an interpreter (*interpretues*). According to music specialists, the “composer creates” and the “vocalist interprets”; one would not say, for example “a vocalist created a performance.” Each act, creation and interpretation, also implied different training (*formimi*). Though creation required an advanced and specialized course of study at the Conservatory, even top interpreters, exemplified by the case of Vaçe Zela as described above, relied on “intuition.” No course of study for light music vocalists existed, though in the absence of training programs, discourses emphasizing originality, discipline, and professionalization circulated, albeit as mediated by composers. This institutionalized difference distinguished vocalists from composers according to the quality of their musical expertise. Interpreters' knowledge in many ways came to be seen among composers as passive, as well as feminized, in distinction from more “active” knowledge necessary for creation.⁷¹

Songwriters

71 Among composers, a common reason given as to why more women did not compose was usually that women naturally “orient themselves toward performance.” The composer Aleksandër Lalo had a different idea: “Women do create—they create life, babies!”, meaning that this takes up their “creative juices,” so to speak. Cf. Halstead 1997.

While a distinction between “creation” and “interpretation” differentiated composers from vocalists, so too did notions of correct or professional compositional sensibility among would-be composers. Theoretically, individuals with some musical training from a culture house could compose a simple song. According to a 1967 piece in the popular magazine, *Radioprogram*, “There are many amateur musicians in work and production centers who, inspired by our socialist life, write songs in which their talent is apparent” (Anon. 1967). Asking, “How should these comrades begin their work?”, this didactic article focused on the interrelated issues of taste and expertise from which resulted a “simple, unique song, with necessary contrasts, that enlivens the right emotions when you hear it” (ibid.).

It is essential that the musician know, play, and study folk music, to be educated to feel and to love it, to study all of its intonational rhythmic, harmonic, and polyphonic characteristics. ... Simple classical works of world [concert] music and, especially, the best creations of our composers, must be listened to and studied closely. ... Amateur composers must work doggedly for the education and development of their taste, which will be reflected in the works that they then write. (Ibid.)

The article included an example of a non-professional composition by an accordionist from the district town of Permet, as well as a discussion of its key elements: its intervals were consonant, “clear and compelling for the listener’s ear”; its structure was simple; the verse’s phrases begin and end on a tonic, and its contrasting section was in the dominant. Emphasizing formal elements such as symmetry, harmonic consonance, and periodic structure, the author linked song composition to concert music, suggesting a kind of implicit, auto-didactic apprenticeship between the amateur and “the best creations of our composers.” At the same time, the amateur must learn not only to perform, but also to love folk music, to submit to a kind of aural self-training in folk music that, given the formal properties stressed in the example, would not seem to aid one's songwriting technique. Instead, study would inculcate in the amateur a taste professional composers themselves sought to cultivate.

In practical terms, professional composers discouraged, or in some cases blocked, the participation of amateur composers. At a meeting organized during the cultural revolution's campaign to facilitate the critique of officials at state institutions, Leftër Nurka complained about the Radio's music editorial office:

Radio Tirana also does little to encourage amateur composers. Often when [amateurs] send their songs [and are rejected], they do not receive an answer about why they are worthless, or what changes can be made to better them. Many times answers are given, but are given very late, something that discourages them and does not encourage them to write. ... (D1/1969 RTSH)

Continuing, Kostandin Thanas, a folk singer in the district city of Vlora, complained that the Radio had not sent a team to record pieces for several years. When a team did come, the quality of its recordings proved poor, a criticism individuals elsewhere confirmed. To improve the situation, Radio employees pledged to create songwriting lessons for broadcast, begin to include district representatives on artistic commissions, and limit repetition of song broadcasts to free airtime for more individuals' works. In my dissertation research and in speaking with composers, I found no evidence that these changes were implemented.

CONCLUSION: 'A CURIOUS NATURAL SELECTION'

At Radio Tirana, editor and poet Sadik Bejko checked light music and folk song lyrics submitted for broadcast. When teams of scholars working in districts sent in texts of newly created folksongs, Bejko often changed only minor elements, excising ungrammatical turns of phrase and replacing archaic words, before explaining his changes to singers and noting which songs had to be rerecorded. No analogous music specialist checked scores, lead-sheets, or recordings, and because Bejko answered directly to Radio Director Thanas Nano, decisions about song texts remained as centralized as responsibility for musical sounds was diffuse. The nature of potential complaints in part shaped this arrangement. Central Committee members

often called the director to complain about texts broadcast on the radio, but not the music. Bejko had the sense that “words were handcuffed, but not music,” a sentiment composers often repeated to me. As one composer put it, musical knowledge eluded the grasp of political elites:

The musical library? There was none. There was a musical library at the conservatory, created with the contributions of whatever we had, whoever had discs gave them, whoever had scores gave them, and around this time [1960s], they began to order new things and those things came, but even so they were few, not enough, insufficient. That's why we did not know, we did not know *what* to look for, we did not know what to enjoy! ... [But the state] did not interfere very much with those things, because, hmm, well first of all it did not know what to say [about music], and *we* did not know that the [musics] we were interested in were [prohibited].... If we did not know this, then the state did not know anything at all. *Shyqyr*—thank goodness—when the state did not know something, the state could not clearly control it, and thus there was no prohibition. (interview, Limos Dizdari, June 2010, Tirana)

While state-socialist administrators planned everything—from chromium production to the number of ballerinas trained each year—cultural directives and orientations did not develop according to blueprints found in either Marx or Lenin. Music policies were particularly susceptible to what scholar Janos Kornai, writing on political and economic aspects of the Hungarian system, described as a “curious natural selection” by which “new [elements] easily reconciled with the nature of the system take root” (Kornai 1992:365-6). The centralization of a cultural means of production itself enabled certain groups to monopolize cultural production. A Soviet-trained group of composers, fluent in ideological speech and endowed with the prestige of their art music training, thus came to position themselves vis-a-vis the state and other groups of music specialists as experts capable of directing musical life, and negotiating into existence ideologically “correct” musical sounds. Though composers' practices often diverged from political orientations, analysis of intellectuals' position-takings and strategies—a practical sense, or “feel for the game”—recoups an understanding of how musical practices did not simply follow or resist party objectives, but instead explored side-streets, dead-ends, or even plotted

hybrid paths running more or less parallel to what might have been understood as an “official” line.

By the 1960s, the APL’s leadership shifted control of domestic populations away from coercive measures, whether the collectivization campaigns, labor camps, show trials, or purges of the 1940s and 1950s. Albania’s cultural revolution renewed the need for an intelligentsia able to propose new values for the masses, but this intelligentsia itself increasingly became subject to discipline and surveillance, though the state’s repressive apparatus unevenly covered intellectual and political space. Moreover, purges and political casualties of mid-1960s revolutionary campaigns thinned the APL’s ranks of members hailing from urban and non-working backgrounds. Increased recruitment from rural areas further changed the APL’s composition, exacerbating divisions among remaining members. Within the intelligentsia, most of whom were not APL members, powerful blocs of writers were made the object of criticism and punitive circulation policies far more frequently than music specialists. As members of an expert status group with skills indispensable to a state apparatus now focused on ideological appeals to legitimacy, composers remained largely insulated from repressive measures. The Eleventh Festival of Song in December 1972 would change this—in spectacular fashion.

CHAPTER FOUR. RECOGNIZING LISTENERS

A schoolteacher writes to tell me that when she tells pupils how they should present themselves and behave, they answer her: ‘You comrade teacher tell us to be polite, with a correct appearance, but on Television we see people going out with clothes, hair, and appearances that you have criticized to us. So, that which appears on television is official.’ No, comrades, these things are not official, but contraband. ... The comprehensive spiritual development of the moral figure of our new person cannot be understood without the training of healthy ideological tastes for the beautiful in art, in nature, in work, and in life. The issue of tastes is not a simple personal question of individuals [...as] tastes have always a social character, they are trained under the direct influence of economic-social relationships, of ideology and of culture, of social psychology.
—*Enver Hoxha, Address to the People’s Secretariat 11 January 1973*

At the conclusion of a 1973 discussion of interpreter Bashkim Alibali’s performance at the Eleventh Festival of Song, Shkodra’s local music director Leonard Deda rose to speak. In Alibali’s dress, mannerisms, and vocal style, all allegedly following “a western manner,” conservative commentators had recognized a disturbing pattern and, over the course of the morning, a line of speakers had criticized the fashionable young man for *shfaqje të huaja*,

meaning foreign or “alien” manifestations.¹ Granting critics' demands he be banned from performing light music, Deda suggested that a more proper denunciation (*dënim*) would allow Alibali to continue to perform, albeit with the stipulation he sing only folk music. A commission accepted this proposal. Previously, Alibali had had neither the experience nor the inclination to interpret anything but light music. Over the next seven years he performed only arranged folk music at district and national festivals. Reflecting on this period to me in 2010, Alibali described how he came to view the experience as essential to his development as a “professional” (interview, Bashkim Alibali, 28 April 2010). Having come to recognize himself as a true artist, a “rehabilitated” Alibali resumed his career as a light music singer in 1979.

Intended to be a “youthful” and “modern” event, the December 1972 Eleventh Festival of Song was the culmination of a short-lived cultural thaw or, in local terms, a “breeze” (*flad*). Conservative factions in the Albanian Party of Labor, however, quickly denounced the Festival as a “manifestation of liberalism” that had “ruined the tastes of the working masses” (Hoxha 1977:386). Officials cited light music vocalists’ performances, modeled after Italian and American singers, as disturbing examples of a false modernity imposed by intellectualist “snobs” and “cosmopolitans.” Hearings on the Festival’s “modern tendencies” resulted in several harsh punishments. The text editor at RTSH, Sadik Bejko, was interned, and vocalist Sherif Merdani imprisoned. Vocalist Justina Aliaj received a performance ban, and other Tirana musicians, assignments in remote village outposts. Fallout from the Eleventh Festival of Song also presaged radical new protectionist and isolationist policies. “Our Party is for a truly modern development

1 At the previous year’s Festival, a RTSH commission had criticized Alibali for “western” comportment, though the singer was allowed on stage following a composer’s last-minute intercession. At the recent Eleventh Festival of Song, organized in a more liberal atmosphere, Alibali shone. Yet on reporting to sing at a local New Year's Eve concert following his triumphant return to Shkodra, Alibali was told he would not be scheduled for live performances until his “case” had been settled.

of our entire social life, of the economy and of culture, of literature and of art,” First Secretary Enver Hoxha declared, “[b]ut this has nothing in common with the corrosive modernization of the contemporary capitalist and revisionist world” (ibid.:391). Over the ensuing decade, RTSH employees exercised an increasingly strict control over musical broadcasts as, according to the RTSH General Director Marash Hajati, “The microphone and camera were announced as holy and inviolate, [to be kept] far from every influence of enemy work and alien manifestation...” (Hajati 1998:83).

In this chapter, I examine how the denunciation of the Eleventh Festival of Song not only initiated the extension of repressive techniques over intellectual space, but also obligated the formation of new modes of recognition by which intellectuals came to understand themselves and their audiences. The cultural field’s 1973 purge, experienced by Alibali at its margins, formed part of a strategic series enveloping first top military officials (1974) and then economists (1975).² For many intellectuals, these three years index the “true” nature of the regime as brutal and anti-intellectual. In criticizing my dissertation project, for example, one musician told me “this story has been told before—about Stalin’s Russia” (p.c., September 2009). Artists today often narrate the years between 1972 and 1985 by emphasizing the politicization of composers’ work and performers’ very bodies. Moreover, a retrospective historiography concerned with identifying and describing an Albanian “dissident” movement has, since the end of socialism in 1991, become standardized by Tirana’s most vocal postsocialist democrats.³ Yet this period also represents a “golden age” of locally produced popular music. In a hugely popular television

2 See Vickers 1999:201-3.

3 In Chapter Five, I describe how musical “dissidence” and resistance came to be retrospectively produced in 1990s Albania. My argument here seeks to recoup a sense of music agents’ practices and trajectories that cannot be described in terms of “dissidence,” “resistance,” or “subversion.”

program aired in 2005, contemporary producers and pop singers remade the top “songs of the century”: compositions written between 1973 and 1990 outnumbered all others by two to one, while six of the ten light music vocalists given special retrospective episodes starred primarily during the 1970s and 1980s.⁴ Moreover, listeners who came of age during this period often point to its art and music as being particularly “cultured,” “beautiful,” and “Albanian.” In the following sections, I suggest one potential answer to this paradox by focusing on the positive, or constitutive, power effects of Albanian socialism. I first describe early 1970s technological and demographic changes that enabled urban listeners to assume an active role as pseudo-consumers, which in turn prompted political elites to liberalize cultural policy in an attempt to “colonize” an incipient youth culture. I then analyze the 1973 cultural field’s purge as a symbolic revocation of the youth’s role in directing culture, and describe two related phenomena: increased controls over music specialists’ space, as well as a proliferation of discourses and practices of artistic self-governance.

THE DEMANDS OF THE YOUTH

At the IV Plenum of the APL held in July 1973, First Secretary Enver Hoxha railed against “enemies” whom he claimed had been challenging the state’s order from within its symbolic apparatus. Certain individuals, Hoxha asserted, had sought to demonstrate how “capitalism has superseded its contradictions, that bourgeois society has gotten better, that now

4 The first edition of *Këngët e Shekullit* (The Songs of the Century), produced by Pandi Laço and Bledar Laço, aired on TV KLAN in 2005; two subsequent editions have aired in 2008 and 2010, with the latter including folk songs. One potential explanation for the emphasis on songs composed between 1972 and 1985 lies in the age of producers and many viewers, who came of age during this period. At the same time, this does not fully account for the “classic” status of many of these songs. Individuals born between the late 1950s and early 1970s would also, for example, have been familiar with songs of the 1960s, which were heavily promoted in the early 1980s as “classics.” In 1983, RTSH even created an annual concert, The Festival of Interpreters (*Festivali i Interpretuesve*), at which young vocalists presented light music songs from the 1960s.

capitalism and socialism are converging toward the same society, that there is no longer a place for class struggle, no more a place of revolutionary coups, no more a place for communist ideals, and so on” (Hoxha 1977:382). In the cultural field, “pseudo-theoreticians,” so-called “learned intellectuals,” and young people in the capital comprised forces allegedly marshaled by two “anti-party” elements in the Politburo, playwright Fadil Paçrami and RTSH’s General Director Todi Lubonja. Each had facilitated manifestations of “open bourgeois and revisionist ideological influences,” whether “imitations of foreign models” or the portrayal of “intimate themes” over grand social ones, all “in the name of the new” (ibid.:384-5). Hoxha criticized especially the “modern music” these individuals viewed as “the only thing that might answer ‘the demands of the period and of the youth’” (ibid.:387).

Throughout 1973, elites’ references to the “demands” of the youth and its tastes in clothing, hairstyles, music, and literature proliferated. By targeting the youth’s “tastes” (*shije*) for locally produced culture and the arts, political elites organized debate around the music intellectual’s social responsibility and artistic self-administration in creating “correct” works for listeners. Yet the turbulent formation of a music field during the 1960s had militated against the careful consideration of actual listeners’ demands. Further, as competition among music specialists began to encourage a preponderance of “epic-lyric” or “heroic” songs on state broadcasts, listeners—and especially sophisticated urban ones—increasingly tuned out. Non-consumers constructed as the objects of cultural enlightenment, listeners had thus exercised little say on the direction of popular culture. How, then, did the issue of listeners’ taste become key to political debates? Why did the actual “demands of the youth” come to be understood as an object of government policy?

Taste's Basis

Between 1945 and 1965, Albania's "urban" population increased from 21.3 to 33.2 percent. This statistic, however, only incompletely portrays the massive social changes initiated by both rural-to-urban movement and collectivization campaigns. Though approximately 45 percent of the 1945 population lived in communities of fewer than 500 individuals, by 1960 this had been halved. In the meantime, the 8 percent urban minority previously inhabiting several large towns more than doubled (*Vjetari Statistikor* 1965:65). The city of Tirana itself swelled from 10,000 occupants in 1923 to 150,000 by 1964, while other major prewar towns at least doubled or tripled in size—the population of neighboring Durrës increased tenfold (*ibid.*:68-9) (see fig. 1).

	<u>Urban</u>	<u>Non-urban</u>
1945	21.3%	88.7%
1965	33.2%	66.8%

General population shift from non-urban to urban

	<u>< 500 inhabitants</u>	<u>> 25,000 inhabitants</u>
1945	45%	8.4%
1960	21.8%	19.3%

Population change according to community sizes

Fig. 1: Socialism's early demographic shifts

The expansion of the educational system intensified demographic policies administering urban and non-urban areas, which affected an emergent "youth" category in key ways. By targeting young people through literacy and schooling campaigns, educational policy created a large bloc of high school and university students in towns and cities. Efforts to organize this bloc enabled novel social formations. Small-scale volunteer work projects termed *aksionë*, for example, proved especially productive of close-knit cohorts. As one woman, *Mirela, put it, "going to *aksion*" (*në aksion*) to labor on construction sites or in agricultural cooperatives

“formed a generation” (*formon një brez*).⁵ A site to work and socialize, one’s *aksion* may be remembered fondly. Mirela herself excavated trenches at the Rrogozhinë-Fier railroad construction site in central Albania with her LAJM classmates in 1968:

We were positioned at the final stop in Fier, but at that time we did not know how many stops there were or how it was to be constructed, just that we were to work there. I was sixteen years old and had memories of my just-completed first years of Lycee [LAJM] in my mind. We slept on mattresses lined up in rows on the floor, one after the other, and the heat in our dormitories was overwhelming. Every night mosquitoes swarmed over us, biting. Reveille was at four in the morning. We rose, washed, ate, and collected our tools to go to the work site. There we worked next to one another, laughing, joking, and singing. I remember one very beautiful moment, singing a song by [popular Italian singer] Orietta Berti. (Personal communication, 9 December 2009)

For Mirela, Italian popular song provided a point of communication with classmates.

Policies to administer the contexts in which young people might forge correctly socialist lifeworlds, Mirela’s anecdote suggests, were not necessarily incommensurate with non-local popular culture, which provided attractive symbolic material alternative to that found on state broadcasts (cf. Taylor 2006). The whims of powerful individuals at key points within youth circuits, however, could initiate acts of repression. On returning to the LAJM for the 1968-9 academic year, Mirela found heightened controls instituted by the school’s director.

Mirela: [D]uring my second year, it became a fad to collect pictures. We collected them, traded them with one another, looked at them—I had about a hundred, but I might be exaggerating. I remember having Johnny Holiday, Brigitte Bardot, Rossana Podestà—she played Helen of Troy. [...]

N.T.: These were pictures you cut out of magazines? Albanian magazines?

Mirela: No, no! Out of foreign magazines, newspapers. One day the director for the school gathered us together, because someone had noticed that we were doing this. He thought it was an “alien manifestation” [*shfaqje të huaj*], and we were told that if any of us were caught with the pictures, our parents would be denounced.

N.T.: Why your parents?

Mirela: Because we were just kids—too young to be denounced—but they had allowed

5 A student at the LAJM and later ILA during the late 1960s and early 1970s, Mirela elaborated that “all young people in Albania shared the same experiences, survived under the same condition. Everyone went to *aksion*, everyone had the same schooling, the same clothes” (p.c., 9 December 2009).

us to do this. I went home that afternoon and looked at all of my pictures one more time. Then, crying a little bit, I ripped each one into tiny little shreds, so that you couldn't tell what it was anymore. As soon as I ripped up the last one, and looked at the mess, I regretted it. 'Why did you do this!?! Who is going to come check in your house, in your room—why didn't you just hide them!?! No one would have any idea if you just kept them secret, kept them for yourself!' But I was afraid, I was afraid that my father could be denounced. I didn't think I was doing anything wrong. [...] (Personal communication, 9 December 2009)

While the LAJM and aksion created communal sites for friendship, and even positive feelings about the nation-state—Mirela, like many other members of her generation I met, had deep pride in her education and felt she had contributed to Albania's "progress"—hierarchical organizational structures enabled some individuals to wield authority in ways many deemed absurd, arbitrary, or repressive. At the same time, these small acts of repression were not subject to an overarching policy about "the youth," but rather enabled by shifting articulations between efforts to target young people through educational institutions, media policy, campaigns for the "building of socialism," and so on.

The example above demonstrates also how rapid technological advances inflected demographic changes. As campaigns to "wire" the country for sound and image proliferated, young people increasingly became able to view, hear, and develop a taste for non-local identity resources, whether Orietta Berti or Brigitte Bardot. Previously, geographical, cultural, and logistical issues had ensured uneven access to non-local popular culture. In 1945, Albania's two radio transmitters reached few citizens due to rugged terrain and a lack of radio sets. In large villages or district towns, public loudspeakers (*altoparlant*) installed in town squares remained the only outlet for radio broadcasts until the 1960s, as few families owned expensive imported radio receivers. When the precursor to Television-Albania, the Experimental Television Center, began broadcasting three programs per week in 1960, households outside the very top ranks of the APL did not own television receivers. Yet by 1968, over 150,000 transistor radios receiving

signals from six national radio stations powered by 52 transmitters reached a substantial area of the country. By 1970, the state television broadcast a short daily program to the now 35,000 homes with television sets (Logoreci 1977:178).⁶ The number of sets doubled following the 1974 opening of Durrës's electronics factory.

Surplus energy, Chinese aid, and a pressing need for “culture and progress” prompted the APL's late 1960s efforts to bring electricity to every community, which the publicity campaign “Light across all Albania” (*Dritë mbi gjithë Shqipërinë*) widely propagandized.⁷ For APL officials, access to technology indexed the party-state's claims to belonging within a “modern” order of nation-states. For urban families, individual access to “modern” technology, and especially television viewing, also proved a powerful marker of social distinction. “A television

6 Heavy financial and logistical support from the Chinese government fueled a technological boom and, perhaps surprisingly, by the early 1970s Albania trailed only the Soviet Union and China in total hours broadcast, transmitting daily over seventy-six hours in seventeen languages on domestic and foreign services (Logoreci 1977:178-9). Though much of the media expansion was aimed at foreign listeners—China intended Albania to be its “voice” in Europe—construction campaigns also created infrastructure for domestic media.

7 During a trip to Shkodra in 1967, Enver Hoxha visited the construction site for a road connecting surrounding mountainous regions to the low-lying city. “If the electrification of all of [mountain districts] Kelmendi and Dukagjin were accomplished,” Hoxha reportedly discussed with a local engineer, “[...] culture, progress, prosperity [*bagëtia*] would climb high into these mountains” (Hoxha 1998:115-6). In her 1998 memoir, Enver Hoxha's widow, Nexhmije Hoxha, linked the subsequent electrification campaign to the potential spread of television, an “irreplaceable window of culture and progress, in the depths of our mountain villages' most remote towers [*kulla*]” (ibid.). In a short film produced for the “Lights...” campaign in 1969, engineers observe a large map covered with blinking lights indicating cities, towns, and villages. Though lit bulbs indicate that in 1967 only 26% of the country accessed electricity, an engineer—with the flip of a switch—bathes the entire map in light. Two of the first districts to receive electricity were Kelmendi and Dukagjin, implying that even the *thellësi*, or “deep” zones, inhabited by the nation-state's quintessential premoderns could enter modernity. On 25 October 1970—months ahead of schedule, and “under the guiding hand of the Party”—Albania celebrated its first “Day of Electrification,” a new national holiday honoring the country's full electrification. My information on this campaign derives from the 15 November 2009 broadcast of TV KLAN's *Historia më e zhurmuese* (The most buzzworthy stories, dir. Pandi Laço), and its retrospective episode “1970.”

in the house was a sign of status,” essayist Mustafa Nano writes of his family’s acquisition in the early 1970s. ““Even you got one?” a teacher at the eight-year school asked me the next day, without hiding his surprise, and I did not find it at all embarrassing to put this question into another form in my head: they gave authorization for a television to your father, who is nothing but a lowly mechanic?” (Nano 2009:58).⁸

The de facto existence of status groups based on heavily regulated consumption points out the key discrepancy between political elites’ modernist aspirations for technology and individuals’ experiences of it. Yet citizens held differential levels of access to a technological means of distinction based on ownership and media consumption. In local parlance, “privileged ones” (*të privilegjuar*) were a group of Tirana elites (*elita*) not formed through an inherent quality, but marked by the accumulation of concrete “privileges”: goods or rights denied most citizens.⁹ Trendsetters, often the children of APL officials who lived in Tirana’s *blloku* (‘the block’), a closed neighborhood housing top officials and their families, could access foreign media and products unavailable elsewhere through special shops or their parents’ travels. Unabashedly oriented toward “the west,” privileged youth rarely followed local media. According to Fatos Lubonja, the son of CC member Todi Lubonja and, in the late 1960s, a university student,

8 Ordinary families received large consumer items (e.g., television sets or refrigerators) through a state-administered lottery process, which theoretically ensured equal access to non-essential goods. Though one’s name would eventually rise to the top of a government list, the process could take several years, and individuals with APL connections often expedited their wait. On the broader (and continuing) role of *të njohurit*, or acquaintances, during and after socialism see Musaraj 2009. Her description of informal connections as “a psychological strategy for personalizing an unknown territory” seems apt here (ibid.:160-1). Cf. Yang 1994 and Ledeneva 1998 for accounts of connections in China and the USSR, respectively.

9 A Central Committee member, for example, had access to a car and driver, as well as a maid—whom, in a show of proletarian solidarity, one called not “servant” (*shërbetorja*) but “worker” (*punëtorja*) (Lubonja in Fevziu 2010:331).

If a part of the youth aspired to go to the East in the 1950s, the 1960s are years of closing off and isolation of Albania, but at the same time, years when the introduction of Italian television was experimented with. In some elite families, not all. There were about 700. ... With all that the youth sought to leave, through imaginative means [*me fantazi*], through foreign, Italian radio [stations], with music. ... [W]e lived in a virtual world in our own way, in that world of music, in that western world of song or what we saw on television. (Lubonja in Fevziu 2010:334)

The extension of media technologies for the first time provided non-privileged, district youth access to foreign media, though this group differed in its reception from Tirana's elite. While Lubonja claims his circle found light music and the Festivals of Song to be in "bad taste" (ibid.), the essayist Nano recounts the pleasure of watching an early 1970s Festival of Song broadcast live at the district home of a friend—the son of a regional party secretary (Nano 2009:56).

In Tirana, tastes for western-style clothing, films, and popular music in the late 1960s gradually began to link the adolescent and university-age children of political elites to a social network comprised of music students, instrumentalists, and singers at the LAJM, University, and Conservatory.¹⁰ Françesk Radi, then at the LAJM, provided me one example of this connection. Along with friends whose parents were *me pozitë* (with positions, i.e., in ministries or the government), Radi, who performed in RTSH ensembles on electric bass and guitar, became interested in singer-songwriters Bob Dylan and Joan Baez, as well as western pop acts Tom Jones and the Beatles.¹¹ Though he himself came from a humble background, Radi easily made friends with elites' children as a singer and guitarist. "We were marketable" (*ne ishim në treg!*), he recalled, especially to the admiring high-school girls who accompanied groups of male friends to sing and dance at the beach or Tirana's parks (interview, 19 November 2009). By the early

10 The *Bllok* abuts the square housing the university and Conservatory; it is two blocks from the LAJM and RTSH.

11 Radi even recorded songs from foreign radio broadcasts with a recorder (*kasetofon*) he had acquired from famous volleyball player Asllan Rushi, whose name today graces Tirana's large indoor stadium. Athletes, like top APL families, also had the "privilege" to travel abroad.

1970s, individuals from elite families even began attending Festivals of Song rehearsals. Bandleader and composer Aleksandër Lalo recalled, “I remember one guy, the son of someone in the Ministry of Defense, would be there at the Radio rehearsal hall; the son of [Politburo member] Rita Marko would be there, too—these were our friends, as our peers [*shoqëri*] made no distinction about what one's parents did” (p.c., 23 February 2009).

Strategic Colonization

By 1970, political elites could no longer ignore non-local media and pop culture's rising popularity among students and urban youth groups. Reacting to pressures from these taste groups and younger intellectuals, several APL officials called—albeit without public fanfare—for the creation of local versions of “modern” popular culture. Skënder Selimi, a Soviet-trained choreographer employed by the TOB, for example, was asked to create a couple's dance. In early 1970, Selimi received a phone call: ““We want a dance, a modern dance. We want one that is completely modern, but one that is also completely Albanian, for the youth. What do you think? Is this something that you could do?” ‘With pleasure,’ I answered, this was something I would like to do very much! So I did it, you see [*winks*], the idea was that we would counter [*winks again*] the [American] ‘Twist again’ phenomenon. To have an Albanian version, a modern dance that had an Albanian scent” (interview, 17 March 2010). Liberal cadres at the Ministry of Culture and LAWA arranged to preview the dance, by now named “The Alba,” in several districts. As neither organ housed a “choreography sector” able to approve a dance, “The Alba” was sent to the Central Committee of the Youth Organization before workshops at the Palaces of Culture in Shkodra and Durrës. Though a conservative official from the Ministry of Culture at one point ordered the dance stopped on ideological grounds, powerful intellectual colleagues interceded on

Selimi's behalf. In 1971, RTSH even broadcast an instructional clip.¹²

A strategy pursued to different extents throughout the eastern bloc, the selective colonization of non-state administered pop culture opened space on RTSH broadcasts for so-called "modern" music that answered what elites termed the "demands of the youth."¹³ Proposals came not from the music field, however, but from within the APL's hierarchy. In a meeting with Enver Hoxha on 28 April 1971, the secretary of the Central Committee of the Youth Agim Mero questioned in frank terms the "predisposition of anyone [in the APL] to understand the youth" (Veliu 2005). Mero described one student's claim that young people preferred Radio Roma over Radio Tirana, and the difficulties students faced in organizing "entertainment evenings":

[W]ith difficulty they secure an orchestra, because they have to pay for this a good sum of money. They don't have tape recorders, nor does Radio Tirana transmit dance music for the youth, at least not more than one or two times a week. When I spoke one time about this problem with the Radio director, comrade Thanas Nano, he answered that the youth don't even really like this [dance] music that we put on.

"It seems to me," Hoxha responded, "that Comrade Thanas might not be in a condition to understand the correct demands of the youth" (ibid.).

In January 1972, liberal elite Comrade Todi Lubonja replaced Nano at the Radio-Television. To employees, Lubonja's arrival signaled a political "softening" on questions of

12 In late 1972, Selimi choreographed a second dance, "the Shqipo," which featured "characteristic" movements taken from northern men's folkloric dancing. This dance was never promoted, as Selimi was caught up in the 1973-4 denunciations and reassigned to a village as a schoolteacher. Conservative critics portrayed him as bourgeois for choreographing a set of Strauss waltzes at the TOB, which Enver Hoxha had mentioned in a speech. The names "Alba" and "Shqipo" were shortened forms of the English-language term for the country, "Albania," as well as the Albanian-language name "Shqipëria," presumably to highlight the dances' nationalness.

13 Maria Survilla, for example, describes how Belarusian government agencies began to form conservatory-trained rock ensembles, euphemistically termed "Vocal Instrumental Ensembles," in part as a response to the 1970s emergence in urban areas of non-state-administered rock groups (2003:193). My sense is that the notion of a strategy of "selective colonization" could be applied more broadly to popular music in the eastern bloc.

ideological content (p.c., Sadik Bejko, September 2010). While Nano had been dictatorial—former employees described how he had them tracked by police outside working hours—Lubonja proved open to others' opinions. He also seemingly arrived with a mandate to “update” programming, broadcasting that spring's annual Eurovision Song Contest and the Munich Summer Olympic games, as well as international football matches and programs of Euro-American dance music (Këlliçi 2003:146). A strategy to make RTSH the sole media source for young listeners by broadcasting what they desired to watch, the turn toward western-oriented programming depended on the ascendancy of an “anti-conservative” wing within the APL. As more liberal Central Committee cadres came to replace conservatives throughout Tirana's cultural apparatus, processes of liberalization were initiated across the fields of theater, film, and music.

Observers understood policy and personnel changes as portending broader political or social reform, which the performative nature of broadcast in state-socialist Albania itself conditioned. Yet because even the slightest deviation in media content or presentation on RTSH was perceived as forecasting a major “thaw,” change could be misleading. Without structural reforms to Tirana's state-subsidized, centralized model of cultural production, reform remained illusory.¹⁴ “Liberalization” thus did not alter Tirana’s socialist mode of musical production, but instead might be viewed as an experiment in allowing certain listeners to have a say in its

14 In their characterization of Soviet perestroika (c.1985-90), Nancy Condee and Vladimir Padunov theorize that rather than simply expanding the space of permissible subjects, “the economic changes under perestroika ... redefined the nature of labor within the cultural sphere” (1991:86). Economic perestroika's shift from the “inherited model of cultural production ... characterized by a dialectical relationship between a specific cultural producer and the state, represented by a specific sector of the culture industry,” to a “self-financing and cost-accountability” model, the authors conclude, “led to a frantic search for consumers” (ibid.:86). Condee and Padunov argue that barring structural change to socialism's mode of cultural production, the emergence of such “consumers” would be put in doubt.

content, albeit within narrow limits. Particular urban groups were thus briefly allowed to impersonate consumption by dictating the quality of the enlargement of production's *subjects*, meaning the sounds, images, gestures, and so on that music professionals might use to create "modern, Albanian" popular music.

The apparent "choice" enabled through the music field's incorporation of non-local subjects of production created opportunities for certain music specialists whom 1960s aesthetic-professional discourses on "correct" musical practice had been framing as non-professionals, especially a cohort of non-composers, typified by performer-songwriters such as Françesk Radi. Only incompletely incorporated into the music field, this loose cohort neither followed nor recognized the emergent "rules" of the 1960s music field governing compositional practice.¹⁵ By the Tenth Festival of Song (1971), sporadic attempts had been made to target these individuals for activation at RTSH events intended to meet urban listeners' "demands."¹⁶ Yet these music specialists did not necessarily wait for invitations addressed to "Comrade Composer." In 1971 and 1972, university students organized two Student Festivals of Song that closely followed contemporary, international trends: the songs were composed by students, singers were

15 As an instrumentalist, for example, Radi was outside the LAJM's theory track, which led to the Conservatory's composition program. Other non-composers, such as journalist/songwriter Kastriot Gjini, also submitted compositions for the weekly, lower-profile *Anketa Muzikore* (The Music Poll). Developed in the late 1960s, *Anketa* programs broadcast a new light music song each Sunday evening. Each month, listeners voted on the best of the four songs presented and the Radio announced a winner. Younger composers, students, and non-professionals primarily competed on this program.

16 The Conservatory's composition track itself became diversified during this period. One composer told me that he had wanted to go to university for engineering, then an extremely popular program. When he did not win a University spot for training, he was offered one at the Conservatory. My sense is that returning USSR students, as well as a backlog of qualified musicians who would have studied abroad had they been able to, swelled the composition program in the mid-1960s, but with the graduation of this class, there were not enough LAJM students to fill a class.

accompanied by a larger ensemble with brass and saxophones, the sax players stood up to play “in the style of contemporary foreign festivals,” and a vocal group performed backup parts (interview, Aleksandër Lalo, 25 February 2010). Organized outside the purview of the Radio and Conservatory, the two festivals “exploded” among students, and provided a model for the Eleventh Festival of Song.¹⁷

A ‘MODERN’ FESTIVAL OF SONG

After attending the 1972 Student Festival of Song, RTSH's Domestic Radio Director Nefo Myftiu, a Politburo member and the wife of top APL elite Manush Myftiu, approached the Music Editorial Office to suggest that a “youthful” Festival of Song be organized. Once Todi Lubonja confirmed plans for this “beautiful festival,” organizers set to work. The Eleventh Festival of Song featured several innovations modeled after recent changes made at the Sanremo Festival of Italian Song and the Eurovision Song Contest. Juries in both Tirana and districts conferred, effectively democratizing prize voting; participants wore contemporary, fashionable clothes; a big band ensemble, including, for the first time since the Second Festival, a saxophone section, performed on stage; and composers submitted few “epic-lyrical” songs—and “no lyrics for the tractor driver, or other such content.”¹⁸ First-time Festival director Mihallaq Luarasi recruited his wife, Edi Luarasi, a soprano known in elite circles for her keen fashion sense, to

17 Aleksandër Lalo, then a student at the Conservatory, was the artistic director at the second student festival in spring 1972. Information on the student festivals is drawn from two participants, Aleksandër Lalo and Osman Mula. The song “*Adresa*” (The address) by Françesk Radi was the Student Festival's big hit. “*Adresa*” was a verse-bridge-refrain song about a young man in love with a girl, who plays coy. In the verse, he seeks her address, which—we find out at the end of the refrain—was also the “address of happiness itself.” “And I asked three friends, but they didn't know a thing/While her two girlfriends, well, they just giggled at me.”

18 Mihallaq Luarasi, interview with Pandi Laço. *Historia më e zhurmuese*, episode “1972.” Broadcast 6 September 2009.

host together with the state estrada's director, Bujar Kapexhiu. A humorist and caricaturist, Kapexhiu also wrote the script:

I worked with much passion, to create something new, something beautiful, to demonstrate that we too were able to do festivals at the European level. Everything in the festival was very modern. There were no politicisms, not in the song texts nor in the script. This you noticed even in the décor, in the way [the festival] was interpreted with several orchestras, the symphonic orchestra, the jazz orchestra, even in the clothes, hairstyles, and so on. ... Everything radiated luxury.¹⁹

The government approved organizers' requests to double the pay-scale for songs, and "Among the singers and composers, a full competition broke out, to see who had the most beautiful arrangements, who had the songs that sounded the best, who got to work with which composer, and who used which ensemble" (p.c., Aleksandër Lalo, 23 February 2010).

Conceived by participants as both "modern" and, in Kapexhiu's terms, "at the European level," the Eleventh Festival of Song represented the elites' most prominent attempt to colonize a local western-oriented youth culture. Retrospective historiographies have framed the event's lack of obvious political texts, what Kapexhiu terms "politicisms," and its western-style music as signaling an implicit "resistance" to then-hegemonic cultural norms. Organizers' creation of a "modern" Festival nevertheless remained beholden to broader social-political discourses on progress. I now turn to describe points where the music field's guidelines on compositional and interpretational standards became suspended under the sign of a normative modernity indexed by the adoption of Euro-American pop practices. By stressing the actions of particular music specialists or political figures, my narrative emphasize strategic moves made by particular individuals featured prominently in the historical record, intellectuals who no doubt enjoyed the support—tacit or otherwise—of a broader coalition within society and the APL itself.

¹⁹ [See the interview with Kapexhiu available at www.zeriyt.com/bujar-kapexhiu-aventura-e-nje-jete-kushtuar-artit-t67876.0.html](http://www.zeriyt.com/bujar-kapexhiu-aventura-e-nje-jete-kushtuar-artit-t67876.0.html), accessed 20 October 2011. Originally published in *Revista Shqip* and posted online 30 July 2010.

Foreign Subjects, Interpretation, and Authorship

At the Eleventh Festival, the field's most established composer-creators, including Tirana's top Conservatory pedagogues, competed to demonstrate how "up-to-date" they could be. Willfully suspending recent and hard-fought claims to "professional" distinction, even major concert music composers presented songs drawing on non-local compositional subjects: harmonic, melodic, rhythmic, and formal resources borrowed from western popular music practice. Česk Zadeja, for example, presented a riff-based, jazzy composition with saxophones in his Festival debut. Zadeja's tune featured a solo saxophone break following the first chorus, and concluded with brass backgrounds leading to an unprepared modulation that introduced the coda. Incorporating relatively standard jazz devices—solos, swung rhythms, a "step" modulation, and a snare-and-hi-hat groove—Zadeja constructed a composition unlike his previous concert works. Tish Daija's submission, "Natën vonë" (Late at night), a straightforward, lounge-style blues, similarly drew on non-local resources. Though these Soviet-trained composers perhaps had less of a feel for contemporary pop styles in 1972 than bandleaders or younger participants, each nevertheless sought to proffer audibly "modern" credentials by foregrounding musical elements perceived as indexical of "the west": brass sections, saxophone breaks, jazzy modulations, and "blue" notes.

In necessitating novel interpretational practices, the widening of musical production's acceptable melodic, rhythmic, harmonic, and formal subjects had a ripple effect at the Festival. While a "beautiful" technique and smooth, clearly articulated pronunciation had characterized the field's vocal sound ideal by the end of the 1960s, the more idiosyncratic, personal vocal styles of the singers activated by Festival organizers inflected collaboration in structural terms. Previously subordinated by a widely held "work" concept as the "interpreter" of the composer's

“creation,” the Eleventh Festival’s singers, like rock and pop vocalists in the “west,” marked individual pieces by their own unique vocal grains. Young RTSH employee Justina Aliaj personalized the song “Në ekranin e televizorit” (On the television screen) with several vocal devices. Small whoops, breathy glissandi, and rapid intakes of breath, or “hiccups,” produced a light syncopation that student composer Agron Xhunga had not inserted into the score, lending Aliaj’s specific performance an intensity and vivaciousness well-received in the hall. Vocalist Zija Saraçi's interpretation of student composer Josif Minga's composition “Sonte i përkasim të gjithëve” (Tonight, we belong to everybody), drew on similar devices and incorporated non-standard pronunciations. An “amateur” fan of 1950s and 1960s RTSH stars such as Zela, Pjetër Gjergji, Anida Take, and Qemal Kërtusha, Saraçi (like Kërtusha, described in Chapter Two) also emulated Italian singers and light operatic fare, from Claudio Villa to Georges Bizet (Simsia 2010). But Saraçi found further inspiration in American rock-and-roller Elvis Presley, as well as “Italy's Elvis,” Adriano Celentano. Foreign media played a key role in forming Saraçi’s sense of self. As a youth, Saraçi reports, he passed through a phase “when—in a completely instinctive way—demands toward myself emerged, [a question of in] what direction I would position myself.”

I imagined myself as a film artist, or a boxer, when we—the lads of the neighborhood at the time—played “The Ring” in the street and began to box, two by two, and when I was winning, I'd say to myself: Perhaps? Could I become a famous boxer? (ibid.)

Whether the singer might have been a boxer is beside the point; Saraçi was among a growing number *imagining* roles proposed by non-local media. The 1972 activation of such an individual for the national stage thus indicated a major shift in RTSH policy toward who might be accorded the status of interpreter.

Finally, the expansion of notions about who should participate at the Festival, and how

they should interpret works, created space for locally novel forms of authorship modeled after western practice. Previously, the arrangement and composition of song had privileged a Tin Pan Alley-style model. Composers submitted to RTSH piano-scores, which expert arrangers, usually the Radio's ensemble directors, scored. Though several composers scored their own works, a handful of young bandleaders, including Agim Krajka, Robert Radoja, Alqi Kareco, and, later, Aleksandër Lalo, arranged most compositions. Though not necessarily “creators,” arrangers were viewed as “specialists” necessary to ensure a measure of polish. The “work” itself, however, remained the melody line, harmonic progression, and text. Though rock-and-roll's “group” phenomenon had by 1972 provided a key challenge to this model in much of the eastern bloc, western Europe, and the United States, the notion of song-as-work undergirded Tirana's music field.

The collective arrangement of riff-based compositions posed one alternative model that differed from a “creator”-centric conception of authorship. A two-bar pentatonic riff, for example, structured “Mbrëmja e fundit” (The final evening), student-composer Enver Shëngjergji's paean to university graduates celebrating a final night in Tirana. Though ensemble director Lalo was credited officially with the piece's arrangement, according to Bato Gashi, a violinist in the ensemble, the song's orchestration came together organically during the process of rehearsal (p.c., 20 April 2010). The globalizing spread of a “singer-songwriter” model provided a second alternative model of authorship. By eliding the discrete spheres of creator, interpreter, and lyricist on which the 1960s music field's stratification was based, the “singer-songwriter” disrupted intellectuals' notions of professionalized collaboration. Ideally, the composer was expected to collaborate with a published poet on a text, while vocalists did not submit

compositions.²⁰ Yet for young music specialists and listeners, the figure of the “singer-songwriter” indexed a distinctly “modern” form of authorship. At the Eleventh Festival, Françesk Radi collaborated with RTSH editor Sadik Bejko on a piece that was “kind of like a Bob Dylan song, [or] Joan Baez” protest song (interview, 19 November 2009).

At that time in America, there was the war in Vietnam, and I wanted to do a song, I had heard a song from Italy, a pacifist song against war. [...] [Ours] was a pacifist song that a group of young people—this is the idea, or narrative [*fabul*—they were singing in a park or public garden, and their song was an echo against the war. (Ibid.)

Critiqued following the Festival for “singing with a guitar about Vietnam like an American,” however, Radi came to understand the singer-songwriter model as “a new tradition that [APL officials] did not really like. In the way you go on stage with the guitar, sing and compose yourself, there was not much desire for this” (ibid.). Tirana’s young listeners nevertheless responded enthusiastically. Students even requested repeated listenings at debates organized to critique the Eleventh Festival in order to, so they claimed to officials, “better criticize” the song.

Media, Meaning, and Vigilance

At the wistful conclusion to the Eleventh Festival of Song’s winning composition “Kur vjen pranvera” (When spring comes) by composer Pjetër Gaci and lyricist Fatos Arapi, vocalist Tonin Tërshana intoned:

I opened the window of my room, and into the window-frame's blue sky
Entered an almond tree branch, covered with white flowers.
Someone near me said: ‘Spring is coming.’ But I did not believe it.

Ostensibly a love song addressed to a girl “with that blonde hair/with that thin blouse/covering her young shoulders,” the lyric alluded directly to the “breeze” of cultural liberalization. If the Eleventh Festival of Song suspended, however briefly, the usual aesthetic-professional codes

20 One exception often mentioned is estrada star Luan Zhegu. Though Zhegu composed songs during the 1980s, he never performed these songs because to do so would have seemed “too European” (p.c., Luan Zhegu, June 2010).

governing the cultural field in a manner consistent with the appearance of reform, the politically performative nature of RTSH broadcasts nevertheless remained in effect. In early January 1973, censure's first signs began to emerge. Citing letters from district viewers at an early January discussion at the Presidium of the People's Parliament, Enver Hoxha criticized "directors in the culture field [who claim] that the youth like these creations, that these are 'innovative' creations, appropriate to our times, to our rhythms of development, to the dynamism of our life" (Hoxha 1977:329). "As the television [audience] is today widening," Hoxha added, "these problems take on a special acuteness, especially in the first phase of [television's] spread" (ibid.).

Spectacular hearings at the national level took place over the next six months, endorsing a hardline orientation advocated by the APL's conservative wing and reorganizing the Politburo. In March, Hoxha criticized the "alien influences" (*shfaqje të huaja*) in areas "not peripheral, but central" to the state's cultural mission, specifically citing "notable concessions" made to liberalism at the Radio-Television, People's Theater, and Theater of Opera and Ballet. In April, Todi Lubonja was interned in the northern town of Lezha while dozens of writers and artists, having sent Hoxha a letter acknowledging "mistakes," left Tirana to labor in rural areas. At Plenum IV of the Central Committee in July, Hoxha accused several high-ranking CC members charged with cultural matters with conspiring against the state; within a month, APL elites had purged Todi Lubonja and playwright Fadil Paçrami from party ranks (see Lubonja 1994).

While fallout from the Eleventh Festival did not create shifts in the APL, it did intensify preexisting schisms. Within the upper levels of party circles, conservative district elites attacked urban liberals during discussion periods, in the process creating national profiles for themselves

(see Mero 2008:115-6).²¹ Today, commentators often view the Festival to have been a “trap” (*kurth*) intended to identify, discipline, punish, and excise certain “alien” elements from the body politic. In this interpretation, particular liberal cadres were the primary targets of power moves made at the APL’s upper levels.²² Political elites’ criticisms quickly began to be replicated at lower levels, and within the music field itself. Françesk Radi, who graduated the spring following the Festival, was assigned to a rural village following several public debates, as was bandleader Aleksandër Lalo. Other individuals maintained a low profile at the Conservatory until the episode had passed. A general climate of intolerance typified hearings, as opportunists within the music field soon began to criticize peers and subordinates.²³

Over the next fifteen years, a state coercive mechanism came to extend over the production and reception of “culture and the arts” as elites abandoned the “colonization” strategy that had allowed young listeners a measure of agency, albeit through heavily regulated pseudo-

21 Proceedings often seemed opaque to participants. At the Radio-Television, for example, Lubonja himself communicated Hoxha’s initial January remarks to employees in mid-January. Yet before this tense meeting, employees have reported, an official instructed discussants to focus criticisms solely on Lubonja rather than Nefo Myftiu, the cadre directly in charge of the Festival (Këlliçi 2003:148-9).

22 I have this sense from interviews with several intellectuals, especially Sadik Bejko, and Skifter Këlliçi’s 2002 novelistic interpretation, *Festivali Njëmbëdhjetë* (The Eleventh Festival). Cf. Ismail Kadare’s short story “Komisioni i Festës” [The Celebration’s Commission] (1978), which is often read as a thinly veiled allegory about the Eleventh Festival of Song.

23 This is a matter of some debate, though I heard anecdotal evidence from one participant that a key Conservatory pedagogue testified quite zealously at hearings. I also heard rumors that some people were “untouchable,” perhaps because they collaborated with investigations and served as witnesses. One composer offered the following explanation: “During the Festival, the singers and composers started in—gossiping, with jealousy. They began this whispering—oh, I should sing this song, what about that song? From jealousy, or something else, maybe one would whisper, ‘Say, doesn’t that song—the one with the sax—doesn’t it sound like an American song?’ There were many hard feelings, jealousy about the songs. ... I have to think that, hearing this gossip and these whispers, messages must have been conveyed at dinner tables, among people with positions, what was going on. In a way, I believe we eliminated ourselves” (p.c., composer, February 2010).

consumption practices. After 1973, officials redoubled efforts to pursue a mixture of coercive and symbolic-ideological modes of overseeing the nation-state's social bodies (cf. Verdery 1991a). The state's protectionist cultural policies exercised a mechanical control over citizens' access to a non-local, alternative symbolic means. Television sets were produced domestically that blocked signals from neighboring Yugoslavia or Italy; new legal mechanisms effectively criminalized the consumption of foreign media.²⁴ The domestic intelligence agency *Drejtoria e Sigurimi të Shtetit* (the Directorate of State Security, hereafter Sigurimi; cf. Securitate in Romania, or the NKVD in the USSR), established in 1943, grew exponentially. A system of prisons and internment camps that had briefly expanded during 1960s ideological campaigns now held increasing numbers of citizens deemed "enemies of the people" (*armiq të popullit*). Local policies provided western journalists compelling evidence to characterize a dystopic anti-democracy: "The long-haired or full-bearded among [foreign visitors]," one shop-worn anecdote informed the incredulous western reader, "are forced to shed their displays of bourgeois decadence at the airport barbershop" (Aschenbach 1980).

Yet the expansion of coercive mechanisms and the systemic depression of consumption also obligated increased reliance on locally produced materials. By criminalizing "culture" from outside Albania, cultural policy expanded the role of producers and symbol specialists.²⁵ A

24 Though some resourceful individuals created homemade antennae (*kanoçe*), laws criminalizing their possession deterred many from watching foreign programs. Further, zealous neighborhood watches informed on individuals who did cultivate a taste for foreign music or television, effectively criminalizing the consumption of non-local popular culture. One former RTSH employee told me a neighbor informed on him after seeing him unfurl a homemade antenna from his apartment window— a denunciation he attributed to petty jealousy.

25 According to an anecdote related by RTSH General Director and CC member Marash Hajati in his 1998 memoir, he once went to Vienna for a meeting of television broadcasters. He claims western European executives were shocked that Albania produced the overwhelming majority of its own programming (1998:89-90).

concerted emphasis on local production intensified throughout the 1970s, swelling the ranks of the cultural intelligentsia and proliferating competitions and events demanding new works. “Every time has its own taboos, every time has its own limits,” one former culture house director told me. “At times before, these were narrow. For example, [socialist-era] events had to have a song ‘for the new life.’ Okay, so at the end of one song there would be a line about how the Party made this new life possible. Always within that frame [*kornizë*].²⁶ But it is also true that art and artists were valued, and this is why: because we created the works. ... There was never a time without something to do—after every concert, festival, event with music, there was an invitation [to take part in the next one]. I don’t remember, but after the [December] Festival [of Song], I think the invitation [for the next one] came in January” (p.c., culture house director, April 2010).

At the same time, post-1973 political elites heavily promoted “vigilance” (*vigjilencë*) against “alien manifestations” in dress, speech, taste, and comportment. In sweeping legal terms, the 1976 Constitution codified vigilance in its infamous Article 55: “The creation of organizations of a fascist, anti-democratic, religious, or anti-socialist nature is prohibited. Fascist, anti-democratic, religious, warmongering, and anti-socialist activities and propaganda are prohibited, as is the incitement of national and racial hatred” (Simons 1980:4). In practice, authorities invoked Article 55 on “agitation and propaganda” (*agjitacion dhe propaganda*) to effectively criminalize non-state-administered forms of organization. Further, the 1976 Constitution made official a national policy of self-reliance in Albania’s “efforts to complete the construction of socialism”: no foreign troops could be stationed on Albanian soil, nor could the people’s representatives in government make “concessions to, accept any credits from, or even

26 Continuing, the director explained that Hoxha “understood how important art is for the life of a country. He knew this, he was an intellectual man and understood the role of art in society. Through art, one creates self, he understood this” (p.c., April 2010).

create foreign or joint financial or economic institutions with capitalist, bourgeois, or revisionist monopolies or states” (ibid.:7). Rejecting all outside influence, Hoxha adopted isolationism and protectionism under the banner “by our own strength” (*me forcat tona*).²⁷ Yet vigilance also obligated new techniques of self-government for intellectuals under the sign of artistic selfhood. In the following two sections, I turn to these contrasting modes of discipline: first, in order to analyze how relationships among “the Intellectual,” “the People,” and the Republic of Albania governed artists’ lives, and second, to demonstrate how one’s sense of oneself as an artist itself came to govern creativity.

ART IN THE SERVICE OF THE PEOPLE

A fleeting space for an altered mode of production, Tirana’s “spring” had been enabled by the fortuitous articulation of several factors: the growth of urban taste groups oriented toward non-local pop culture and empowered by technological change; the political rise of a “liberal” wing in the APL; and a policy shift toward cultural colonization rather than criminalization. Yet cultural liberalization had also targeted the relationship between popular culture’s producers and local “consumers,” proposing a potential mode of musical production alternative to one developed since 1945. With the abandonment of this small colonization experiment, the relations among political elites, “culture,” “the people,” and the intelligentsia came to be reconfigured in ways that recast both listeners and artists as targets for intervention.

A policy statement titled “Artists and Writers are Aids of the Party” initially signaled the reorganization of relations among the State, the Intellectual, and the People. In this 20 December 1974 address to the Secretariat of the CC of the APL, First Secretary Enver Hoxha expanded on

²⁷ The 1976 Constitution also changed the country's official name, adding the word “Socialist” to distinguish “the People's Socialist Republic of Albania” from revisionist pretenders in the eastern bloc.

“lessons” arising from the previous year's IV Plenum to present Albania as having arrived at an ideological crossroads.²⁸ Reaffirming the leading role of the People (*populli*), Hoxha also repeated the post-Festival rejection of the possibility for particular urban taste groups to influence “culture.” “Writers and artists have an exceptionally great role” he continued, “our people and the Party need them” (*ibid.*). By creating “art in the service of the People,” the Intellectual reentered the structural domination forged during the 1960s cultural revolution: the People over an intelligentsia beholden to develop the “folk creativity” of the former; the Party leading an intelligentsia “in the name of the People” as society's vanguard; and the Intellectual as the People’s voice.

Instead of dismissing, resisting, or rejecting the notion that Art should in some way “serve” the People, individual artists over the next decade came to embrace it. “It was always, ‘The artist must serve the people,’” lyricist Jorgo Papingji explained over coffee, “this was the system's principle.” Our tablemate, Bashkim Alibali, clarified in an aside, “So you know, this was a slogan [*parullë*].” The lyricist interrupted, “No, I am saying it was not simply a slogan; it was executed—like a law—by the People itself”:

If I went with a group to a village, if they had one chicken, then it would be cooked for our dinner. We were given accommodations; people recognized you and loved you. Even though the salary [for an artist] was minimal, the love of the people was great. If Bashkim went to Korça, everyone recognized him and would talk to him, there was a great love for artists. (p.c., 21 April 2010)

28 “During the entire course of history the kingdom of capital, of religion, of the aristocracy, and of the bourgeoisie has clashed with the progressive forces, with progress, and has lost many limbs in these wars,” Hoxha said. “Now [capitalism] has reached the stage of its decay. [...B]ut we must not think that in the face of the defeats it is suffering, world capitalism has laid down its arms. In its objectives, it relies precisely on its barbarous attacks and on predatory imperialist wars against the liberation of the peoples from its yoke, but it also counts on that world outlook and on those remnants which burden the consciousness of men and have kept them as its slaves for centuries” (Hoxha 1986 [1974]:3).

If “service” held a structural possibility for repressive discipline, Papingji’s terms “law, “principle,” and “slogan” mapped potentially agential trajectories available to the post-1973 Albanian Intellectual. Thus while both People and Party remained linked symbolically in subordinating intellectuals through service, individual artists could conceive each element as separable and generative of two distinct relations: between the Intellectual and the State, and the Intellectual and the People. An ever-expanding coercive apparatus (“censure”) coupled with a national system of official disciplinary recognition (“praise”) governed the former relation; self-generated notions of social-artistic “duty” and “obligation,” the latter. The triad Party-Intellectual-People thus came to represent three distinct positions, which were managed by a cluster of interrelated disciplinary strategies: censure, praise, and duty.

Censure

Deployed symbolically “in the name of the people” (*në emër të popullit*), a post-1973 network of domestic intelligence agents, internment camps, and prisons expanded in scope and intensity as the Albanian nation-state’s prime instrument of censure. Yet for intellectuals, public censure remained exceptional rather than commonplace, and linked to a ritual cycle of “discovery-demasking-purging” only partially integrated into daily life. As exemplified by the example of Bashkim Alibali cited in this chapter’s introduction, individualizing censure always followed these distinct phases: once “discovered,” an alien manifestation (Alibali's performance) necessitated the exercise of symbolic acts of “de-masking” (speech-making in the form of expert analysis) before the foreign element could be “purged” from the social body (Alibali's performance ban). The organizations in which intellectuals worked, whether the LAWA, RTSH's Editorial Office, or local culture houses, never “discovered” censurable action, but instead acted

as vehicles for the enactment of ritualized “demasking.” According to LAWA secretary Dritëro Agolli²⁹:

[Writers] were not denounced by the League. The League was even criticized by the Central Committee, that it was not vigilant. These things were fought out first of all in other *instanca*, and only then did [officials] notify the League that 'you don't publish so-and-so.'³⁰ The League was truly an instrument under the command of the party, but it was not the one who decided. When we received news that someone was arrested, it came to us completely unexpectedly [...]. Many [arrests] were made for agitation and propaganda. Persons that spoke with one another, an agent heard and said, 'this is what they said to me.' Even when you were at a table with a writer, there was no assurance that he was a writer, not a spy. [...] Afterward, after the spying, it was seen if this one had sent a book for publication. 'Let's take a look at it, to see if he perhaps has these thoughts in a book, too?' they told us. This other thing was [then] added [to the original charges]. This is how it was, because there was no way to [trump up charges] in a book to start with, so first [one is identified] by [spoken] words, later with the written ones. (Agolli in Fevziu 2010:275-6)³¹

If intellectuals' works' potentially provided “evidence” following censure's “discovery” phase, creativity never initiated a cycle of denunciation. Formed in 1943, the state's domestic

29 Agolli's installation as secretary itself demonstrates the “logic” of denunciations: not a conservative, the writer's position did not depend on his “vigilance” or personal positions on other artists, but rather on an ability to be both acceptable to other artists (in terms of literary pedigree—he was a graduate of Soviet journalism school and a novelist) and APL rank-and-file (he was an APL member in good standing from 1952).

30 Employees within the state's instruments of cultural production—at publishing houses, or RTSH's Editorial Office—enforced exclusion by banning the broadcast of recordings made by “enemy elements” or refusing to “activate” individuals for Festivals or other events. Because of their positions and practical knowledge of censure's instruments, however, these same employees often served as bridges to “rehabilitate” individuals. Conductor Ferdinand Deda especially aided individuals with questionable political credentials. One composer, “banished” from activation at the national level following the Eleventh Festival, explained how Deda approached him in the mid-1970s to suggest the “climate was right” for him to submit a new song, proposing that the subject matter be in tribute to the APL (p.c., January 2010). In effect, Deda rehabilitated this composer through this composition.

31 Some intellectuals dispute this account, assigning more blame to organs such as the LAWA and individuals with power, such as Agolli, as being “complicit” in some way with the state. I quote Agolli at length for several reasons: he was the head of the LAWA and thus had insider knowledge; he has a reputation today for being accurate and fair-minded; and elements of this account accord with ones I have read or heard elsewhere.

intelligence service Sigurimi established a wide surveillance over the cultural intelligentsia. After 1973, Sigurimi expanded to include a Tirana section termed the Section of Institutes of Higher Education, charged with “the protection of the intelligentsia, the youth, and cultural-educational institutions and objects and those of health” (Dervishi in Peçi 2011).³² Though many individuals assumed the Department of the Interior kept dossiers (*dosje*) on all citizens, during the late 1970s and early 1980s, a period seen by intellectuals as one of particularly intense surveillance, the Sigurimi listed 260 “suspects” in Tirana's cultural field (*ibid.*).³³

Yet Sigurimi cases did not widely suppress intellectuals' rights, but more insidiously fostered an atmosphere of interpersonal suspicion encouraging opportunism under the guise of “vigilance.” The prominent profiles of star light music vocalists, as well as their integration into elite social circles, invited especially close scrutiny. Top performers often performed for politicians' private events, while the most high-profile artists even traveled abroad as the “voices” of the People's Republic; anecdotal evidence overwhelmingly suggests powerful men in the political, literary, and military fields took actresses and singers as mistresses. Young female vocalists seem to have been particularly vulnerable to unwanted advances from individuals seeking to exploit political “difficulties” (*kleçkë*) (e.g., a relative living abroad or in jail).

32 Concerned not with “liberals,” agents pursued “the old [guard] intellectuals who were used in the initial postwar years, especially in the raising of institutes and other upper schools, but who carried a 'danger' for the 'spoiling' of the intelligentsia with their thoughts” (Dervishi in Peçi 2011). In 1982, a number of investigations were opened on various cultural institutions in Tirana, including RTSH, the Albanian Telegraphic Service, the national Kinostudio, the TOB, the People's Theater, the LAWA, publishing houses “8 Nëntori” and “Naim Frashëri,” the Gallery of Figurative Arts, the State Estrada, and the Circus (*ibid.*).

33 By 1982, more than half this number of Tirana intellectuals, 151, actively informed on colleagues under code-names such as Romeo, the Pen, the Lahuta [a one-stringed bowed folk lute], Butterfly, the Painter, the Researcher, the Big Buffet, or Fontana (see Peçi 2011).

According to light music vocalist Alida Hisku,³⁴ aggressive agents “surfaced openly with the most varied tricks. Initially with an invitation for coffee, to 'clear up' some delicate circumstances, then directly with bastardly offers. I remember especially well their presence during the TVSH festivals [i.e., the Festivals of Song]. At that time, they were the most important cultural events, but simultaneously served as a beauty pageant” (Imaj 2010b).

As Hisku’s profile rose, she received a coveted spot in Tirana's Party School, directed by headmistress Fiqrete Shehu, the wife of Albania’s second-in-command Mehmet Shehu.³⁵ With Fiqrete Shehu's assistance, Hisku entered university, though in the meantime, the fortunes of the Shehu family fell dramatically.³⁶ Assigned to the southern village of Braka following her graduation, Hisku was arrested by Sigurimi agents in June 1983 on charges of “agitation and propaganda” after a roommate submitted her diary to the local Sigurimi office. Rumors spread throughout Tirana: she had rejected a powerful suitor, had interpreted “foreign songs,” or even had participated in the “enemy Shehu group” denounced the previous year. Employees at the

34 Hisku first came to national prominence at the Thirteenth Festival of Song (1974) with her interpretation of composer Enver Shëngjergji's “Vajzat e fshatit tim” (The girls of my village). A sixteen-year-old singer who had participated in regional festivals and debuted at the previous year's Festival, Hisku was added by the Festival commission as an afterthought. Her simple, straightforward performance of Shëngjergji's folk-inspired piece charmed listeners and, surprisingly, received first prize.

35 “At that time,” Hisku has related, “the most popular artists, those who stood out, they invited them to the Bllok to do the music for birthdays or other parties, according to the tastes of leaders. On occasion, I went a few times. There I met Fiqrete Shehu and her family. I tried to use contacts with her to find a good job according to my preferences. Even though I liked music, and though I had also begun studies for music, I was not only a singer, but also was looking for an [upper-level] spot in the field of culture. Well, the time was such that nobody could be named to functions of this kind without having a Party card [i.e., membership] and advanced political schooling” (Imaj 2010a).

36 In December 1981 Mehmet Shehu committed suicide following open charges of espionage; Hoxha later claimed Shehu had been an agent of Yugoslav, US, and USSR secret services.

RTSH sound archives received an order to pull Hisku's recordings from broadcast rotation.³⁷ In a country that pressed no recordings for domestic consumption, this effectively erased the “enemy” artist's voice. At trial, Hisku was found guilty of crimes against the state and consigned to forced medication in psychiatric hospitals until she emigrated in the early 1990s. A district security officer whom the young woman had previously spurned arranged her arrest—the diary, which had provided evidence sufficient for her initial detainment under his guard, was not mentioned in trial proceedings (Imaj 2010b).

Thus while the expansion of state's security organs enabled practices of denunciation, silencing, and censure “in the name of the people,” these acts often depended on the petty cruelties of individual security agents, against whom individuals lacking political connections had little recourse. Due to a lack of oversight and the expanding coercive apparatus's strategic incorporation of a self-selected group of predators, security agents often acted with impunity and near juridical immunity, especially in rural areas distant from Tirana. The actual exercise of coercion over artists and intellectuals, however, often stemmed from personal disputes, jealousies, or crass opportunism, rather than ideological censorship. Singer-songwriter Franko Radi described to me his 1973 appointment to the rural northern village of Fushë-Arrëz, the result of his “alien” performance at the Eleventh Festival of Song. While some locals were wary of establishing ties to the “anti-national” artist, most chose to view the new music director, then something of a pop star, as simply “named,” not “denounced,” to their village. Radi nevertheless had to remain guarded against “provocations”: questions from strangers such as “What do you think about [the] Sanremo [Festival of Italian Song]? Did you hear the [latest] Eurosong, how

37 Whenever an artist was denounced, all traces were “erased” through a strict prohibition on broadcast. RTSH’s archivists would receive instructions—sometimes even before a denunciation was made public—to perform a “check” (*kontroll*) of an artist’s materials. This meant his or her recordings would be marked with a note to “not transmit.”

beautiful! ... Listen to Elvis? What do you think of the Beatles, Rolling Stones, Bee Gees?' and so on" (interview, 19 November 2009).³⁸

Praise

Exercised in the manner described above, censure “in the name of the People” increasingly excised the state's structuring role from public discourse and encouraged the circulation of rumors. Yet state officials quite publicly *praised* artists through a graded system of titles and prizes awarded in the name of the Republic.³⁹ Annual “Republic Prizes” recognized individual achievements or works, while titles and orders recognized a general body of work. In 1960, the People’s Parliament had established two rankings for outstanding individuals in the culture and arts sector: the title “Artist of the People” (*Artisti i Popullit*), “to be given to the most distinguished singers, composers, conductors, opera, theater, and estrada directors and actors, ballet choreographers, and ballet artists, who have created works with high ideo-artistic value and have special merit in the development of art of the People's Republic of Albania”; and the title “Meritorious Artist,” for those “who have created works with good ideo-artistic qualities.”⁴⁰

38 Were such questions directed from covert Sigurimi agents, or simply by opportunists seeking to win privileges by informing on a high-profile artist? Artists' files remain sealed under current lustration laws, though leaked files and memoirs by, in local parlance, “persecuted ones” (*të përsekutuarit*) offer glimpses into the relationship between state security organs and members of the intelligentsia. One complicating factor is the fact that many “persecuted ones” themselves were obliged to inform on others, though other intellectuals spied not only because they had personal problems with their “biography,” but also to win privileges.

39 On the Stalin Prize, which these orders were modeled after, see Johnson 2011—he argues that the prize functioned as “an institution that operated at the intersection of political and expert-artistic standards within which the parameters of postwar socialist realism were negotiated and to some extent defined,” as well as aiding in the “self-aggrandizement” of an elite minority. My research did not include how these awards were decided in Albania.

40 This law (Nr. 3171, ratified 26 October 1960) established analogous titles for sculptors and painters. Initially awarded for military valor, and later for specific achievements including not only artistic works but also exemplary labor, excellence in teaching, or even “hero motherhood”—giving birth to ten children, a requirement downgraded to eight in 1980. See

Recipients received a certificate from the People's Assembly and, beginning in the 1970s, a round brass medal with the state's black eagle and red star insignia over a red circle with a white base, attached to a yellow- and white-barred ribbon (see Schena 2006:60-1).

Since the 1940s, the cultural field's "successes" had indexed the APL's stewardship of "progress" in ways deeply felt by many urban individuals, though in time official recognition increasingly took on a ritualized cast.⁴¹ Titles, prizes, and orders organized social fields' upper hierarchies by circulating key forms of ideo-aesthetic endorsement translatable to "privileges." Artists' titles functioned as epithets, so one might be announced at a Festival as "Meritorious Artist Ramiz Kovaçi," or identified in an article as "Artist of the People Çesk Zadeja." In the music field, composers and vocalists viewed (and continue to view) these awards as legitimate recognitions of excellence, though only certain kinds of achievements were legible to prize committees. In December 1979, for example, the following music specialists received titles, and musical works, prizes:

Artists of the People: Jorgjie Vangjel Truja (pianist and pedagogue, b. 192?) and Lola Dionis Gjoka (pianist and pedagogue, b. 191?); Gaço Avrazi (conductor of the People's Army Chorus); Prenkë Jakova (Shkodra-based composer⁴²); and Tish Cin Daija (composer).

Meritorious Artist: Agim Prodani (composer and estrada director); Limos Dizdari (composer)

Prizes of the Republic: Çesk Zadeja (1st Order), Sonata for Violin and Suite for Symphonic Orchestra; Feim Ibrahim (2nd Order), Tone poem *Tanë Shqipnia asht betue pa gjak*; Tonin Harapi (2nd Order), opera *Zgjimi*; Thoma Gaçi (2nd Order), Violin and Cello Concerto *Toka ime, kënga ime*⁴³

www.qpz.gov.al/doc.jsp?doc=docs/Ligj%20Nr%203170%20Dat%20C3%AB%2026-10-1960.htm (accessed 10 October 2011).

41 Many individuals told me they felt a deep sense of patriotism when Albania began producing its first operas, symphonies, films, or novels in the 1950s and early 1960s. Among music specialists, even staunch "anti-communists" today feel pride in a socialist-era "Meritorious Artist" title. The postsocialist state stopped awarding "Artist of the People" or "Meritorious Artist" awards, in the late 1990s replacing the former with "Grand Master of Labor" (*Mjeshër i Madh të Punës*). In 2006, "Labor" was dropped for its "communist" connotations.

42 Jakova had committed suicide in 1969, and thus received the award posthumously.

43 This partial list is derived from *Drita* (25 November 1979), pages 1, 4, and 14.

Here, five of a total of eleven “Artists of the People” laureates were concert music performers or composers; the music field’s four Republic Prizes were for concert music works.⁴⁴ Only rarely would artists oriented primarily toward light music receive recognition at the national level. When Vaçe Zela was awarded the title “Artist of the People” in a 1975 class with Çesk Zadeja and several operatic soloists, she was no longer viewed as an estrada singer after having performed in the People's Ensemble of Folk Song and Dance for close to a decade. The most elite light music vocalists and estrada stars instead received at best “Meritorious Artist” titles, while song composers almost never received Republic Prizes. Participation in the cultural field thus potentially granted one prestige and, at upper levels, “privileged ones” (*të privilegjuar*) in each sub-field enjoyed large apartments, passports, and free time to create. In the music field, top composers maintained an orientation toward concert music and large-scale works, often paying little attention to “smaller” genres such as song or viewing participation in the Festival of Song as at best an onerous task. To many, light music composition provided relatively high risks with low rewards.

Duty-Obligation-Competition

Composers nevertheless created light songs for a spectrum of reasons covered by the term *detyrë*, meaning duty or obligation. In one sense, composers held a professional “obligation” to be skilled enough to “create in all musical genres”; the notion one might “specialize” in one sphere over another continues to be viewed as somewhat suspect. The ideal professional, my interlocutors often claimed, could “work on a symphony for breakfast, arrange a folk suite for lunch, and compose a light song for dinner.” Yet not all composers perceived

44 Only four of 135 Prizes of the Republic (1st or 2nd Order) awarded in 1979 went to composers. Engineers and scientists received the vast majority of the rest.

themselves to be equally “oriented” toward each sphere. One’s internal “orientation” (*orientim*) might point toward “larger” or “smaller” genres, though only concert and folk music were included in the Conservatory’s course of study. “To arrange a folk motive, this is the cornerstone of musical composition,” one composer explained. “You have to know how to take a theme and develop it, work with it, arrange it, to know the form of a piece and develop a motive within this form. You have studied music, you know these things. The development of a folk motive is the best model to see how a phrase or a motive is developed and worked” (interview, Gazmend Mullahi, 18 May 2010). According to these compositional “laws of development,” one could not understand concert music without understanding first musical folklore, with light music remaining outside this formulation.

Yet one’s *detyrë*, translated above as “obligation,” also has a related sense best conveyed by “duty.” When I first met Limos Dizdari, a composer oriented primarily toward concert music, film music, and “grand” songs, he described how the ideal composer would hold a “commitment to the listener” (*përkushtim ndaj dëgjuesit*) (p.c., 7 January 2010). Dizdari further suggested I shape my research around the following questions: What rapport does one’s creativity have with society; what rapport does it have with reality and with the people as they live their lives? (ibid.). Here Dizdari’s “commitment” approached a form of “social duty” governing one’s creation of elevated works for the listening masses. In less philosophical terms, composers trained in “serious” forms but named to district towns or large villages held specific commitments to particular constituencies. Before being named to the Culture House in the town of Librazhd, composer Gazmend Mullahi had previously composed only concert music. Once in the district town, Mullahi felt a “duty to write all forms of music according to [local] need, to write all kinds

of works—not just symphonic works, but to arrange folk music, write smaller works, miniatures, and songs”:

It did not necessarily matter how I was oriented, I was there as the music chief and had to create works according the level that you find where you are named, you understand? If it is not an elevated cultural level, you cannot do what might be termed intellectual music with an orchestra, you are duty-bound/obligated [*detyruar*] to do what the district needed. This meant you should arrange folk music, so you did that, finding and preparing folk singers, preparing ensembles and working with them, even if you desired to compose a more intellectual music. Thus there was born the need to do song because song is the most *popullor* genre, and after a while came many demands for [light] song or for arranged [folk] songs. (Ibid.)

If Conservatory training “formed” individuals oriented to “intellectual” or “elevated” pieces, a practical sense of professional “obligation” following from real-world “demands” oriented all but an elite in Tirana toward smaller, more “popular” works.

Finally, competition among intellectuals revolving around truth claims to beauty, value, and culture obligated a final sense of “duty.” A violinist described the socialist period to me as “a kind of intellectual competition [*garë intelektuale*], an artistic-cultural competition. You wanted to be the best, to distinguish yourself from others ... not for money, or for privileges, because we were all equal from the point of view of money. No one had more, or less. But we were not all the same in terms of this *garë*” (p.c., Roland Gjergji, 24 September 2009).⁴⁵ For composers, the Festival of Song provided Albania’s most high-profile site for “competition.” The individual seeking to raise his or her profile in order to obtain a better position or creative opportunities might “shine” (*bie në sy*) at the Festival of Song. After not submitting a composition in the early

45 Violinist Roland Gjergji initially invoked “competition” to explain how his Conservatory students found themselves so well-prepared to win jobs in Europe after 1991. Continuing, he explained that though leading intellectuals (“the [Feim] Ibrahim-s or [Ismail] Kadare-s of the Albanian universe”) received special privileges (nice apartments, money, the ability to travel), the vast majority of individuals comprising the intellectual stratum did not. Though in comparison with the People these artists received a disproportionate share of state investment (in terms of education, facilities, subsidized time to create, instruments, and so on), intellectuals in effect had to compete among themselves for distinction.

1980s, one composer related to me, an older colleague had chided him: ““Why have you not done any song?” You had to do one, because at the Festival you shined for everyone, and you needed it because it was the most followed event by both the powers-that-be and also the People....” (interview, Haig Zacharian, 8 March 2010).

If “censure” and “praise” functioned strategically, as techniques exercised on the intellectual by state representatives acting in “the name of the People,” the polysemic “duty” described in the foregoing pages indicates one form intellectuals’ self-discipline took. In this sense, the 1974 slogan-law-principle that “Art serves the People” came to penetrate the Intellectual’s structural social relations in multifarious ways. Irreducible to the state’s repressive apparatus, artists themselves came to understand their own creative selves in a manner that further embedded the position of the Intellectual within relations to the State and People. An irreconcilable tension nevertheless remained between the diverse senses by which one correctly “served” the People. As a potentially corrupt and corrupting influence over the social body, the Intellectual necessitated observation, analysis, and, more rarely, denunciation by domestic security. Yet as a symbol-producing cadre indelibly linked to a far-reaching socialist-modernist cultural production apparatus, the Intellectual also necessitated emplacement within particular social fields through the disciplinary recognition accorded by prizes, titles, and privileges. Composers described each mode in response to specific questions I posed during interviews, but rarely initiated discussion of “repression,” “censorship,” or “discipline.” Instead, my interlocutors sought to explain duty as well as artistic “individuality” (*individualiteti*), a native concept that points to a key technique of self-government cultivated from the 1970s on.

INDIVIDUALITY AND THE COMPOSERS' HIERARCHY

According to a now-standard historiography, Tirana's post-1973 music field came to be dominated by Party hacks or toady pseudo-musicians, who exercised their power of censorship based on personal whims cut with a measure of cultural illiteracy.⁴⁶ Yet "official" oversight remained channeled primarily through artistic commissions (*komisione artistike*) and editorial offices (*redaksia*) staffed by respected and competent members of Tirana's artistic disciplines in tandem with visiting APL officials.⁴⁷ "According to the regulations of artistic creativity's preliminary control [*kontroll paraparak*] every important work had to be approved by ... specialists and employees of state and party apparatuses involved with the administration of art" (Mato 2001:254).⁴⁸ While commissions provided a potential means to censor works, in practice they often functioned as a peer-review system that enforced field-specific aesthetic-professional codes (ibid.:254-7).

46 I have this sense from interviews with postsocialist composers. In the next chapter, I discuss the emergence of new forms of knowledge about cultural production under socialism as part of a program of democracy.

47 At the Radio, for example, two long-standing members of the Editorial Office—Gjon Simoni and Ferdinand Deda—were generally viewed as among the nation-state's top music specialists. The rehearsal space and a courtyard at the RTSH building were named in each man's honor in the late 1990s.

48 According to intellectual history Jakup Mato, "The control and administration of creativity had two consequences, but not with the same weight. Some authors of works and well-known artists have been clear that creativity generally profited in its creative values from the discussions in artistic councils and commissions, where specialists primarily participated. ... In this case, the artists and participants [comprising] the artistic councils and commissions played the role of a qualified public. Since the work was still in process, this enabled some additions, changes, and shortening of pieces or details. Other times, however, interruptions of various commissions have seriously influenced some works, threatening their true artistic values" (Mato 2001:254).

At the Festival of Song by the early 1970s, a commission of composers and bandleaders reviewed compositions, while writers reviewed texts.⁴⁹ A composer's commission first read through piano-scores submitted for consideration, keeping or disqualifying submissions based on musical criteria as well as the submitting composer's reputation. Zhuljana Jorganxhiu, a poet employed by RTSH's Music Editorial Office, then edited accepted songs' lyrics, and found, commissioned, or composed new ones for the many pieces composers submitted without a text. An editor with a keen sense for ideologically correct texts, Jorganxhiu often inserted lines or words deemed necessary to “correct” a lyric. Finally, the editorial office commissioned orchestrations and advised a singers' commission in the distribution of pieces to vocalists. Following four weeks of rehearsals, Festival organizers staged a dress rehearsal for a “general commission” (*komisioni i përgjithshëm*) of elite composers, writers, and several party officials, usually Tirana's Executive Committee Party Secretary and the Minister of Education and Culture. This final commission “made observations” (*bënte vërejtje*), and one former Radio employee estimated that several song lyrics would be edited in the hours before live broadcast (interview, Spartak Tili, 15 March 2010).

In practice, notions of “correct” or “professional” compositional technique largely structured musical production at the Festival of Song from within the field itself. Though composers' submitted compositions to artistic commissions, those whom I interviewed did not recall to me any concrete examples of musical changes requested by them. “Words were in handcuffs, but music was free,” my interlocutors asserted, meaning that while texts or lyrics were able to be censored, musical features were not. Composers no doubt exercised a measure of self-

49 My understanding of the following process is indebted to several conversations with composer Spartak Tili, an employee in the Editorial Office of Music from 1975 to the early 1990s.

ensorship, especially for popular genres. Yet censorship, whether self-imposed or exercised from without, figured to a far less extent than individuals' cultivation of techniques of artistic self-discipline. Thus a set of personal-aesthetic obligations, or artistic individuality, conditioned any one individual's role within Tirana's mode of cultural production, both capacitating the composer and situating him or her within a professional-aesthetic hierarchy.

Creativity and Expression

For the composer, one's deeply felt sense of creative selfhood—or, how one recognized oneself as an artist—depended on the cultivation and expression of individuality. Integrated by a system of pedagogy, criticism, and academic publishing, composers elaborated a diverse body of professional-aesthetic discourses governing the relationship between an internal creative self and “creativity” (*krijimtaria*), or the “work itself.” In a narrow sense, critics used the term “individuality” to mark a baseline level of professional-aesthetic distinction related to correct musical construction, development, and composition. One might laud a work for the “simplicity of its [folk-derived melodic] figure and its compact development, [which] give this song a special color so characteristic of the author's individuality.”⁵⁰ The conscientious analyst could uncover individuality “in the notes” (*me nota*) of a work. One composer thus insisted this dissertation comprise a comparative analysis of elite composers' three “best” songs in order to grasp the creative individuality of each one: “This is a project that does not take twelve months, but forty!—and what do you have left, four or five months?” “Eight months,” I replied. “It is not enough time, five months [sic], to really know these songs, how they were created” (p.c.,

50 I insert this exemplary phrasing from conductor Ermir Krantja's review (*Drita*, 6 January 1980) of the composition “Fest' ka sot Shqipëri” (Today Albania celebrates), presented by composer Agim Prodani and lyricist Zhuljana Jorganxhiu at the Eighteenth Festival of Song in 1979.

composer, January 2010).

In a broader sense, composers invoked individuality in interviews to describe what they perceived to be the strict identity between a coherent expressive self and one's own "creativity," meaning oeuvre. "Listening [to my songs], you hear the melody and harmony that pertain to my face, to my individuality," according to the composer Alfons Balliçi. "Every song has its own melodic line, its own harmonic progression, which pertains to me" (interview, 17 January 2010):

N.T.: Meaning you have created an individuality?

A.B.: Look, does your son look like you? Okay then, this is something that is inherited, right? Do you understand the comparison? It is the same. The way a composer is prepared [*ështëë gatuar*], determines the fruit he [sic] will bear. One's style. I mean, even in my early songs I reflect myself [*pasqyroj vetën*], my face in my creativity. This is what it means to say I created my individuality. It means the manner of creating melodies, of creating a harmonic progression, reflects my face. (Ibid.)

Indivisible from the individual, "individuality" articulated the composer to the nation-state, the cultural field, and to him- or herself. Yet unlike light music vocalists, whom composers or commissions selected for the Festival, composers competed with one another for access there and elsewhere. As composers increasingly received Festival spots by reputation or connections, competition for the handful of remaining spots further intensified. Despite sharing a notion of individuality and its attendant professional-artistic tropes, three strata of "creators," whom I term "privileged ones," "elites," and "directors," expressed themselves at the Festival of Song in contrasting ways.

'The Privileged Ones'

Titled composers, who through an orientation toward concert, rather than light music, had "won" their titles, participated in Festivals of Song by virtue of their leading positions in the music field. Individuals at the field's apex, such as Artists of the People Çesk Zadeja, dean at the Conservatory, or Feim Ibrahim, secretary of music at the LAWA, usually presented a Festival's

“songs of greeting” (*këngë përshëndetje*) commemorating special dates or events (e.g., the Nth Anniversary of the “liberation of Tirana”). As symbolic statements indexing the music field's full participation in the state's symbolic projects, “greeting songs” did not compete, but often opened or closed concerts. Yet while the Festival's national profile necessitated the participation of privileged ones in order to demonstrate unified support for an event broadcast “under the guiding hand of the Party,” other duties or projects often preoccupied top composers. Top figures, who enjoyed open access to national events, stages, and ensembles, thus sometimes viewed participation at the Festival of Song as burdensome, and RTSH employees had to repeatedly request they send in submissions. These composers' songs usually arrived late, and often without texts, which employee Zhuljana Jorganxhiu then generated by finding and adapting poetry or creating new verse, usually on political topics.

To be “privileged” one had to be recognized by the state, but to be recognized one had to have a compositional sense for “developing” folklore into instrumental or vocal concert music compositions in an individual, elevated style. Conceived as neither strategic nor superficial, but as an expression of one’s “individuality,” the development of folk material gradually came to underpin field-wide notions of correct compositional practice as disseminated by privileged ones themselves, whether in study articles or their Conservatory courses. For the privileged and overworked composer unaccustomed to creating within the constraints of a four- or five-minute piece, a crude approximation could fulfill one's obligation to participate in the Festival without stealing precious time “better spent” on other projects. The 1979 composition “Me partinë e ty në zemër” (With the Party and you in our hearts), presented by Ferdinand Deda and RTSH editor Zhuljana Jorganxhiu, was one such song deemed “necessary” to complete a politically correct program. Filled with what commentators today term “politicisms,” obvious political language

indexical of Hoxha or the APL, the lyric of “Me partinë...” did not comprise a complete poetic statement, but merely a list of stock epithets and political formulae. Deda's straightforward musical setting of a newly composed melody line in the style of a southern polyphonic folk song sounded similarly thin, almost like a simple folk transcription (see fig. 2).

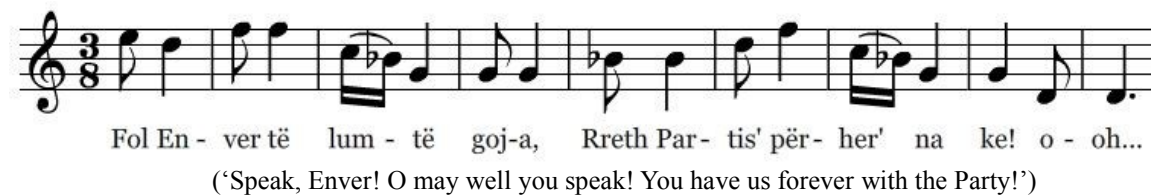


Fig. 2: The introduction to “Me partinë” (1979)

Other “privileged ones,” however, relished the challenge of polishing a “small gem” (*xhevahir*), and constructed elaborate, “beautiful” songs based on folk motives. These tightly crafted works were complex artistic-political statements integrating the cultural field's highest professional-aesthetic demands, and followed careful collaboration with top poets and elite vocalists. With his 1981 composition “Krenari e Brezave” (The pride of generations), Artist of the People Feim Ibrahimî presented an artfully conceived, metaphorical paean to the APL and Enver Hoxha. The lyric, by Tirana poet Gjokë Beci, revolved around the figure of a soaring Eagle, and the composer developed a short folk-inspired motive in 5/8 time throughout the piece. First set in the contrapuntal introduction, this figure resurfaced in the orchestral accompaniment to the verse and in the conclusion of the vocal line in the refrain. Ibrahimî often worked with leading poet Gjokë Beci, whose “elevated” texts overflowed with poetic devices, and especially metaphors: “over the white waters goes the Eagle,” “persons that are raised [i.e., like children in a family] everyday by the Party,” “we like eyelashes,” “a pure and beautiful life we erect [i.e., as one would a building or railroad],” “we make the country bloom,” and “the Party speaks.” These poetic figures served primarily to personify the APL and Enver Hoxha, as well as to describe the actions of “the People,” a collective “we” voiced by elite vocalist Ema Qazimi. Beci also created

a formal structure typical of a literary style in vogue:

1 Ja <u>vijnë</u> nga puna të qeshur në vatrat	1 Yes <u>they come</u> from work laughing people to their hearths
2 Foshnjat me gaz <u>ledhatojnë</u> .	2 The infants with joy <u>they caress</u> .
3 Ne <u>shikojmë</u> të sotmen' ndritur,	3 We <u>see</u> the enlightened present
4 T'ardhmen e bukur <u>takojmë</u> .	4 The beautiful future <u>we meet</u> .

Each couplet (lines 1-2, and 3-4) shared the same internal structure. Line 1 began with the verb “they come,” and the next verb came at the end of line 2, “they caress,” analogously to the switch that occurred in lines 3 and 4—the paired *we see/the present*, and its mirrored pair, *we meet/the future*. Moreover, these four lines incorporated elevated, poetic words, such as *ledhatoj* and *e/i ndritur*. The poet also alternated the narrative between different points of view. In lines 1-2, the speaker described action in the third person, switching in lines 3-4 to the first person plural and, in symbolic terms, drawing the listener into the narrative before the refrain. Here another, more detached, voice emerged, which addressed a series of stylized statements about the Party: “When the Party speaks, hearts take new strength/Its light is the light of years; All Albania weaves unending song, [As] you are the pride of generations.”

Elite Composers

Often “Meritorious Artists,” and usually laureates of national prizes, elite composers occupied the space immediately below that of “the privileged ones.”⁵¹ Employed at the Conservatory or activated for sought-after work at high profile institutions in Tirana (e.g., the national film company KinoStudio, RTSH, or the State Estrada), these savvy individuals had a strong practical sense for navigating the cultural field and hands-on experience at its center. Oriented toward concert music as well as “elevated” songs on grand themes, the elite composer held creative-professional credentials and connections enabling him or her to realistically aspire

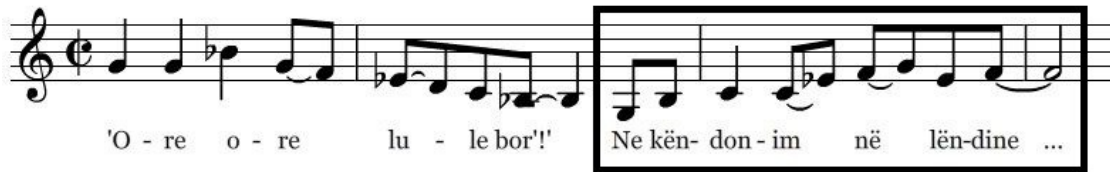
51 While people speak of “privileged ones” in common parlance to mean a very specific, bounded set of top artists; the term “elites” is more open to interpretation.

to directing positions in Tirana. Though an elite might compose a song on a political topic in order to, as one composer told me, “score points,” many accrued prestige not by strategizing, but simply by expressing an individuality oriented toward those “grand” or “epic” political-social themes most often rewarded with Festival prizes and recognition. Elite “love” song specialists, including Agim Krajka, Aleksandër Lalo, and, later, Vladimir Kotani, also figured in this stratum as necessary “experts” on “youth” songs treating “intimate” or “beautiful” subjects.

For elites oriented primarily to song and film music, the Festival of Song was the year’s premier event. These composers competed annually, and often began work on a submission in the weeks following the previous Festival’s conclusion. Rarely were song specialists censored; the Radio had a “need” for songs with lighter subject matter as a counterweight to “grand” themes, and these composers knew which compositions would be well-received by artistic commissions as audibly “national” expressions. The song specialist collaborated with carefully selected lyricists and vocalists, whom he might work with as a team over the course of several Festivals. Moreover, as pedagogues, estrada employees, or bandleaders in Tirana, song specialists often had a remarkable sense for finding vocalists on the cusp of stardom in estrada groups or at the LAJM. In compositional terms, a song specialist elite’s status in part rested on the professional distinction he claimed by developing “national” melodic material in an organic fashion, customarily integrating melodic material—and especially pentatonic modal motives—into song hooks or riffs.

With the 1978 composition “Çel kjo tokë si trendafil” (This land blossoms like a rose) composer Agim Krajka, by then a Meritorious Artist and laureate of the national Naim Frashëri Order (3rd class), and lyricist Arben Duka, with whom Krajka had worked at several previous Festivals, provided emerging star Irma Libohova her signature hit. The opening, pentatonic line

and text citing a well-known children’s rhyme immediately made apparent Krajka's grounding in the “national melos” (see fig. 3).



'O, o my snow-drop!' We sang in the meadow ...

Fig. 3: A “national” vocal line with a pentatonic “melos”

Krajka worked with lyricist Arben Duka because of his “youthful” texts filled with fresh images (*me freski*) and allusions to flowers, stars, light, eyes, blossomings:

<u>Ref.</u> : O sa lule tek ne sot blerojnë O sa yje vezullojnë. Çel kjo tokë si trëndafil! Ne plot me dritë, me dritë i kemi sytë...	O how many flowers blossom for us! O how many stars twinkle! This land blossoms like a rose! We, our eyes are filled with light!
<u>Verse 4</u> : E në ballin e djersit' Çelet lulja më e mirë Lule toka na ka rrit' Kënga jonë, mori krahë e fluturoi...	And on the sweat-filled brow, Blooms the best flower Flowers the land has raised [as its children] Our song took wing and flew!

Though he did not publish collections of verse before 1990, Duka today is widely considered to be not a “lyricist” but a “poet,” and has published several books. When I asked Duka whether the “stars,” “flowers,” or “light” in his “youth” lyric had any relation to those of “politicized” songs drawing on the same symbolic corpus of images (cf. “Krenari e Brezave”), he admitted to a “certain parallelism.” Nevertheless, Duka felt his work more closely invoked older, presocialist poets, claiming that he rarely thought about how or if his lyrics lined up with political imagery on the nation, Hoxha, or the APL, or how they would be received by the Radio commissions. To Duka, lyrics simply expressed one's literary “profile” as a poet (interview, 14 January 2010).

Elites oriented toward “grand” or “elevated” genres also submitted compositions to the Festival, for reasons ranging from an artistic-ethical sense of “duty” to move the listener through “elevated” pieces, to strategic calculation to raise one's personal profile through participation

among other elites and “privileged” ones at the national level. Like song specialists, these elites drew on and “developed” folklore as a professional-artistic duty. To the elite composer, different levels of “development” indicated varying levels of professional distinction:

The first method is to take a motive and to put it into the song. What I mean is, to take a phrase or a melodic figure from a folk song that already exists and to use that as the basis for the song. I did not use this method as much as the next one. The second one is to utilize the intervals that are most characteristic of Albanian music, to insert these ...as the foundational elements of your song, as the melodic material that you utilize for the song. [...] We can say that the first way, the citation of a piece, is a method that is less professional, that is more empirical, or even primitive. The second demonstrates a more serious professional manner. [...] This is the basis of a professional creativity, how a professional creates music. So that we are sure and clear: what I am talking about are the cells of folk music, its basic parts, which serve as the structural framework for folk music. To utilize these “cells,” as we might call them—intervals, modal material—in creating all genres of music. (Interview, Gazmend Mullahi, 18 May 2010)

In this manner, one paradoxically might “bring something new” by creating works that “sound original,” or “do not sound like anything else” (ibid.), albeit by utilizing the same subjects of production all composers were obligated to develop. Obsessed with notions of “professionalism,” this segment of the elite stratum most closely policed Tirana's means of cultural production to ensure its “subjects” remained rooted in the *taban*, or national soil, and unpolluted by “alien” elements.

“Gonxhe në pemën e lirisë” (Buds on the tree of freedom), presented by Limos Dizdari with a text by Robert Shvarc, received first prize as performed by Vaçe Zela and Gaqo Çako at the Sixteenth Festival of Song in 1977. Like most of Dizdari's “grand” works, “Gonxhe...” featured several dynamic and tempo changes, and a late romantic, lyrical aesthetic. Shvarc's historical text depicted Tirana's prewar girls' school, which produced many of the early communist movement's female members and, later, provided APL leaders with politically suitable wives. Dizdari was attracted to these historical pieces, and was particularly proud of how the vocal line of “Gonxhe...” paralleled its “lyric-epic” text. Shvarc was one of Tirana's only

Jews, which, according to Dizdari, ensured that he only wrote lyrics with clear political or historical positions, especially since he had been known in the 1950s as a poet oriented toward love songs. The first half of the final stanza of “Gonxhe...” drew on the corpus of symbols also present in previous examples:

Në moshën tuaj janë	They are of your age
Vajzat tona, yll e dritë!	Our girls, o star and light!
Sot rritur në liri,	Today raised in freedom,
Jetën vetë e ndërtojnë,	They construct life itself
E krijojnë dhe e mbrojnë me dashuri.	They create it and protect it with love.

As a topic for a light song, Dizdari viewed the selection of Nexhmije Hoxha's school as exhibiting “a kind of dualism”—that is, the theme had political overtones as well as apolitical, “patriotic” ones—but denied any explicit “calculation” on his part. Instead, Dizdari felt that his own personal musical style lent itself to these “heroic” historical themes (interview, June 2010). According to him, if this meant he created pieces with political resonances that RTSH both programmed and rewarded with prizes, that was due to a variety of fortuitous factors.

Directors

Rarely titled, though respected by their peers as culture house directors in major towns, district music specialists comprised the field's largest stratum, but presented the smallest percentage of Festival songs. In daily work, the district composer oversaw, prepared, and rehearsed folkloric ensembles, organized local or regional festivals and events, and more generally convened district cultural activities. For these directors, the Festival of Song provided an opportunity to participate in musical life at the national level. Directors thus sought to demonstrate their “professional” credentials, earned in study with elites and privileged ones at the State Conservatory, which rarely figured in routine district work. At the same time, directors often lacked an internal “orientation” toward “grand” themes or complex concert music that

would have initially enabled the composer to be named to a more prestigious position.⁵²

Though directors shared with more elite creators field-specific discourses on individuality and motivic development, their positions outside the capital handicapped aspirations to more privileged, creative roles in the capital. Yet Conservatory training ensured district composers were not only able to compose large-scale works in addition to the smaller ones deemed requisite to district areas, but also aspired to this “elevated” form of creativity. Certainly, some directors felt themselves “oriented” toward more “intimate” genres, embraced their district role, and prided themselves in being able to “do it all.” But others felt stifled:

[Y]ou have to realize, the conditions were extremely difficult, each composer was expected to create [works] in many different spheres. But does it make any sense that I, as a composer, would also be expected to be in charge of all the folk costumes? To collect them, figure out which ones to use, hand them out to people? I was not trained to be a traditional costume researcher! (Personal communication, director, January 2010)

For directors who chafed at their “lack of opportunity,” the Festival thus provided a means to demonstrate how, if given the chance, they might deserve a higher position in the field. District musicians submitted textured compositions annually, and while in a given year their submissions might not be selected, directors employed at major urban centers usually made the final cut.

Through compositions with wide, sweeping melodies, the district composer demonstrated a correct sense for the “beautiful” and the “national.” After the Eleventh Festival of Song, composer Alfons Balliçi, then an emerging compositional talent and virtuoso guitarist, was unofficially “banned” from future participation because he had directed a “western” guitar ensemble at the concerts. As a working guitarist in Elbasan and, later, as its Culture House director, Balliçi had gained a mastery of local urban repertoires. On his return to the Festival, which conductor Ferdinand Deda facilitated in 1976, he began presenting beautiful, lyrical pieces

52 Others were assigned in districts for biographical reasons, e.g., a religious family background.

drawing on regional folklore. In his 1977 composition “O moj shamishpalosura” (O my scarf-wearing girl), Balliçi set a soaring melody in what he termed an “Elbasanese melodic mode,” an urban folk scale similar to the Turkish mode *Nikriz* (see fig. 4).



Coming from the mill, to the hydroelectric plant/Flow waters like crystal.

Fig. 4: Verse excerpt from “O moj shami shpalosura”

Balliçi arranged his own pieces, and viewed himself as a creator and expert craftsman. The orchestration for “O moj...” sounded very much like an elevated version of an arranged folk song from Central Albania, especially in its use of a single violin to double the vocal line during the verse, and woodwinds (oboe during the introduction, and flute doubling the vocal line at several points). The orchestration also called for a women's choir to thicken the texture on long held notes behind vocalist Afërdita Zonja's lyric refrain.⁵³

Steeped in local folk styles, district musicians often drew on idioms or melodic materials experts at the center might deem regional or “non-national.” Less ambitious composers, or ones deeply invested in the arrangement of folk materials, sometimes based compositions closely on pre-existing folk dance or song motives, even “citing” a pre-existing melody, though few admit to this “non-professional” practice. When Sabrie Nushi graduated from the Conservatory in theory (1975), she was named to her hometown of Pukë in northern Albania. There Nushi became the first female virtuoso on the *çifteli*, a two-stringed chordophone traditionally

⁵³ Balliçi often worked with Zonja, an excellent singer who, like the composer, existed at the fringe of national culture in part because of her position outside the capital, in the city of Korça.

performed by men accompanying themselves on historical songs. As a folklorist, ensemble director, and folk song arranger, Nushi rarely submitted songs to RTSH. In 1979, however, she received a call from the Editorial Office about a composition she had submitted for a lower-profile radio program, “Seç më fton në stan” (He invites me to the pasture). “[T]hey told me, ‘This is a very beautiful song, but let’s get rid of this text’—which had been done by a writer from Puka—‘and put in the text of a poet, a writer.’ The theme was the same, but they used a text from the well-known poet Zulaha Puci. ... [The song] even made it to the final night, but I was so surprised by all this!” (interview, 9 June 2010).

In “Seç më fton...,” Nushi had “developed” a local folk song, using the melody for the verse and creating a countermelody for the refrain, though some commentators might deem this work closer to “citation.” Nushi demurred when I asked her why she thought she had been included. As a consummate professional, there is no reason why she should not have taken part, though she believed that the need to include a woman composer might have influenced the decision. Few women composed, though Nushi did not feel she had been discouraged from the Conservatory’s composition track. Yet the Festival provided Nushi a means to exercise what she called her “pretensions” (*pretendime*) to creativity: “[T]he Festival was the culminating, most important activity of the year. I mean, it was a dream for me, and when it was achieved, I felt, wow, I was evaluated among the greatest composers, like Avni Mula, like Çesk Zadeja.... I mean, I had brought a song that was chosen, that had touched an emotion.... It felt really good, to tell you the truth!” (ibid.).

Calculation, Strategy, and Privilege

In April 1985, the death of Enver Hoxha initiated a media blitz. State television broadcast images of the miles-long line of mourners snaking through Tirana, and power transferred to his

successor, Ramiz Alia, in a series of televised symbolic events including speeches, a funeral, wreath-laying ceremonies, and so on. Eight months removed from this elaborate choreography, Hoxha's memorialization at the Twenty-Fourth Festival of Song seemed almost muted. The elite song specialist Agim Krajka presented “Partia ime” (My Party), inspired by verses from eminent novelist Ismail Kadare, and fellow elite Haig Zacharian presented “O Enver, o yll e dritë” (O Enver, o star and light), a symphonic work with a text from the prolific Radio editor Zhuljana Jorganxhiu. Zacharian's sweeping, romantic style, oriented toward “grand” themes and “elevated” expression, previously had lent itself naturally to political texts. Though the composer always submitted compositions with at least an indication for a text or a few lines, editor Jorganxhiu sometimes composed or commissioned replacements for his songs in order to fill gaps in a given Festival's tematika. To Zacharian, the composition “O Enver...” emerged “more or less through my [professional-aesthetic] demands [on myself] to say something different, because here we come to 1985, and the scale of [compositional] maturity is a bit different.” Zacharian had submitted an untexted melody and, “not finding another song that would fit a text like this, and they asked me, how to put it, 'Do you have a text? No?' and they had this text” (interview, Haig Zacharian, 8 March 2010).

The issue of intentionality, or, as my interlocutors say, “calculation” (*kalkullim*), colors postsocialist debate on the nature of musical creativity. Since 1991, commentators have retrospectively sought to recoup socialist-era elites “dissidence” (*disidenca*), asking to what extent artists collaborated with or artfully subverted “the regime.”⁵⁴ Yet the subtle dynamics of professional values, unconscious strategy, and one's artistic individuality more often governed

54 Most debates have revolved around privileged writer Ismail Kadare (cf. Morgan 2008 and Morgan 2011). Eno Koço, a former employee of RTSH, has also sought to recoup a sense of local “dissidence,” drawing most explicitly on comparisons between Albania and Stalin’s Soviet Union, as well as between Kadare and Soviet composer Dmitry Shostakovich (see Koço 2005).

the relationship between politicisms and expressive practice. Even at the most symbolically charged events, the musical signs one created could thus be divorced from an immediate, extra-musical politics. Though composers sometimes strategically revised their earlier positions or work in interviews with me, especially about creating “politicized” songs, my sense is that Zacharian's individuality and position in the field—as oriented toward large-scale works over songs, yet without the prestige necessary to choose themes—put him in line for compositions such as “O Enver . . .”⁵⁵ Such a profile itself proved conducive to the accumulation of privileges. In 1986, Zacharian's application for the position of “free professional” (*profesion të lirë*) was granted with full benefits. Funded by the LAWA, “creative license” (*lejë krijuese*) provided him a formal institutional affiliation in Tirana, reduced faculty service hours, and extended time for composing concert music. On receiving the highest order, Zacharian had just turned thirty. Perhaps, he said, this was a “form of remuneration,” albeit one for which he had not strategized: “Look, you have to understand, at that time, it was, I mean, normal [...] maybe, there was no other road, you just accepted it because, hmm, it was the only way of living, there was no other way. [...] *Shyqyr*, my goodness, I don't know, I don't know how we could have been dissident then” (ibid.).

If rapid discursive change and competitive positions-taking based on emergent notions of what it meant to be an artist typified the 1960s, the period between 1974 and 1985 came to be characterized by its remarkable stability. For composers, the music field came to have a strictly pyramidal structure, its apex pointing toward Tirana and its base, the districts. Graduation from

55 Today, Zacharian works as a pedagogue at the state Conservatory, and in speaking openly about this subject, his interview proved exceptional among composers of his generation. One of Zacharian's colleagues at the Conservatory, for example, refused an interview on grounds that I might portray him or her as a “communist.” A mutual acquaintance later explained that the pedagogue suspected the music dean wanted to find a reason to fire the pedagogue, and was thus wary of my questions about socialist cultural politics.

the state conservatory without exception determined initial access to the field. Yet one's individuality or creative orientation governed both the “position” one might assume after graduation, when “the state named” you to a post, and this geographical location in turn thus determined one's “position” in the field itself. One's grasp of professional-artistic conventions and aesthetic discourses largely determined status and career advancement, while “politics”—in the sense one might be punished by biography, enabled through “collusion” with the security apparatus, or rewarded for creating artworks with “politicisms,” figured to a much lesser extent. If an individual at the top composed pieces “for the Party,” he or she did so as a function of this “privileged” position. If an elite or district director created “non-political” love songs, this too depended less on one's personally held politics than on the organizing effects of the field.

By the mid-1980s, the composers' pyramidal field experienced a remarkable ossification, as creative discourses and shared senses of “correct” artistic selfhood reinforced and maintained an aesthetic equilibrium. Even as “culture and the arts” became more politicized, composers paradoxically came to view themselves as divorced from politics and creatively “free” from state strictures. Only those “other” intellectuals were seen to have “served the State.”⁵⁶ The nature of semantic production and reception in part grounded this notion. Describing Tirana's academic and political fields, linguist Ardian Vehbiu has identified “citational” practices—the replication or verbatim citation of previous statements—as a key mode by which state power reproduced itself (Vehbiu 2007:71). For composers, an insistence on the assimilation and reproduction of melodic-rhythmic codes of musical folklore, as well as the Festival of Song's routinization of

56 The notion that the music field functioned as a self-regulating “clan,” not wholly integrated with other social fields, initially derived from my observations of the 2009 Festival of Song rehearsals. A socialist-era star estrada star later confirmed my understanding, describing Tirana as a kind of “high school, filled with cliques” (p.c., Luan Zhegu, June 2010).

creation and interpretation, led to field-wide standardization.⁵⁷ Strict prohibition of non-local performance models or extra-national “subjects” further ensured all individuals accessed the same raw materials of musical production, which itself encouraged the efflorescence of micro-forms of discursive and practical “professional” distinction.⁵⁸ Obligated to “develop” the same corpus of melodic-rhythmic material, one could only distinguish oneself by increasingly fine degrees of professional-aesthetic difference.

More broadly, a deeply felt sense of artistic selfhood forestalled resistance, subversion, or dissent. In casting compositional practice as a “professional” issue of personal expression—that by correctly creating works one represented a “physiognomy,” or “sounded like oneself”—composers denied themselves the possibility of voicing political, anti-hegemonic statements. Highly developed field-specific artistic codes thus did not mechanically police individuals' conduct, but rather framed individual instances of potentially disruptive symbolic behavior (e.g., an aggressive vocal style, or a repetitive melody) as “non-professional” rather than subversive. Similarly, the notion that one might have had a practical sense for formal, melodic, or gestural expressions indexical of politicized themes signaled neither coercion to compose such pieces nor strategic calculation (e.g., “point-scoring”). In a field governed by aspirations to complexity, melodicism, and grand gesture, professional-aesthetic values often resonated with political ones.

57 Vocalists' rote learning of a “beautiful” style, or younger performers' emulation of models previously “approved” for broadcast, for example, exponentially increased performance practice's rate of standardization.

58 Another example from my fieldwork is the role of the Festival in general, which was to provide new compositions for district or regional ensembles to perform. Because broadcast on state media had essentially “approved” compositions beforehand, this was a primary way ensemble directors could find correct, approved material that did not have to go through artistic commissions in order to be approved.

A modernist-idealist notion seemingly at odds with a materialist conception of the cultural field and society at large, the belief in an individuality able to express a stable, core self through creative practice governed intellectuals' approaches to “creativity” and production. In sum, claims to intellectual status became coterminous with ones to individuality, even as individuals recognized individuality as a “natural” property divorced from the practical constraints of one's position in the field and discontinuous with the political exigencies of creativity. For composers trained between the late 1960s and early 1980s, the notion that one has an individuality to express remains so commonsensical that the opposite seems unthinkable. This suggests Bourdieu's following insight: the deeper a person's imbrication in a field's codes,

the greater is his [*sic*] ignorance of all that is tacitly granted through his investment in the field and his interest in its very existence and perpetuation and in everything that is played for in it, and his unawareness of the unthought presuppositions that the game produces and endlessly reproduces, thereby reproducing the conditions of its own perpetuation. (Bourdieu 1990:67)

To gain membership in the field, one was obligated to maintain one's true individuality; in expressing this individuality, however, one contributed to the field's perpetuation.

CONCLUSION: THE POLITICS OF RECOGNITION

Upon founding a weekly arts newspaper in 1962, young Soviet-trained intellectuals christened it *Drita*, “The Light.” By the early 1970s, the editorial board had added to its header an epigraph from nineteenth-century illuminist-nationalist Naim Frashëri: “And the light of knowledge—forward may it carry us” (*Dhe drit' e diturisë—përpara do na shpjerë*). In this chapter, I have examined the interrelationships between modes of recognizing the true nature of the listener and one's artistic self. This cultural politics of recognition emerged from the intersections among APL elites' struggles, the state's mechanisms of repression, demographic and technological shifts, a protectionist cultural policy, and composers' practices of aesthetic

self-administration. Indeed, by the mid-1980s, the Socialist People's Republic of Albania came to be stratified in part by the distinction between the nation-state's objects and subjects, especially as illuminated by "the light of knowledge" about culture and the arts. Albanian socialism's cultural program thus enabled the formation of two differentially capacitated social positions: a cultural vanguard functioning to raise and direct society, albeit as a "dominated fraction" of the dominant stratum more generally; and its object, a listening masses fully excised from state-subsidized processes of cultural production.⁵⁹

"Beautiful," "cultured," and correct musical practice powerfully enacted the social difference, a "natural" distinction, on which a nationalist-modernist vanguard position rested. Formed by this distinction even as they produced it, music intellectuals came to consider themselves "duty-bound" (*i/e detyruar*) to oversee correct tastes by their position vis-à-vis culture's object, "the masses." As one vocalist explained to me, "This is the work of music, to raise the level of the person that does the work, but also the person who goes to the show. [...] Clean clothes, beginning with shoes, nice shirts, a suit [...] this is culture that the spectator profited from! 'I will dress like Qemal dresses! Look at Uncle Qemal!'" (interview, vocalist Qemal Kërtusha, 10 May 2010). Though my interlocutors considered this relationship strictly in apolitical terms, this paternalism articulated to broader strategies characteristic of socialist states for targeting and managing populations.⁶⁰ Consider, for example, the following vignette. In February 2010, I went to hear socialist-era light music star Kozma Dushi perform at a Tirana

59 In using the terms "dominated fraction" and "distinction" in this paragraph, my argument once again points to Bourdieu 1984.

60 In an essay suggesting the links between postsocialist studies and postcolonial studies, Sharad Chari and Katherine Verdery (2009) suggest colonialisms and state socialisms shared a reliance on biopolitical mechanisms (cf. Foucault 1978), racist and "class racist," respectively, to manage social bodies. The anecdote cited here, I believe, indicates one way "culture" was imbricated in notions about who could be considered a "person" in state-socialist Albania.

restaurant. A fellow listener, *Vilson Xh., introduced himself, and our ensuing conversation suggests the diverse ways “culture and the arts” had functioned to register and produce unequal social stratification. On graduation from the University of Tirana in 1970, Vilson—a self-described “person of culture” (*njeri me kulturë*)—was appointed teacher to a rural village school:

Vilson Xh.: [Simply put,] we went there to teach [rural villagers] how to live like people.
N.T.: Did you have a specific program, a list of things to teach them, from the state?
V.Xh.: The state does not enter in here! I did it as a citizen, as a person with culture! Show them how to wash themselves, wash their hands, keep their house clean, clean their clothes, use utensils. [...] Just by being there I was an example: how to dress, how to behave. Enver [Hoxha] understood this, which is why I say that above all, he was an intelligent man.⁶¹ [...]
N.T.: What do you mean by 'person with culture'—did this have to do just with how you dressed, how you kept a house?
V.Xh.: Not just this, not at all—it has to do with how you speak, the kind of vocabulary you use. How you dress, of course, and with hygiene, but more than this. It is about your mentality, how you relate to others in your family, in your community, with society. It is an entire way of living that these people had to learn [...]. (p.c., 6 February 2010)

Irreducible to state power as such, the post-1973 articulation of several factors intensified a pervasive inequality founded on the fundamental distinction between the governed and governors. In broad terms, a deeply held modernist-nationalist understanding about the nature of Albanian society, coupled with the adoption and maturation of Marxist-Leninist cultural policies, undergirded this politics of recognition. In more proximate terms, elite struggles within the APL, media and broadcast policies, field-specific notions of duty, or artistic techniques for cultivating an expressive individuality provided elites a means to administer social bodies amenable to particular forms of intervention, whether repressive, didactic, paternalistic, or emancipatory. Imbricated in questions of personhood, authority, and social recognition, Albania’s strictly

61 Though it might seem polemical to include praise for dictator Enver Hoxha (1908-1985), this sentiment parallels other comments I heard from intellectuals who considered Hoxha to “esteem” culture or even to “over-value culture and the arts.” Hoxha himself cultivated an image as an intellectual and “fine arts” aficionado—photographs often showed him in his office, where he kept poetry books and records of folk and concert music.

administered mode of musical production—in tandem with protectionist cultural policies overseen by state officials—accorded creators and interpreters a monopoly over the symbolic means of personhood to which listeners had access. At the same time, creators came to be disarticulated from the quotidian concerns of non-elites, in effect disqualifying themselves from the possibility of advancing social critiques, overt or not, in their works. What effect did this have on the listener, viewer, or reader? Mirela, whom I previously introduced as a 1960s student singing Orietta Berti with friends at a socialist youth labor campaign, once mentioned to me that she never secretly listened to foreign radio stations during the 1970s and 1980s. Instead, she claimed, “We simply ate what they offered” (p.c., 9 December 2009).

CHAPTER FIVE. SOUNDING TRANSITION

*Arben: I remember, in 1991 or so, wondering what [Coca-Cola] would taste like. We thought it might taste like [the locally available carbonated orange-flavored drink] *aranxha*. It was such a huge surprise!

*Genti: Around 1992, I was walking on the beach and I found a bottle of spring water, washed up on the shore, with an Italian label. I remember, I took this empty bottle home—

N.T.: A plastic bottle?

Genti: —yeah, a plastic bottle! And I put it on the shelf, in my grandmother's living room! Like it was something to look at, just an empty bottle! Can you believe it—we left it up there until 1996, 1997! That was how I thought, like it was something valuable, like a vase! You cannot believe this, right?

Arben: I remember, we had a buffet set up at a cousin's house, and we lined all the bottles up, the empty bottles, like it was a display. For decoration! That was the mentality. (fieldnotes, 17 May 2010)

In December 1989, the fall of the Berlin Wall presented viewers worldwide with a powerful image of a global order transformed. Smaller tears in the fabric of symbolic systems throughout the eastern bloc, however, presaged more local changes. In Albania, young men soon began greeting friends by whistling “Winds of Change,” a global hit for West German metal band the Scorpions and an anthem to Soviet perestroika. Foreign products trickled, and then poured, into

Tirana and other major cities. Unavailable or criminalized before 1990, rock music, foreign media, and consumer products became the very public totems of political-economic transition for young people. Just-so stories about what my interlocutors in the epigraph to this chapter termed a “new mentality” often privilege personal, even intimate, signs of change, though at the national level, opposition groups remapped the nation-state's monumental landscape in more dramatic fashion. During the sweltering summer of 1990, desperate citizens first breached the borders of the Socialist People's Republic to demand asylum at Tirana's western embassies. Massive student protests in December then forced APL officials to recognize an opposition party. Within months, the concrete monuments dotting urban Tirana—and mapping Albanian socialism's ideological world—began falling. Prime Minister Ramiz Alia ordered the removal of the capital's Stalin statues and, in February 1991, crowds overwhelmed the central Skanderbeg Square to pull down its towering, golden Enver Hoxha. Protesters repeated this figurative beheading throughout the country.¹ In March 1992, the recently legalized Democratic Party defeated the communists in Albania's first plural elections. Newly elected President Sali Berisha strode to a podium to make an acceptance speech, raised two fingers in the Democrats' “victory” sign, and began: “Hello Europe, I hope we find you well!”

Despite calls beginning in 1990 from pro-pluralist corners of the intelligentsia for “full and free creative expression,” the symbolic ruptures sketched above did not immediately impact Tirana's system of cultural production, nor could the nation-state's symbolic economy be

1 Writing about Albania, journalist Blendi Fevziu has aptly described this period as characterized by “pedestals without statues” in his monograph of the same title (2011 [1997]). On post-1989 “corpses” and reburials throughout the eastern bloc, symbolic or otherwise, see Verdery 1999.

transformed overnight.² Debate over even the state's most basic symbols immediately emerged.³ On the eve of a historic visit by the United States Secretary of State James Baker, for example, most of Albania's Lenins remained on their pedestals, though crowds had pulled down dozens of scowling Stalins and smiling Hoxhas months before (Mustafaj 2006:127ff.). Like Hoxha and Stalin, Lenin too had to go—especially as foreign journalists swarmed Tirana “to see and describe, to film, to photograph the statue-corpses,” the “symbolic witness to the end of a tragic epoch” (ibid.:133). By the late 1980s, Albanian socialism had conditioned a music field conducive to semiotic stability, and composers unprepared to challenge or reform the state's longstanding modernist-nationalist symbology. With the 1992 adoption of a liberal-democratic program of governance, however, the Festival of Song and light music in general emerged as key sites for processes of democratization. Following the disintegration of a socialist mode of musical production and major organizational reform at RTSH, a new cohort of self-described “Democrats” (*demokratë*) began to render democracy and political transition legible—or better, audible—for listeners, albeit not without challenges from socialist-era elites and Albanian-speaking artists from beyond the nation-state's borders.

Music ethnographies of political-economic transitions from socialism have emphasized how novel musical signs function as vehicles for anti-hegemonic forms of identification during moments of change.⁴ In Albania, music genres and sounds did provide a means with which some

2 For one example of a call for “freedom of expression,” see Lazër Stani's article “‘Shteti’ i artit” [‘The state’ of art]. *Drita*, 10 February 1991, 3.

3 Intellectuals, for example, even debated whether a pluralist Albania's flag should retain its five-pointed gold star, which some claimed was presocialist, and not “borrowed” from the Russian. See Mentar Belegu, “Ylli mbi flamurin tone nuk është i huazuar” [The star on our flag is not borrowed]. *Drita*, 20 January 1991, 12.

4 Among former Soviet Republics, the “Singing Revolution” of Estonia especially has been framed as exemplifying antisocialist, non-violent protest productive of new forms of identity See

individuals could propose nonsocialist forms of social and political organization. In targeting the creation and dissemination of a particular corpus of signs for subsidization and strict administration, socialism had organized the production and reproduction of a widely circulating regime of knowledge about nation, community, and personhood that operated largely without challenge from publicly available alternatives. Composers, by rendering audible the signs by which Albania's citizens came to recognize themselves as locally legible subjects, had played key roles in differentially capacitating social bodies as able to participate—or not—in social-political life. Until 1991, musical signs of identity were thus created amid constant haranguing about the purity of the local/national and the polluting quality of the non-local/foreign. With the political-economic transition from socialism came a new program, heralded by protesting students chanting, “We want an Albania like the rest of Europe” (*E duam Shqipërinë si gjithë Evropa*).

In this chapter, I analyze the symbolic dimensions of Albania's political-economic transition from socialism as proposed by an emergent group of Democrats. Between 1990 and 1997, would-be Democrats negotiated the nation-state's turn from a hegemonic socialist cultural

the film *The Singing Revolution* (Tusty et al. 2007). In Mark Slobin's 1996 edited volume collecting writings tracing various cultural “re-tunings” following socialism, Donna Buchanan extended her perspective on postsocialist Bulgarian musical change to the region, writing, “the primary issue underlying Eastern European political transition is the transformation and reassertion of social identities in the political and economic spheres of culture” (Buchanan 1996b:227). In formerly socialist states in southeastern Europe, the most audible transformation has been the rise of various pop-folk genres. As a “wildly polysemic symbol” that challenged state-socialist musical “expressions” of progress and nation, pop-folk genres such as Bulgarian *chalga* have incorporated a number of timbral, metrical, and formal properties previously constructed as backward or uncultured (Rice 2002). Analysis of symbolic musical change has not been confined to examinations of Eastern Europe: music ethnographers of Cuba's *período especial*, the period of economic crisis following the Soviet Union's disintegration, for example, have pointed to the emergence of *timba* as a genre that “resists cultural elitism...and evades notions of narrowly-defined cultural nationalism” (Perna 2005:4; cf. Fernandes 2006 on hip-hop in Cuba).

program to a nonsocialist one legitimated and administered in the name of “de-communization” and “democratization.” While music scholars have traced how post-1989 musical practice provided certain social groups with non- or anti-state vehicles for identity formation and political mobilization, political theorists and ethnographers of transition have focused more broadly on the institutional and social conditions under which “democratization” occurs.⁵ These two approaches might be critically combined. By targeting the Festival of Song and light music for democratization, Democrats promoted alternative principles of government before, during, and after Albania’s proximate transition from “communism.” Analysis of this process presents a picture of musicians’ strategies to emplace themselves within an emerging nonsocialist order, as well as the contested, disordered, and conditional emergence of several potential threads of a nonsocialist democratic political rationality more generally.⁶ By promoting a cluster of interrelated and mutually constitutive principles around which a postsocialist program of government might be organized, the composition, performance, and broadcast of light music did

5 “Transitology” literature on political-economic transformations in the eastern bloc initially tended toward models privileging either concrete destinations or metaphors of movement (Stenning 2005:115). In one “disintegration” model of the transition, scholars framed the “totalitarianism” of the past as inherited obstacles or “rubble” individual actors would have to navigate on their paths to “democracy”; in the much-discussed “end-of-history” model, the introduction of neoliberal economics and liberal democratic institutions were seen as leading necessarily, even inexorably, to capitalism (see the analysis in Buraway and Verdery 1999:4-7; cf. Malia 1992 and Fukuyama 1989). Though many ethnographers of Eastern Europe (e.g., contributors to Buraway and Verdery 1999) have critiqued such models as expressions of a neoliberal or liberal-democratic triumphalism, democrats through the region often themselves adopted these narratives as part of an oppositional political rhetoric.

6 With “political rationality,” I adopt Nikolas Rose’s definition of such rationalities as “discursive fields characterized by a shared vocabulary within which disputes can be organized, by ethical principles that can communicate with one another, by mutually intelligible explanatory logics, by commonly accepted facts, by significant agreement on key political problems. Within this zone of intelligible contestation, different political forces infuse the various elements with distinct meanings, link them within distinct thematics, and derive different conclusions as to what should be done, by whom and how” (1999:28).

not simply comment on or describe “transition,” but created new possibilities for political action, albeit in ways that articulated certain music elites to postsocialism’s hegemonic program of Albanian democracy.

CHALLENGING SOCIALISM

Following Enver Hoxha’s death in 1985, younger intellectuals began to question older ones. Across the cultural field, elites increasingly found the discursive edifice of professional privilege on which their claims to social distinction rested faltering. Humorist Artan Dervishi, for example, satirized several of the music field’s core principles with the tongue-in-cheek guideline, “Five Points Towards Writing a Schematic Song” (see fig. 1):

Scheme A

1. Schematic song A should have a general and euphoric title. In any case, the last line of the song's refrain might be used.
2. The *tematika* of schematic song A should be “broad,” simultaneously including motives about life, work, defense, and *aksion*, and through lyrical-theoretical-epico-physiophysical explication should achieve “grand” and “powerful” ideo-emotions.
3. It is advised that schematic song A begin by citing the motive of a folk song, later “arranging” it to create something between a song, march, or ballad. [...]
4. In general, the strophe of schematic song A has a softer development, while the refrain obviously should be explosive and declamatory, wherever possible mentioning the expressions “we build...,” “we march...” or at the very least “we progress through life.” Stirring expressions such as “O comrade!” might also be used.
5. Schematic song A should end with a high, held note almost unsingable by the singer. The word “always” ensures a “triumphal” conclusion to the song.

Scheme B

1. Schematic song B should have a non-schematic title so incredibly strange that the listener is surprised by where the artist's mind might wander.
2. The *tematika* of schematic song B should be intimate [*intime*]. The primary motive <‘me and you’> or just <‘you’>, after a lyrico-lyric explication, should arrive at <‘the two of us’> or <‘together’>.
3. Here too it is advised the song begin with a folk song motive. Later, by simplifying it and lightening it an “original” motive is achieved. (Since everything about this song remains light, it can be classified as light music.)
4. The strophe of schematic song B should generally become intimate, where the singer sings to beautiful nature filled with greenery, flowers, fruit, and vegetables, until in the refrain they “blossom,” open their “petals,” and “open flower buds.” Ready-made figures such as “the rays of the sun in the morning” or “dewy roses” can be used, too.
5. Schematic song B should have an unexpected ending. Just when the listener expects the development and culmination of the song, it should then end. It can also finish with a question.

PS. It is not advised that the composer of a schematic song have an inspiration before he writes the song. Also, he may compose it, quite simply, without having its text [beforehand], as it is sufficient to bear in mind the above points and to choose the scheme one wants.

Fig. 1: “Five Steps to Writing a Schematic Song” (Dervishi 1985:13)

Mocking the tone of light music discourse with invented adjectives such as “lyrico-lyric” or “lyrical-theoretical-epico-physiolo-phical,” Dervishi had critiqued one of the primary legitimating mechanisms of the music field’s structure. In creative fields dependent on expert analysis, such as music, elevated aesthetic discourse both marked and produced hierarchy. By stylizing evaluation, critics such as Dervishi suggested, baroque formulations on “innovation,” “originality,” or “individuality” had paradoxically contributed to creative stagnation by obligating participants in the cultural field to reproduce the field’s terms.

Younger intellectuals termed the cultural field’s elaborate set of rules, discourses, and professional considerations “schematism” (*skematizëm*). Yet as critical voices in the cultural field increasingly challenged professional-aesthetic orthodoxies, elites in the music field repurposed the very terms of debate in defense of the status quo. In a 1987 review essay, for example, Tirana’s leading music critic Fatmir Hysi described the “schematism problem in song” in terms opposite from Dervishi’s slashing critique, opening his analysis by listing composer-lyricist partnerships he felt exemplified “professionalism” and “originality” of expression (Hysi 1987:5). Song teams Limos Dizdari-Xhevahir Spahiu, Feim Ibrahim-Gjokë Beci, Ferdinand Deda-Kudret Isai, Gazmend Mullahi-Koçi Petriti, and Gjergj Leka-Zhuljana Jorganxhiu included Meritorious Artists, an Artist of the People, RTSH’s text editor, as well as the then-Defense Minister’s son. Only one composer—the son of the TOB’s choral director and Jorganxhiu’s nephew, Gjergj Leka—was oriented primarily toward song. In short, Hysi praised the field’s promoters of “epico-physiolo-phical” and “lyrico-lyrical” themes on defense, Fatherland, and young love’s “budding flowers.”

Hysi targeted a new kind of light music: western-style songs, which he claimed “bored” the listener by sounding too similar. “[T]here is evidently a misunderstanding of the youth’s

tastes,” Hysi hypothesized, “and its desires for liveliness, joy, and dynamism.”

If you believe that the youth can be pleased by weak, poor singing and prefabricated emotions, it means you don't respect [the youth's] great world, experienced through the many and glorious aspects of socialist life. (Ibid.:5)

Critiquing by name a list of composer-lyricist duos, primarily students or secondary personnel subordinate to the capital's elite circle, Hysi identified a handful of “stamped songs [created] according to predefined rules.” The objects of Dervishi's satirical guideline further elaborated this term. Çesk Zadeja, for example, decried recent light songs as manifestations of “cookie-cutter-ism” (*shabllonizëm*, lit. ‘jig-ism’), specifically imputing to younger creators “a desire to be pleased with the poor, limited, ‘in-fashion’ tastes, which have dampened the lyrical-ness of our song.”⁷ Vaçe Zela worried about a young singer who standardized (*standardizon*) songs, a charge implying she sang in a “shouting,” overly declamatory manner, had not professionally developed an individuality, or lacked professional training.⁸ Festival reviewers increasingly dedicated space in published articles to a cluster of “technical problems” indicating singers' lack of “cultural and professional level”: a tendency toward “dilettante communication, without fantasy and with vocal restrictions”; “a spiritless [*zbehtë*] *mezzo voce*” that cannot arrive at a *forte*; poor intonation; and a lack of “original and soloistic” voices. In late 1987, physician and Teacher of the People Petrit Muka even published an analysis of young singers’ voices, concurring with calls then circulating that a course be opened for light music vocalists (Muka 1987).

Young composers oriented toward so-called “schematic,” “cookie-cutter,” or

7 See Zadeja’s short article “Tematika e gjerë, jo intonacione të paadresuara” [A wide tematika, not unaddressed intonations]. *Drita*, 15 January 1989, 2.

8 I report these various senses based on my review of critiques published in *Drita* between 1985 and 1990. See especially the roundtable discussion “Ç’pret nga kënga auditori i gjerë i artdashësve?” [What does the wide listenership of art-lovers expect from song?]. Vaçe Zela, Çesk Zadeja, conductor Mustafa Krantja, critic Anastas Kuremeno, and students Dhimitër Druga and Leftër Liço. Interview by Fatmir Hysi. *Drita*, 26 January 1988, 2-3 and 13.

“standardized” songs often presented these compositions at the light song festival *Kur vjen pranvera* (‘When spring comes,’ hereafter ‘the Spring Festival’). Founded in 1983 as a lower-profile and less politically charged alternative to the December Festival of Song, the Spring Festival fueled elites’ criticism. But it also provided a forum for less-established composers and served as an outlet for “love” songs increasingly demanded by young urban listeners. Granting that young composers and “art-lovers” preferred these songs, composer Agim Prodani nevertheless complained “they overvalue the rhythm and damage the melody,” citing “Dua t’u them” (I want to tell them), presented at the 1987 Spring Festival by composer Demokrat Shahini with singer Ermira Babaliu, as fitting this criticism. In contrast to the December Festival’s more symphonic arrangements, orchestrations for the Spring Festival’s ensemble of drumkit, synthesizer, electric bass, electric guitar, and flute featured terraced dynamics typical of western pop or rock arrangements—a softer verse and louder refrain, for example, rather than swells effected through instrumentation, crescendo, or diminuendo. The electric bass-synthesizer-drum kit accompaniment in Shahini’s composition maintained a strict duple meter with a heavy backbeat throughout. The lyric drew on simple, straightforward language and a realism completely devoid of metaphor—its female narrator pined for a boy, and in two minutes, vocalist Babaliu pronounced the word “love” (both the verb *dua* and noun *dashuri*) ten times:

A day came, and mother saw us/ When I was returning from a date, and told me:
 ‘Who is this boy?’ ‘We love each other!’ I told her, ‘Once you must have been a girl!’
 We will keep warm in this love/ We won’t extinguish the fire in our breasts...⁹

9 The song’s theme depicted a “youth” subverting her parents’ authority, which the lyricist framed as initiated by the girl’s youthful exuberance rather than a “correct” socialist stance, such as indignation toward “conservatism.” Though the lyric’s realistic naïveté was not interpreted as subversive—reviews usually termed such lyrics *banal* (*banal*) or amateurish—it departed as much from a professionalized metaphor-heavy poetic aesthetic as its music did from a concert one.

Seemingly about “schematism” and signaled by the borrowed keywords routine, monotony, schema, prefabrications, and stamped songs, this cluster of debates was one reaction to an emergent light song aesthetic opposed to an art-music one based on developing folklore. Elites were thus complaining about songs that, in using duple meter, smaller ensembles, and romantic love themes, approximated American or European pop standards. For older composer-teleocrats invested in the cultural “progress” indexed by the music field’s aesthetic-professional standards, the refusal seemed jarring, even insulting.¹⁰ By using the language of schematism to frame aesthetic challenges to the music field’s status quo as long-held “problems” about the nation and professionalism, elites fulfilled criticism’s formal function while reformulating a potentially field-shaking critique.¹¹ Members of the music field thus proved averse to change even as younger composers increasingly viewed creative discussions as a formality, or debates

10 Agim Prodani’s 1988 identification of younger composers’ “weaknesses” succinctly illustrates the tenor of older elites’ feelings about upstart, younger composers: “When you sit down at the piano without any thought in mind. When you are supported mechanically in foreign schema. When you think that every day you can write a new song. When you haven’t read any poetic volume. When you think that to write a contemporary song, the rhythms of our folk music [offer only] ‘archaic and rudimentary’ elements. When you have created the conviction that the time [signatures] 3/4, 3/8, 6/8, and 4/4 have now been ‘surpassed’ by the times.” Agim Prodani, interview with Arben Kallamata. “Kënga jonë rritet e zhvillohet, masat e duan edhe më të bukur: Mendime të kompozitorit Agim Prodani, Artisti i Merituar, në vazhdim të dialogut për këngën” [Our song rises and develops, the masses want it to be even more beautiful: Some thoughts of composer Meritorious Artist Agim Prodani, in continuation of a dialogue about song]. *Drita*, 24 January 1988, 5, 10.

11 Criticisms also circulated within an emergent historical mode of apprehending society, a nostalgic turn that begged comparison of contemporary cultural production with older song, especially as Moscow-trained artists and their students withdrew from cultural life and entered semi-retirement. When star vocalists Gaço Çako, Vaçe Zela, or Ibrahim Tukiqi ceded the stage to younger performers, nostalgia for their earlier works boomed, with commentators now conceptualizing the 1960s as a musical “golden age.” At Festivals of Song after 1985, organizers began inviting older stars to perform greeting songs, often their 1960s hits, and RTSH organized *Festivali i Interpretuesve* (the Interpreters’ Festival), where young vocalists performed covered older repertoire.

on “professionalism” as dated.¹² The music field’s structure, however, dulled calls for even simple reform. The field’s reliance on expert discourse and hierarchy had formerly insulated musicians from potential political criticisms by enabling music specialists to construct a seemingly non-ideological, apolitical space governed by aesthetic rather than political standards. These standards calcified the music field’s structure over time, homogenizing music specialists’ critical and musical faculties. Indeed, while calls for reform grew in related artistic sub-fields, especially segments of the visual arts, theater, and literature, music specialists moved toward retrenchment—at times even seeking to expand an apparatus for aesthetic-professional reproduction over popular vocalists. The nature of musical training and production methods encouraged equilibrium. Individuals tended to view pedagogue-student relationships at the LAJM and Conservatory as foundational to their creative voice, while within popular music, the intensely personal nature of collaboration between singer, composer, and lyricist wove deeply asymmetrical power relations into the field’s fabric. Moreover, the music field was heavily dependent on state resources—rehearsal time and spaces, instruments, ensembles, broadcast or performance venues—and thus musicians came to be more deeply enmeshed in the state’s institutional structures than, for example, writers.

12 One oft-criticized “schematic” composer told me he paid no attention to these debates, though others claimed they did. Caricaturist Bujar Kapexhiu satirized a general lack of interest in critique or debate in his sketch “Vepra dhe Redaktori” [The Work and the Editor]. *Drita*, 7 June 1988, 13. Kapexhiu portrayed ‘the artistic work’ as a tree under siege from a workman ‘editor’ holding saw and pruners. For the work of “someone” (i.e., a ‘big name’), the editor had erected a ‘Do Not Touch!’ sign; he hacked gleefully at the work of a young artist. In another caricature, (*Drita*, 3 January 1988, 7), Kapexhiu depicted an exposition and its subsequent creative discussion. In the first panel, captioned “On the day when works for the exposition are submitted,” a crowd of artists clutching paintings push into a hall to deposit works; in the second, titled “...and at its creative discussion,” a scant few sit yawning before a panel of four male discussants in the now empty hall.

Innovation's Prospects

The intelligentsia's hierarchical structure, in tandem with procedural strictures on the circulation of novel ideas or symbols, nevertheless caused even minor symbolic changes to be interpreted as harbingers of sweeping reform. At the same time, the centralization of cultural production's oversight within state institutions and its critical discourse within state-administered media effected a measure of intellectual conformity older intellectuals increasingly came to experience as stifling.¹³ Younger musicians without prospects for assignment to Tirana began feeling less investment in arts' careers: aside from the most elite (or connected) art music composers, the best a talented graduate could expect by the 1980s was assignment to a district Culture House.¹⁴ The music field's pyramidal structure tended toward stability, permitting little play with its key signifiers and scant influence from non-established voices. By the time an intellectual "had experience" (*me përvojë*), he or she had demonstrated "correct" intellectual commitments by rehearsing discourses propagated by "privileged" superiors. One musicologist told me that *Drita* did not publish her first reviews until a decade after she graduated from Conservatory: a strict editorial policy bypassed younger voices, while editors commissioned study articles from major figures, who tended to speak for an artistic status quo (p.c., Zana Shuteriqi, 21 October 2009; cf. Klosi and Rama 1991).

The field thus structured artistic discourse in ways that rewarded those individuals best able to reproduce its prior terms, while the centralization of criticism and debate forestalled the

13 Composer Tonin Harapi, for example, complained in his memoir about the difficulties he encountered in even accessing materials at the ILA without lengthy permission forms, while Abdullah Grimci wrote about feeling "worn out."

14 Composer and studio producer Edmond Zhulali, for example, was switched from the composition track to trumpet performance in the early 1980s due to politicking, then on graduation assigned to an undesirable location in a northern district. In our interview, he recounted how discouraging this was to him as a young man.

formation of innovative critiques.¹⁵ How, then, could one compose a song that sounded fresh and novel, yet remained legible to the field in professional-aesthetic terms? At the Twenty-Eighth Festival of Song, composer Aleksandër Peçi's winning vocal trio "Toka e Diellit" ('The land of the sun'), based on a lyric by fellow elite Xhevahir Spahiu, caused a stir among intellectuals. Critics received the composition positively in part because of persistent criticisms that recent Festivals had lacked top composers such as Peçi, but also for several novel musical features. Though a vocal trio had been used for chorale-type songs in the late 1970s, composers found this formation innovative, and several copied the trio at following festivals (Pirro Çako in 1990, Osman Mula in 1992). The composer also used a live folk instrument, the *pipëza*, to present the composition's main motive, which provided the basis for the verse's melody.

Musically, Peçi and critics conceived the piece as successfully combining folk motives and art music methods. Though named director of the AKVP in 1985, Peçi had been oriented primarily toward concert music and elevated film scores over folk or light music.¹⁶ Following the Festival, *Drita's* correspondent submitted a short interview with Peçi where he discussed the song's genesis:

In my creative method, I refer always to those particular melodic embryos found in folkloric creativity. In my song at the last festival, I was supported by a rhapsodic Dibran [northern Albanian] motive, while in this case, by a motive from the villages around Tirana, [which was] presented at the 1983 Gjirokastër [National Folkloric] Festival, a

15 Under capitalism, Bourdieu has argued, individuals able to "fall back" on other form of capital, especially the economic capital derived from family wealth or a paying job (a 'bread-and-butter' occupation), disproportionately enter the cultural field because they have a safety net. Those with dispositions inclining them toward calculated risk-taking thus become artists at a higher rate than individuals with more conservative dispositions or less secure backgrounds (see Bourdieu 1993:42-3). My sense is that state-subsidization enabled the opposite process to occur in Albania, as individuals seeking a steady position and inclined toward consensus and respect for hierarchical authority came to disproportionately enter Tirana's cultural fields.

16 Peçi did compose several very popular light songs for films, including his best known song, the title track to the film *Në shtëpinë tone* (In our home), performed by Vaçe Zela.

motive which is stripped from all later oriental layers, [and which thus] demonstrates its ancientness. Its major mode is rare among all [our] modes [... and ...] gave me the possibility to ... find the form of variations (the basis of folk and cultivated music): a new song structure. Thus, the [folk instrument] *pipëza* executes 90% folk theme (10% belongs to the laboratory work [in order to] structure it in the style of light music), and the singers one after the other make 6-7 variations around this theme until the refrain. Thus, the special thing in the structure, which so pleased artistic opinion, is that a kind of theme and variations was created within the genre of song.¹⁷

With “Toka e Diellit,” Peçi navigated the field’s primary markers of distinction on expert development by using “folkloric” materials in a novel way. He successfully framed his compositional form in art music terms, as a “theme and variations,” and himself as an expert, by “finding” the developable material he then transformed in the “laboratory” of his elevated individuality. The composer also framed his piece as “national”—ancient and non-‘oriental’—even though the trio’s interpretation and variations have a semi-improvised quality, and in places sound almost like gospel shouts.

Vetted by an artistic commission and awarded the Festival’s top prize, authors Peçi and Spahiu thus presented a composition legible in political and aesthetic terms, albeit one with potentially anti-communist undertones. In the lyric, a free-flying eagle soared across the ocean, while the performers extemporized in a style alluding to African-American gospel. Yet ostensibly about “freedom,” Spahiu’s lyric nonetheless drew from the long-standardized corpus of symbols discussed in previous chapters as representing the contours of an optimistic, Marxist-Leninist modernity:

Verse 1: At the edge of the azure, there’s a willow tree they say cries
Next to beauty, a star, they say it dreams.
In every waterfall, a sun that rises and sets,
In every light-winged seagull, who lives? [...]

17 See “Temë me varacione brenda zhanrit të këngës: Intervistë me kompozitorin Aleksandër Peçi” [Theme and variations within the genre of song: An interview with the composer Aleksandër Peçi]. *Drita*, 31 December 1989, 3.

Refrain: O Albania, give me springs,
In my spirit I keep your fire,
The eighth wonder of the world,
O song of sun, unleash your veils,
Like an eagle through the world, fly! fly!
Like an eagle, fly! to the future!¹⁸

The lyric's metaphorical keywords, "bloom," "green," and "blossom," and allegorical images, of the sun, eagle, or star, sutured potentially subversive lines—"The word 'freedom' is born" and "Like an eagle, fly! to the future!"—to then-familiar political tropes. In short, Peçi and Spahiu's composition raised complex aesthetic issues about the depth to which "schematism" in Dervishi's sense had penetrated the music field. Could one produce novel ideas within the socialist mode of cultural production? How might the professional "free" himself from "physiolo-phical" schematism? From what point and in what terms might he reform or innovate?

Reform and Policy

In 1985, Hoxha's successor Ramiz Alia had signaled that change, if it came, would be directed by APL leadership. Announcing a "continuity" policy, Alia's government condemned the USSR whenever Gorbachev announced reforms, whether related to *perestroika* or the rethinking of the Soviet position within the diplomatic architecture of a "common European home" (cf. Rey 2004). Isolated economically and politically from both "eastern" and "western" spheres by the late 1980s, Albania nevertheless depended on a stable Cold War order and the legitimacy of even "revisionist" Marxist-Leninist states in order to maintain the image of viability to its own citizens (Vickers and Pettifer 2000:17). Over the course of 1989, however, events throughout the eastern bloc and beyond—from Tiananmen Square to the Berlin Wall, and from Gorbachev's July declaration of Soviet non-aggression to the December executions of the Ceaucescus in Romania—begged a strong response from the APL and Tirana's intelligentsia. The

18 This text derives from http://www.teksteshqip.com/frederik-ndoci/teksti_1849087.

Ninth Plenum of the Central Committee, held in late January 1990, instead merely reaffirmed the APL's leading role, and portrayed the reforms enveloping the eastern bloc as the faults of "rightists and deviators." The hardline stance delayed, but did not quash, local calls for change. Faced with mounting internal unrest inspired by international events and critical domestic food shortages, Alia and hardliners in the APL accepted reforms granting citizens private plots of land, passports, and the right to assemble an oppositional party within the year.

Intellectuals approached impending change with uncertainty. In their uneven efforts to rethink the tenets of society, many shared a belief in the intelligentsia's prerogative to direct society, though select responses demonstrate a growing diversity. In 1989, sociologist Hamit Beqja, considered a "liberal" CC member allied with an increasingly vocal cohort of reformists, composed his study *For the Youth and with the Youth* (Për rininë dhe me rininë). Though he added an introduction addressing "recent changes" for its 1991 publication, Beqja felt his original analysis stood, arguing for reliance on Marxist principles during what he termed "a kind of moral and spiritual crisis that now and again has appeared with virulence precisely in certain youth environments" (Beqja 1991:6). Beqja's solution to these "crises" entailed, of course, a more prominent, hands-on role for academics. Even for reform-minded intellectuals, the possibility of political pluralism thus heralded a potential challenge to public order. Bound to teleological notions of "culture" and "coherence," Tirana's elites formulated responses to change only with difficulty, at times predicting a larger, not smaller, postsocialist need for the intelligentsia.

Elites in the music field proved particularly conservative. In a February 1990 creative

meeting about light song at the club of the LAWA, top composers continued as before.¹⁹ Česk Zadeja stressed now-decades old complaints about professionalism, “the education of the masses” or “the formation of good musical tastes,” and “the problem of national originality.” The LAWA music secretary Feim Ibrahimli lectured once again on the importance of “the cultural elevation of creators, orchestrators, and interpreters.” LAWA head Dritëro Agolli finally interjected. Predicting that soon “a family of composers concerned only with song will be created,” Agolli welcomed the time when individuals would “create songs in a voluntary manner, for pleasure, or in a spontaneous manner.” Agolli continued, scolding that “like it or not,” rock music influenced popular music, and light song creators must realize an equilibrium among its “national, Balkan, and European” elements. Almost anticipating the coming transition, Agolli concluded:

Our song has formed a tradition. The national sound [*frymë*] certainly derives from this tradition. Yet it is not only folklore that gives the Albanian sound. This song tradition that we have formed also gives an Albanian sound. This tradition, together with the people’s spiritual culture, gives a still fuller Albanian sound. Yet even with all of these achievements, composers must continuously seek more. To seek as the painters who are rejuvenating painting seek. Composers are a bit clumsy in exploring this great breath [*frymë*] of discovery that is spreading in all fields of our life, in the economic and cultural fields, in the field of painting, poetry, the novel, the film. (Ibid.)

MUSICAL SIGNS OF TRANSITION

In June 1990, impoverished citizens began forcing their way into Tirana’s western embassies. With brutal police measures failing to stem their tide, the government granted thousands the right to leave. Many elites criticized the asylum seekers as mischief-makers, possible security agents, or *alabakë*, Tirana slang for “loafers” or “ne'er-do-wells.” In a televised statement, Prime Minister Alia summarily dismissed “those who had left” (*të ikur*), saying,

19 See “Kënga ka nevojë të rritë frymen kombëtare e të demokratizohet më tej” [Song needs to raise its national-ness and democratize even more]. *Drita*, 18 February 1990, 3-4.

“They are not Albania.”²⁰ In October, Ismail Kadare, a “privileged” writer who also had criticized so-called *alabakë*, boarded an airplane for Paris. Self-described as “one of the few writers of this half century to have not only provided intellectual nourishment to [his] countrymen, but to have provided it in quantity” (Kadare 1994:64), Tirana's foremost intellectual sought political asylum once in France. Events soon proved premature Kadare’s assertion, made to Parisian newspaper *Le Monde*, that “the promises of democracy are dead” (quoted in Hadji-Ristic 1991:10). In December, massive demonstrations prompted the government to recognize the oppositional Democratic Party (*Partia Demokratike*, hereafter PD). New waves of refugees soon left for Greece and Italy, as between March 1991 and October 1992 an estimated 300,000 citizens, almost ten percent of Albania’s population, migrated (see Martin et al. 2002).

Concomitant with massive political and social change, RTSH began broadcasting musical signs of transition. Between spring 1990 and February 1992, the performance and broadcast of light music songs about “freedom” and “Europe” circulated potential symbolic materials for a nonsocialist cultural program, albeit one imagined by a particular cohort of elites based in Tirana. As these individuals sought to promote new musical sounds and aesthetic discourses, they also challenged long-held notions about “correct” music and spurred debate about the future contours of the nation, society, and the role of the intelligentsia. For some music intellectuals, the Festival of Song also provided a forum in which to not only propose the novel principles around which a nonsocialist cultural program might come to rest, but also to frame themselves as nonsocialist

20 I have read estimates that security forces killed hundreds of asylum-seekers and jailed many more, though there is no consensus on exact numbers. Immediate government concessions initially sought to appease restive rural constituencies as well as international actors concerned about mass migrations. In late July, the APL held a congress to dismiss several hardliners, and voted to allow limited retail and to extend plots of individual land for cultivation. In September, Albania signed the Helsinki Accords under pressure from foreign governments. Among intellectuals, there were many concerns about cleanliness and the circulation of rural villagers into Tirana.

artists, even agents of “democracy.” For the sake of continuity, I organize the following vignettes chronologically, though each circulated within broader debates and claims at the national level.

“Freedom” (March to December 1990)

Struggles to chart the nation-state’s future course first played out across the concepts of “rights,” “democracy,” and “freedom.” Ismail Kadare, for example, has claimed he met with Ramiz Alia to discuss human rights, arguing that “the civilized world today has only one conception of human rights, which is to say that those rights are universal, and they cannot be parceled out at the whim of individual nations” (Kadare 1994:26-7). When student protesters met with Alia in December 1990, one student read aloud protesters’ rights according to the Helsinki Accords, an agreement then-First Secretary Enver Hoxha had mockingly dismissed in 1975 (see Buçpapaj 2011). Over the following months, protesters’ began chanting “*Liri-Demokraci*,” or “Freedom-Democracy,” eliding the two notions in political speech, as diverse notions of “freedom” implicated in travel, mobility, and consumption—before 1990, the privilege of a small elite—gradually fused with an emergent opposition’s ideals. As a rallying cry and “universal” political standard linked discursively to “democracy” and reform, “freedom” entered Tirana’s new political lexicon as a potent potential principle for political, economic, and cultural reorganization at the national level.

As notions of “freedom” (*liri*), democracy (*demokraci*), and human rights (*të drejta të njeriut*) became indelibly linked to opposition politics throughout 1990, officials at RTSH and the Central Committee’s Office for Propaganda more carefully policed potentially mobilizing speech in the media. Yet at the March 1990 Spring Festival, RTSH editor Zhuljana Jorganxhiu composed a text “Ne, bijtë e lirisë” (We, the sons of liberty), the first of several lyrics she wrote between 1990 and 1992 invoking tropes of “freedom” and “democracy.” The verse began with

Romeo and Juliet's universal story of tragic love, offering the seemingly innocuous cliché that "love conquers all" ('We know it will win over misery/Love will win'). The bridge, however, dispensed with allegory to insist that "youth" universally demands "democracy":

Youth everywhere has beautiful eyes/But someone seeks to blind them.
She [youth] alone with two fingers raised high/With the silence that resounds in the world
Seeks democracy!

The refrain's text three times called for "freedom!"—that of the "heart's fire," the "mother tongue," and "dream's wing"—in "a language we can understand": "Libertá, Liberte, Liberty, Freiheit! Libertá, Liberte, Liberty, O Liri!" After setting the word "freedom" in western Europe's tongues, Italian, French, English, and German, as well as the Albanian mother tongue, the lyric concluded with a general call for peace: "O world, we are freedom's beautiful sons/and so we don't want to see violence and tears throughout the world."

As the long-time song text editor at the Radio's Music Editorial Office, Jorganxhiu had cultivated a second sense for submitting lyrics safe from rejection on ideological grounds. This lyric drew on a trope, the 'sons of liberty,' used previously to describe partisan guerrillas,²¹ but remained purposely vague in referencing no specific events or groups other than "the youth." According to singer Frederik Ndoci, audience members read the song as advocating "freedom" for Kosovar Albanians, then increasingly subordinated by the Serbian state and mobilizing a separatist movement that summer.²² According to the poet, composer Gjergj Leka, her nephew

21 See the film *Bijtë e Lirisë*, as well as a 1978 memoir by author Sterjo Spasse of the same title about Albanian communists in Spain during the 1930s.

22 The Spring Festival's Artistic Director, Ndoci has claimed, scolded, "The time has not yet come to raise fingers for Kosova," which the singer understood to indicate the director recognized that the lyric's "two fingers"—the middle and forefinger raised after Winston Churchill's famous victory sign—secretly referred to recent anti-APL protests in the Albanian town of Kavaja, where protesters had also used this sign (quoted in Kapinova 2005:103). Jorganxhiu (2011) suggests that officials were primarily wary of an association with these protests. "[Critics claimed] Gjergji [Leka] and I had made a 'hymn to Kavaja,' because a revolt

and frequent collaborator, had had in mind a text “concerning the struggle of the youth for freedom and democracy throughout the world” (Jorganxhiu 2011). The Central Committee’s Office of Propaganda, however, requested the song be pulled from broadcast. If Jorganxhiu presumed the lyric’s polysemic keyword *liri* would pass without comment, the term had by spring 1990 become too closely associated with a growing, yet still ill-defined, opposition.

Though APL officials or conservative RTSH employees suspected the lyric on ideological grounds, the state media nevertheless aired Ndoci’s performance. Veiled only slightly by allusions to love, the composition musically and discursively rendered a “freedom” that existed outside Albania. With iterations in Italian (*libertá*), French (*liberte*), English (liberty), German (*Freiheit*), and only then Albanian (*liri*), the refrain’s multiple senses of “freedom” located it as a “universal” condition expressible through western Europe’s primary diplomatic languages.²³ Yet the musical language of composer Gjergj Leka and vocalist Frederik Ndoci, members of a younger guard oriented toward so-called “schematic” western pop, located “freedom” within a then-current African-American commercial sound. Ndoci’s swooping vocal phrasings indexed

had occurred those days in this city, and all this because the text had the words DEMOCRACY and FREEDOM.” Youtube user and prolific commenter Partizan1003 noted below an uploaded clip of this song that s/he had understood the song to be about the youth of Kosova, not Albania.

23 Today, the song is often referred to as “Libertá” rather than “Ne, Bijtë e Lirisë.” “Libertá” was also the title of a hit song performed by Italian star Albano “Al Bano” Carrisi and his wife Romina Power that became an anthem to “freedom” in the eastern bloc. Released in November 1987, the love song was inspired by a visit to the Berlin Wall the previous June and, four months after the fall of the Wall, the singers released a remixed version on an album with liner notes more explicitly linking the song to this political development. Al Bano, named after Albania, where his father served during the Italian occupation, had performed several concerts in Tirana during September 1989. Though today the Italian singer is widely recognized as an artist who “sang for freedom,” *Drita* reviews of his concerts do not mention if he performed this song. My sense is that while urban groups, and especially musicians such as Ardit Gjebrea or Gjergj Leka, were aware of Al Bano’s work and meaning, many Albanians would not necessarily have connected his “Libertá” to Ndoci’s “Bijtë e Lirisë” in spring 1990, though they may have in retrospect.

African-American singers with gospel backgrounds (e.g., Whitney Houston), while Leka's orchestration included musical markers also pointing to a 1980s black aesthetic.²⁴ The pianist played jazzy seventh chords in an introduction and comping patterns over the verse and bridge; Leka orchestrated a "shout" call-and-response refrain between Ndoci and backup vocalists and included a saxophone solo. "Ne, Bijtë e Lirisë" thus voiced a multilingual, jubilant shout for "freedom" in Europe's languages, but rendered musically through the globally circulating sounds of the United States.

"Europe" (December 1990)

Before 1989, Albania tolerated no rock or guitar groups. State institutions owned drumkits and electric instruments, which only participants in professional ensembles or approved extracurricular student groups could access, and RTSH did not broadcast contemporary western rock groups. By the late 1980s, however, young people in Tirana increasingly listened to foreign radio broadcasts clandestinely. A founder of one early guitar group told me he listened to Yugoslav radio stations because he perceived RTSH broadcasts as "endlessly, endlessly, endlessly stuffed with ideologisms!" (interview, Saimir Braho, 21 April 2010). One listener, who graduated from a Tirana high school in 1988, told me he listened to Hit Parade on Italian radio. In his circle of friends, "everyone was interested in western music":

It was not something public, though, but something very intimate [*intime*]. This is what drew me to it, you know, it was something that you could do with a few close friends together, wherever, at the lake [outside Tirana] or at a friend's house, in private. (p.c., 4 December 2009)

Though this student had friends "from the *bllok*" who owned western albums, he just listened to the radio. "It was simply your society [*shoqëri*]," he said, "nobody noticed if someone had a

²⁴ See Ryan 2011 on the cliché that "African-American" music is often read as indexical of freedom. This is not a notion I encountered in Tirana.

parent in a high position or not” (ibid.).

By 1989, groups of young men began congregating at Tirana’s Grand Lake, a man-made park south of the University and Conservatory, for loosely organized, acoustic performances. Participants played covers of Italian, British, and American pop, though most were not Conservatory-trained musicians. Some had “day jobs,” while others formed part of a growing number of young people who chose not to work.²⁵ Many were students at the University or pupils at the LAJM, and those with the most up-to-date tastes were the children of political elites. The “intimate” spaces of 1980s rock gave rise to gendered structures of apolitical, male friendship existing outside the institutions of the state. While narratives on these young male musicians sometimes portray them as subversives, several key figures were Liceu or Conservatory students. In 1989, RTSH organizers recruited members of this segment to participate in the Festival of Song: clarinet student Redon Makashi, guitarist Bledar Sejko, and vocalist Morena Reka performed a trio composed by Pirro Çako, the son of Artist of the People Gaqo Çako.²⁶

In December 1990, guitar group Tingulli i Zjarrtë (The Fiery Sound) presented the Festival of Song’s first rock composition, “Jemi emri i vet’ jetës” (We are the name of life itself) with a text by RTSH editor Zhuljana Jorganxhiu. Fronted by vocalist and songwriter Elton Deda,

25 My understanding of “the lake guys” and early rock is indebted to conversations and, in some cases, interviews, with Aleksandër Gjoka, Redon Makashi, Etmond Mancaku, Elinor Butka, and Saimir Braho.

26 In 1990-1, cultural bureaucrats in Tirana staged a number of “picnics” at the Lake for students, with live music, food, and games. The incorporation of rockers into these events, and at select programs on RTSH, may be read as part of an attempt to “colonize” rockers’ space (cf. my argument in Chapter Four). Nicholas Pano writes, “To combat the obvious disaffection of Albania’s youth, a significant social element in a country where in 1989 the average age of the population was twenty-seven, [Ramiz] Alia sought to increase recreational facilities and activities for this group and to ease regulations on clothing and hair styles. He also sanctioned special radio programming (including Western popular music)[...]” (1997:300).

the high school-age son of long-time RTSH elite Ferdinand Deda, and composed of LAJM and Conservatory students, the group had previously performed light rock-inspired arrangements of classical music on state broadcasts.²⁷ RTSH organizers also invited other “instrumental-vocal ensembles,” though with the exception of Tingulli i Zjarrtë, these predominantly male, guitar-oriented rock bands performed compositions by established professional song composers.²⁸ Broadcast in the days following the state’s official recognition of the Democratic Party, the Twenty-Ninth Festival of Song’s backing tracks were pre-recorded for the first time—ostensibly for technical reasons, though pre-recording also ensured spontaneous sentiments expressed on stage would not be possible.²⁹

Tingulli i Zjarrtë’s choreography and presentation had never before been seen on the Festival’s stage. Deda wore his hair long and, dressed in matching blue jeans and jean jacket, tapped a sneaker-shod foot while the rest of the band stood alongside him on stage. During an instrumental break and guitar solo, the electric guitarists and bassist stepped to the front of the stage in arena-rock formation, guitar necks jutting out in studied synchronicity. Presented from the point of view of “the youth,” Jorgaxhiu’s lyric was about the youthful unity presented by this ensemble. Throughout, Deda sang in the first-person plural, speaking (through Jorgaxhiu’s words, of course) for all “youth”:

27 See, for example, Tingulli i Zjarrtë’s 1988 performance on RTSH program *Koha në pentagramin tim*, available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=TR8AT_oCbIA, last accessed 2 August 2012.

28 *Ansambël vokal-instrumental*, a term borrowed from Soviet usage, was also used in Yugoslavia.

29 Festivals, however, were also not broadcast live. If any participant had made a political statement, only the spectators in the hall would have heard, and the speech could then have been edited before broadcast. I have not been able to find out what the original reasons were for pre-recording.

Don't ask what year it was when we were born/We felt grown-up so fast
And with the daring of our age, our heart speaks: 'We want those beautiful things, o life!'

The final setting of the refrain, following a guitar solo, presented a sing-a-long anthem:

We! We are the name of life itself/We! We seek the future today,
We! We to our fatherland like no one else/We! We will bring it to Europe.

Like Jorganxhiu's statements on "freedom" described in the previous section, "Jemi emri..." linked the project of rapprochement with "Europe" to the power of "youth" in discursive and musical terms. Using a musical form legible to those young, urban listeners in Tirana oriented toward western-style arena rock, this composition seemed to propose sonic and discursive notions of "Europe" as a potential rallying cry for the collective "we" of students or young people more generally.³⁰ Yet at the same time, the collaboration paired RTSH's longstanding lyrics' editor with the son of one of Tirana's most elite musicians.³¹ Moreover, this explicitly political statement did not necessarily resonate with the often apolitical musical statements of other young "rockers," who proliferated throughout Tirana and other large cities over the following year.³² Indeed, the dynastic claims of certain families, whether the

30 Cf. Tighe 2010:380 on the postsocialist semantics of the first-person plural in Eastern Europe.

31 Yet many individuals today believe "rockers" to have been persecuted. As Youtube user rami100perqindjezus incorrectly commented on the clip of "Jemi emri..." which received a prize at the 1990 Festival of Song, "Eh, I remember this song was on the festival's first night, and they pulled it quick, because it was unacceptable for the festival of that time, but I liked this song a lot, and cried when they disqualified it, unfairly, without letting it enter into competition at all" (posted 5 January 2012).

32 In contrast, Saimir Braho and Altin Goci formed Ritfolk, initially named "Friendship and Love," the previous spring. Braho had begun guitar lessons as a child at the local Pioneers' House, and later resumed playing in high school. A cousin, early rocker and then-LAJM student, Bledar Sejko, taught Braho a few songs ("Beatles, Rolling Stones, some foreign songs") and a handful of chords. "It wasn't that it was any big thing to do with art ... [or] that I had any big desire to express myself artistically" (interview, 21 April 2010). Among classmates, Braho joked to me, he became "famous" as the class guitarist, and soon formed a band with Goci, who played

Jorganxhius, Lekas, or Dedas, to working modernist-national symbolic materials at the national level may even have disqualified such statements as distastefully politicized in the eyes of some reform-minded or anti-establishment young people. Ervin Hatibi, for example, an anti-conformist author who penned texts for several early guitar groups, has written about a children's performance for communist elites he was barred from in the early 1980s. Why, he asked retrospectively, had it been upsetting to not participate, even when he knew he would have been expected to "line up with all those little girls rolling around like little curtsying dolls singing with shouts the songs of the party and of happiness, with texts by Jorgo Papingji and Zhuljana Jorganxhiu, under the strong, sweat-making lights, under the explosion of decorations in red and red" (Hatibi 2005:22).

"Slavery" (August to December 1991)

Beginning in 1991, "Europe" became an increasingly attractive, seemingly realistic, proposition for thousands of impoverished, rural citizens. On 7 August 1991, approximately twenty-thousand people commandeered a boat docked at Albania's southern port of Saranda and ordered its captain to sail for Italy. Officials at the Italian port city of Bari initially refused to allow the arrivals to disembark, though the ship's lack of water and food soon obligated a change of course. The crisis escalated as aid workers relocated passengers to La Vittoria Sports Stadium. When Italian officials began using military planes and ferries to forcibly repatriate Albanians,

harmonica. A Palace of Culture employee friendly with students (a "free spirit type, someone who kind of lived in [his] own world") invited the group to use state-owned electric instruments in one of the Palace's rehearsal studios. "Friendship and Love" played a handful of school dances but, according to Braho, viewed themselves as apolitical. The group was rehearsing on 20 February 1991 as crowds overwhelmed Hoxha's statue just a hundred yards away: "[W]e discussed with one another, 'Whoa, they pulled down the statue!' People were running here and there, and then we returned to our rehearsal" (ibid.).

skirmishes erupted, and thousands of Albanians barricaded themselves inside the stadium.³³ To these economic migrants, offers of 50,000 lira (then approximately 40 U.S. Dollars), clothing, and return passage surely seemed ridiculous.

The winning composition at 1991's Festival of Song, "Jon," presented by composer Ardit Gjebrea in collaboration with lyricist Zhuljana Jorganxhiu, rendered these events in affectively moving terms for urban listeners. Positioned between the past and present, Gjebrea's career exemplified the opportunities and challenges of the political transition for elites in Tirana's transitional field. In the 1970s, Gjebrea competed in local children's singing competitions in Shkodra, later relocating to Tirana for advanced studies in composition. Political connections benefited the composer. His father-in-law, Besnik Bekteshi, was an APL elite who arranged for Gjebrea to study in Italy, making him the first composer to receive permission to go abroad since the 1962 class's abrupt return from Moscow. At the 1991 Festival, audience members discomfited Gjebrea by recognizing this political connection: "[A]s soon as I entered the stage, some people [seated] by the stage began to clap and call [out the well-known slogan], 'Party-Enver, we are ready anytime' [*Parti-Enver, jemi gati kurdoherë*] ...but I continued to sing, and at the end everyone exploded in applause."³⁴ Gjebrea's political biography thus potentially tainted

33 As described by the Council of Europe's official report, "All of Europe witnessed the dramatic scenes, captured on television news, showing the Albanians being expelled by Italian officials. Although repatriation was legally justified, the way in which the operation was conducted was problematic. The vast majority of the Albanians, according to their accounts of the exodus, fled their country because they felt "buried alive" there. They explained that when the news spread like wildfire that it was possible to leave Albania, lorries were seized in the ensuing rush, ships commandeered, and their crews forced to set sail. It was a form of mass psychosis." Report from Council of Europe (27 January 1992), retrieved from assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/WorkingDocs/Doc92/EDOC6555.htm, accessed 2 August 2012.

34 Ardit Gjebrea, interview with Iva Tico. "Arditi, Ja ku është" [Ardit, There he is]. *Revista KLAN*, 2004. Retrieved from www.revistaklan.com/material.php?id=154, 2 August 2012.

the legitimacy of his representations of the political transition. Were audience members mock-cheering with “Party-Enver” chants, which by December 1991 might have signaled derision? Were hard-liners demonstrating loyalty to the government?³⁵

A member of an urban bourgeoisie oriented toward Italian culture, Gjebrea’s studies anointed him with a great deal of postsocialist cultural capital, while his unique circulations to and from Italy formed a privileged parallel to those of desperate refugees. Jorganxhiu’s lyric in “Jon” framed migrants’ experiences of transition through a series of heightened, elevated metaphors. *Jon* is the Albanian-language rendering of “Ionian Sea,” one of the two waters separating Albania from Italy, but also the given name of Gjebrea’s then-newborn son. The first verse of “Jon” invoked the desperate scenes broadcast to viewers in Tirana and in western Europe, linking the Baby Jon’s birth to ships crossing the Ionian Sea:

You came to me at a desperate time, with pain. Jon.
When the ships like phantasms through a sea of adventures screamed: ‘*Libertá!*’³⁶

This opening verse, intoned *sotto voce*, in a half-spoken, half-whispered recitative, portrayed the refugees’ plight through heightened poetic imagery, evoking a romantic, stylized scene of a crossing coterminous with Baby Jon’s birth. Imagining migrants to scream the word “freedom”—in Italian, of course—Gjebrea softened the potential impact of the onomatopoeic word *klithnin* (translated above as screamed, alt. ‘howled’) to a whisper. His portrayal contrasted with APL depictions of economic migrants, whether Alia’s pronouncements (“they are not Albania”) or intellectuals’ concerns about the social background of these so-called “hooligans” or “uncultured” people. In the following verse, the narrator addressed the newborn, explaining “Today you are the same as all the world’s infants [...] / But you will grow up to understand that

35 In interviews, Gjebrea himself has favored the latter interpretation, though the applause was ambiguous.

36 Lyrics from ‘Jon’ derive from <http://www.arditgjebrea.info/>.

destinies are not the same.” The lyric implied that the transition to pluralism would enable postsocialist children equal access to opportunities, though one’s Albanian nationality potentially held one back. Gjebrea’s narrator closed with a warning to his child:

Take this blessing from me, o untroubled soul,
Listen to the word I have to say:
They have gold-plated chains to offer you, but once again you will be a slave.

Though portraying Albania’s Marxist-Leninist political-economic system, and especially its restrictions on movement, as a form of slavery, Gjebrea’s lyric nevertheless warned against a future life outside Albania as portending new forms of oppression: the “slavery” of economic migration.

“Jon” framed a particular moment of transition for an urban audience to whom the change was a deeply ambiguous proposition. “Democracy” and “freedom,” whether Albanian *liri* or Italian *libertá*, promised mobility, modernity, and access to “Europe.” As a *kantautor*, or ‘song-author,’ a term derived from the Italian *cantautore*, Gjebrea with his vocal performance indexed a prime figure of an Italian musical modernity attractive to music intellectuals: the enlightened (male) vocalist, commenting on society through song. Italian musician Gazebo (Paul Mazzolini) recorded and mixed “Jon,” which further granted Gjebrea a measure of pop legitimacy, even while raising potentially troubling issues about postsocialist cultural autonomy for Tirana’s vanguardist cultural elites. A one-hit-wonder, teen idol in the 1980s, Mazzolini recalled meeting Gjebrea as follows: “I met him one day in my studio as he came along with an Albanian violinist who came for a session. He asked me if I would arrange a song for him as he wanted to perform at the Tirana Song contest Festival. He had no money. But was so funny I decided to help him out. Now he is by far the best well known singer and performer in his

country. For me it is like if I did another [hit like my 1983 disco smash] ‘I Like Chopin!’”³⁷ In a state-socialist Tirana insulated from “Europe,” light song had been a genre associated with the artistic expression of one’s creative individuality. Would postsocialist song, even a composition articulating the intelligentsia’s deepest fears about political transition, aspire to comparison with a banal, English-language Italo-disco novelty dance hit from 1983? Finally, “Jon” framed migrants’ acts of mass economic exodus for urban listeners. A translation of the experience of the nation’s subalterns, Gjebrea’s composition aestheticized economic desperation as a foil to his personal fears as a father and ambivalence as a member of a social stratum who, when leaving Tirana, did so by airplane, not clinging to the side of a cargo ship.

‘Eating halva for communism’

Snapshots of emergent ways of enunciating “transition,” the light song performances described above provided contested, overlapping spaces for the potential remodeling of Albania’s political-economic order in musical and discursive terms. Yet the proposal of a new symbolic imaginary around which a politics of pluralism might be organized also posed challenges to Tirana’s music field. Though integrated into a system obligating nothing but the production of ideological statements, whether on the nation, Party, “new person,” or society, few intellectuals had experience forging novel political statements. Tentative moves to render transition audible in terms of “freedom”/“slavery” and “Europe” thus indicate how would-be “Democrats,” as several of the individuals described above began to view themselves, strategically articulated themselves to the related transnational projects of liberal democracy and European integration on which a postsocialist politics came to be organized.

37 Paul Mazzolini, interview with Zeljko Vujkovic. “Gazebo.” *The World of Italo-Disco Interviews*. Retrieved from <http://www.italo-interviews.com/Gazebo.html>, 1 August 2012.

The extent to which ordinary listeners viewed RTSH broadcasts as a source for legitimate, moral, ethical, or even relevant symbols of change, however, remains unclear. In ethnographically derived work on economic migrants, sociologist Nicolas Mai has described Italian television as a kind of “periscope” offering late socialism’s viewers “access to radically different ways of being, having, and behaving” (2001:178-83). Mai asserts elsewhere (with co-author King) that “[b]y turning their desiring gazes away from the official, moralized, naturalized mediascape, Albanian people started disembodying themselves from the regime’s authoritarian libinal economy which denied them existence as individual desiring subjects” (King and Mai 2008:57). Could RTSH function as a legitimate resource for visions of democratic transition?

The emergence of notions of freedom and Europe more specifically articulated to the opposition Democratic Party’s program for nonsocialist governance. In May 1990, among several articles calling for rethinking tenets of society, heart surgeon and former Party Secretary Sali Berisha had published a call to rethink the role of the intellectual in society as follows:

Most importantly, the intellectual has profession at [his] essence. Without this essence, he would simply be a craftsman [*zanatçi*], but not an intellectual. The necessary nourishment for [this] essence’s training and development, as opposed to the essence itself, is the same for all intellectuals, independent of their profession. This nourishment should contain knowledge [*njohuri*] of primitive man’s initial, naïve drawings, the writings of Ablūs, the Hubble telescope, the works of Homer, Shakespeare, [Fyodor] Dostoevsky, [Ernest] Hemingway, [Gabriel García] Marquez, [Ismail] Kadare, the discoveries of Archimedes, the theory of relativity, the discoveries of [Theodor] Schwann, [Charles] Darwin, [Hendrik] Lorentz, the symphonies of Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, the song of [Lucio] Pavarotti, but also of Whitney Houston, the interpretations of [Charlie] Chaplin, the bravery of [Neil] Armstrong, the vaccines, hormones, light, laser, nuclear fission, genes, protein synthesis. (Berisha, quoted in Klosi and Rama 1991:19)

Expanding the intellectual’s purview, Berisha posited an eclectic notion of “general culture” with reference points in the modern sciences, western world classics, and even contemporary pop music. As a statement of program, Berisha’s call refuted cultural isolationism, but also the protectionism that had governed a cultural field for close to two decades. Both isolationism and

protectionism had underwritten Tirana's mode of cultural production, but a nonsocialist program would instead come to be based on intellectuals' fluency with the nonlocal, its programmatic knowledge based on claims about "Europe."

Other voices, however, were disqualified from making programmatic statements on the future of the nation-state. In 1990, composer and RTSH employee Spartak Tili in collaboration with young poet Elvana Hysaj submitted a composition titled "Lule e vetmuar" (The solitary flower):

This was a play on words, something that intellectuals used to talk about—the flower was Albania. Intellectuals would talk about how it seemed as if Albania was, out of all the eastern bloc countries, allowed to become some sort of experiment in socialism, cut off from everyone and everything. Right? So this is the 'solitary flower.' A flower that blooms, opens, and then rots. Well the general director at that time calls me into his office, and says, 'What is this, a solitary flower?' He was an advanced person, someone you could speak freely with, so I said, 'You know, Comrade Marash, the flower is a symbol, right, a metaphor, but it could be changed if necessary.' But he was an advanced person, closed his ears to the conversation, turned a blind eye to the song, and it went through, without any problem. (P.c., Spartak Tili, 27 January 2010)

If the "blossoming flower" previously served as an optimistic symbol of progress and beauty, in Tili's piece the lyricist Hysaj had repurposed it to comment on socialism's broken promise. In musical terms, the composition refused all pretensions to narrative. The sparse instrumentation of electric guitar, bass, synthesizer, drumkit, percussion, and alto saxophone contributed no dynamic contrasts. Its plodding electric bassline, with insistent, repetitive dotted-eighth-sixteenth rhythm, formed an unchanging backdrop to the singers' almost lifeless interpretation.

As a musical statement of program, Tili's composition could not but fail. An intellectual might register, and perhaps even eulogize, the past, but without making claims about a nonsocialist future, such a statement could not be part of postsocialism's program. Productions about "communism" began to proliferate in the 1990s, but within a particular democratic politics that disbarred meditations like "Lule e vetmuar" in favor of concrete testimony about the evils of

the dictatorship. In her memoir about 1991-2, an early Democratic Party supporter, Meri Lalaj, related her surprise at the scene broadcast from the district town of Kruja by the newly pro-Democratic state media following its March 1992 election. Footage of this museum-city showed scenes of people gathering next to an imposing equestrian statue of the fifteenth-century national hero, Skanderbeg, as they cooked *halva* on open fires. “For me,” she writes, “this is very original: ‘to eat halva for communism’ (*t’i hash hallvën komunizmit*). When someone dies, this is what you do [to mourn them at their funeral]” (Lalaj 1996:129). Despite claims to the contrary, “communism” did not remain buried for long. In some ways, early postsocialism’s projects of democratization thus proved no less hegemonic than before, especially in targeting the past as a site for the production of knowledge about the present. In order to render the present audibly “Democratic,” Tirana’s new postsocialist elites soon began to musically register both the emancipation of democracy as well as the bondage of socialism.

SOUNDING DEMOCRACY

With the 1992 ascension of the Democratic Party to power, would-be Democrats found their musical projects of democratization linked to a program of political-economic reform at the national level. Held nine months after the Democrats’ March victory, the Thirty-First Festival of Song anointed with its first prize “Pesha e fatit” (Destiny’s weight), a Democratic vision of the transition to “democracy.” The composition began with an orchestral swell leading into a plaintive piano accompaniment, as Conservatory-trained vocalist Viktor Tahiraj, the composition’s “Narrator,” alluded to the events of the previous year in his opening lines: “O my spirit, don't succumb to despair/Our dreams are not drowned in this turbulent sea, in this endless misery.” Continuing in a wistful, minor mode, the illuminist Narrator addressed the audience with poetic tropes on light and darkness, oblique references to nineteenth-century nationalist poet

Naim Frashëri's "The Words of the Candle" (*Fjalët e qiririt*). "Let us make just a bit of light," Tahiraj intoned, "however little, in this long darkness." Suddenly, a "Migrant" character, voiced by rocker Aleksandër Gjoka, interjected, reprising the Narrator's musical material, albeit with a choppy, pointedly unpoetic text:

Mother, I'm far, missing you burns! Though I've money I'm poor, 'cuz I'm not near you!
I feel it, sleep is killing me, I see your eyes in dreams, and I scream like a madman.

An intellectualist passion play, "Pesha e fatit" signaled a novel musical alliance between self-described "Democrats" and rockers. Composer Osman Mula, the nephew of elite baritone Avni Mula and a veteran director at RTSH, had with lyricist Alqi Boshnjaku long been associated with a "liberal" faction in the cultural field.³⁸ For Mula, the performance of Gjoka sounded a "natural" break from socialist-era aesthetics. A nonconformist during late socialism who fronted several of Albania's first rock groups, Gjoka thus voiced for Mula an emancipated, authentic form of social commentary on the postsocialist condition, which the composer described to me as a "purity" and a "necessity" for 1990s listeners (interview, 16 February 2010). At the same time, "Pesha e fatit" rendered a postsocialist condition audible in a manner congruent with a particular politics of transition. The composition's most emotionally charged moments were set for the rocker Gjoka's Migrant, but Tahiraj's Narrator explicated and framed this Migrant's experience by invoking the cultured verse of one of the nation-state's guiding "lights," *rilindasit* Naim Frashëri. The trio concluded in unison lines, making explicit the earlier passing reference

38 As a saxophonist in the early 1970s, Mula performed at the Student Song Festivals preceding the Eleventh Festival of Song, and throughout the 1980s had championed initiatives to incorporate European elements into TVSH productions. In 1990, Mula broke rank with RTSH colleagues to support the DP's calls for pluralism. Boshnjaku had a different trajectory. While employed at the Army Estrada, he composed several texts for late 1980s Festival compositions. In 1991, he assembled and "managed" one of the first rock ensembles in Tirana, Arting, later collaborating with a number of groups formed by likeminded entrepreneurs as an editor at RTSH.

to the poet: “Hey you who holds such sadness, no, no no! Don't stop, fight! Make light like a Naim, and live!” “For the first time,” Narrator and Migrant exclaimed in turn during the coda, “our eyes saw the light.”

In the postsocialist eastern bloc, political elites cultivated a number of techniques to simultaneously produce and register the “freedom” of democracy, whether through “shock therapy” economic policy and property privatization that administered a “free market economy,” or through political pluralism and constitutional reform that managed the “transparency” of democratic elections. In national politics, a juridical-ethical “lustration” apparatus intended to “normalize” or “de-communize” formerly state-socialist societies purged newly elected parliaments of socialist-era politicians and bureaucrats, retroactively defined “crimes” committed before 1989, and created mechanisms to identify and punish those deemed “complicit” with these crimes.³⁹ The term “lustration” connotes a spiritual and moral purification, the “performance of an expiatory rite,” but it also suggests a secondary meaning “to review, inspect, or look around.”⁴⁰ As a heuristic device, “lustration” thus generates several potential questions: How might techniques for rendering the socialist period legible—“bringing the past to light”—be imbricated in Democratic governance? How might one not only see the past’s “truth,” but also retrospectively “hear,” “voice,” or “sound” Democracy? For Tirana’s first Democrats, light music and the Festival of Song provided a means to produce knowledge about both “the

39 Much literature discusses the shortcomings and abuses engendered by “lustration” campaigns. See Stan 2011 and Killingsworth 2010 for recent reviews of perspectives, as well as Horne 2009, Szczerbiak 2002, and Letki 2002 for individual case studies of lustration’s relationship to postsocialist governments.

40 See the entry “lustration.” Retrieved from *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1989, <http://dictionary.oed.com/>, accessed 10 August 2012.

dictatorship” (*diktatura*) as well as pluralism (*pluralizëm*), and in the process, to articulate themselves to a nonsocialist program of government.

Re-sounding Communism

In the months leading up to the March 1992 elections, the Democratic Party promoted a platform of “national reconciliation.” Once elected, however, President Sali Berisha quickly abandoned this policy to begin courting anticommunist constituencies. A prominent political prisoner and author, Pjetër Arbnori, was elected chair to the Parliament, and “persecuted ones” (*të përkëtuarit*), former internees or political prisoners, increasingly influenced national politics. The government’s shift to the right culminated in a 1995 “Genocide Law” that, ostensibly intended to identify and punish former communist elites for socialist-era crimes, effectively eliminated the staunchest of President Berisha’s political opponents. In broad terms, efforts to recognize who had been a “communist,” as well as individuals complicit with the prior regime, entailed the retrospective definition of positions, actions, and duties that constituted culpability. Revision in many cases proved difficult. Berisha himself, for example, had been a former APL District Secretary; his critics have long charged the Democratic Party with incorporating former Sigurimi agents into its ranks (e.g., Rama 2012).⁴¹ In consolidating power, the Democratic Party-led government increasingly relied on RTSH as its unofficial organ and, in a move evocative of the socialist period, replaced even employees without explicitly “communist” ties with individuals holding “correct”—after 1992, meaning “democratic” and

41 Shinasi Rama, a political scientist and early member of the political opposition, has been the most vocal proponent of the charges. In his most recent book (2012), Rama describes how the Democratic Party has shaped discourse about its early years into “fairytale.”

“anticommunist”—credentials.⁴² The replacement of personnel paralleled the purging of “communist” pieces from broadcast. In 1992, an archivist “checked” each archival recording for “ideological” content, marking in pencil the words “not for transmission” on those with “politicisms.”⁴³

Early on, anti-APL groups began framing musicians and artists considered to have been “persecuted by the dictatorship” as bearing particularly truthful testimony about the nature of “communism.” In 1991, the Republican Party, a recently legalized, minor opposition party, invited singers Besnik Taraneshi, Justina Aliaj, and Sherif Merdani to perform at a rally-concert. Each vocalist had been denounced following socialist-era Festival of Song performances: Taraneshi in 1964, and Aliaj and Merdani in 1973. In a widely circulated interview conducted after the concert, each responded at length to two questions: ‘Were you political?’, and ‘What was the cause of your denunciation?’ (Zhillia 1991:6). Each denied having “been political”: ‘For me,’ one stated, ‘life was song, friends, poetry’; another asked rhetorically, ‘Can politics occupy the time of a young man who leaves one dance early to go to the next?!’ (ibid.). The singers each framed their denunciations as inscrutable or arbitrary:

42 This process has recurred with each government change. During my fieldwork, some friends working in media told me they feared being fired each election. This occurs not just at media institutions, but all state institutions and many private ones.

43 Postsocialist Radio-Television tightly controls its archival material with “communist” themes. Toward the end of my fieldwork, for example, I made several official requests for pieces with “ideological content” that a director denied. Yet RTSH also maintains close, informal links with private media figures, who receive recordings and archival film through non-official means for use in their own historical programming, which must be clearly anticommunist. Nevertheless, a handful of recordings about Enver Hoxha circulate in bootleg copies in stores, though it is unclear how they were leaked. During one listening session in the archives, an archivist pulled a carton she had marked “a v[ery] v[ery] beautiful song...Enver” [*një këngë sh sh bukur... Enver*], meaning that while the music was very beautiful, the text concerned Hoxha and thus could not be transmitted

Besnik Taraneshi: A dialect pronunciation. ... I pronounced [my text] in [a regional] dialect, which is where my mother is from.

Sherif Merdani: [T]hey told me I would not participate [in a song festival] because I tapped my foot to the rhythm of the music.

Justina Aliaj: They did not give me any reason. Even after I asked, they told me that I had completely white [i.e., without political faults] documents, and again, nobody could give a correct answer.... (ibid.:6-7)

In framing individual instances of repression as triggered by such seemingly insignificant practices, vocalists provided eyewitness testimony to both the irrationality of “the dictatorship” and the apolitical intentions of popular musicians. Other Democrats, however, began to portray socialist-era Festivals of Song as indices of the state’s calculated, illiberal politics, a “Barometer of the Dictatorship”:

The Festival was a mirror of the day's politics in the field of the arts and morality, of liberalization or repression. To where was Vaçe Zela's skirt [hem] raised or lowered, how low was Liljana Kondakçiu's décolletage, how would Luan Zhegu or Tonin Tërshana hold the microphone. Would they allow Agim Krajka to have a rhythmic song this year, which always would take second or third prize. (Çili 1995:43)

Here musicians implicitly resisted an unstated socialist aesthetic, whether manifested in their rising hemlines, or affinity for up-tempo songs, and naturally gravitated toward western fashions and style. Similarly, in a 1996 essay included in a short history of the Festival produced by RTSH organizers, musicologist Fatmir Hysi situated light music within a chronology stretching to the 1920s and 1930s, a period “when progressive forces ... aspired to a democracy of the western kind with all the accessories of its culture” (Ciko et al. 1996:5).⁴⁴ “Their interruption of almost a half century, at first because of the war and later on account of the communist

44 For the Thirty-Fifth Festival of Song (1996), organizers assembled a booklet on the Festival's history, which Zhani Ciko conceived (*ideoi*) and poet Agim Doçi edited, in collaboration with musicologist Fatmir Hysi. The album included an essay (see below), responses from participants to the question “What has the festival been for you?”, a list of twenty “golden songs” (eleven from 1962 to 1972, and eight from 1987 to 1995), a list of previous winning songs, and several pages of photographs depicting Festival participants. The album’s portrait of the Festival privileged a 1960s “golden age,” as well as the post-1992 “democracy,” both periods framed as freer from political interference than the post-1972 period.

usurpation of Albanian life,” the musicologist concluded, “prevented the creation of a stable national tradition.”

Critics consistently constructed the Festival as a site of contestation between “east” and “west.” In Hysi’s extended narrative, the first early socialist-era Festivals “demonstrate[d] a special affinity for Italian, French, and to a certain extent British song, showing in this way a clear Mediterranean sensibility,” though soon the “systematic pressure of official orientations, or of the schematic prolet-art of the masses” succeeded in “deform[ing] the European aspiration of Albanian light song” (ibid.:8-9). The Festival’s schizophrenic profile, Hysi claimed, reflected that of the nation’s psychology:

For almost thirty years of its life, the Festival survived between a dual existence with an artificial dimension: the propagandistic and cerebral on the one hand, and the more essential one, which was [its] aspirations to freedom and contemporary civilization on the other [...]. Everybody saw in the Festival something from his [sic] life and, in this sense, [the Festival] remains a double face of that which we lived, what we suffered, and what we won together in these 35 years. Naturally, it is a dual face, enthusiastic and fatal, fragile and arrogant, sincere and provoking, but it is nevertheless our face.... (Ibid.:5)

An expression of the essential dualism immanent to both social life and the individual listener’s person, the socialist-era Festival thus offered a potential site for covert resistance, a “Trojan horse” portending “suicide for the regime” (Ciko et al. 1996; Avni Mula, quoted in Çili 1995:40).

Framed as extending itself over inconsequential micro-practices, such as a tapped foot, a mispronunciation, or stage movement, the “dictatorship” came to be constructed as having infiltrated essentially anticommunist artists, who had been obliged to mask their “true” inner feelings. Anticommunist intellectuals heavily promoted the notion that “communism” had driven potential revolt deep within individuals’ souls, as in the following exemplary anecdote often

repeated by vocalist Sherif Merdani.⁴⁵ In 1979, an earthquake shook the region near the jail where the vocalist was being held. Inmates scattered, but when guards rounded them up, two were missing. Merdani and an old, sickly man had not stirred from their cells. The frail man was too senile to react, according to the singer's account, and he, too lost in the sounds of western pop music only he could hear pulsating in his head (*Diela Shqiptare*, aired 7 February 2010 on TV KLAN).⁴⁶

Democrats aestheticized the internal location of a “hidden dissidence” marked by the rhythms of western music in several postsocialist compositions. At the 1992 Spring Festival, Merdani presented the first such song explicitly about “communism,” “Se kënduam 'Let it Be'” (Because we sang 'Let it Be').⁴⁷ This composition promoted the notion that Hoxha personally punished vocalists for “singing foreign songs,” in this case, the Beatles 1970 song “Let it Be.” Listeners and even some music intellectuals sometimes told me one could be imprisoned for singing foreign songs, often identifying Merdani as an example of a singer punished “for singing Beatles songs.” In 1995, singer-songwriter Françesk Radi, also denounced following the Eleventh Festival of Song, presented “Rock i burgut” (Prison rock), with a lyric by staunch anti-

45 Sherif Merdani, interview with Ardit Gjebrea and Balina Bodinaku. *E diela Shqiptare*. TV KLAN, 7 February 2010. I also heard Merdani relate this story on the TVSH-produced program *Historia nis këtu*, November 2010.

46 Consider also the following brief anecdote, prominently reported on in the press during the 1990s. In the 1960s, sculptor Janaq Paço had sought “to avoid Socialist Realism with neither fright nor hesitation” by creating nine large female nudes. Accused by a conservative opportunist of incorporating foreign, decadent influences into his work, Paço received a visit from armed guards who forced him to smash by his own hand the nine statues. “This event hurt, even shocked deeply Janaq, causing in him a condition of anguish. Together with his creations, it was as if his heart itself broke. Perhaps that ugliness caused his [later] Parkinson's disease” (Sokoli 2003:18-9).

47 The song, composed by former estrada star Luan Zhegu on a text by Zhuliana Jorganxhiu, received first prize. Merdani opens asking “whatever happened to youth?” closing with the lines “And in the sun each morning, yes!/I still have 'Let it Be' to sing!”

communist Agim Doçi. In this homage to a 1950s Elvis-style “rock and roll” that, though never popular in Albania, indexed rock's spirit for the author, Radi imagined a generic foreign sound generative of a space to which a person metaphorically imprisoned by communism might have escaped. Two female backup vocalists and a saxophone quartet wearing red tuxedos with black sunglasses, Albania's national colors, accompanied Radi on stage. Narrated from a young prisoner’s viewpoint, Doçi’s lyric linked rock to rebellion:

It is our revolutionary rock/How little freedom, how many guards;
Under rock's rhythm I lose myself/Freedom, I have so far away, but also so near to me.

In the night's darkness I seek freedom/Alone, without any friend;
The walls of granite, chains everywhere/The handcuffs clash under rock's rhythm. [...]

Though never imprisoned, Radi introduced the song by solemnly intoning the name of a notorious center for political prisoners, Burrel. Framed by Merdani as true testimony, and Radi as metaphor, foreign popular music in each instance was framed as emancipatory to communism’s “captives,” a means to access a universal, internal psychological condition of resistance.

While non-“persecuted” socialist-era intellectuals did not publicly react to these retrospective discoveries of a resistant agency, these former elites did voice opposition to specific postsocialist media policies and laws. Forced into early retirement with the closing or defunding of much of Albania’s cultural infrastructure, socialist-era actors and singers often found themselves, like most unemployed older citizens, struggling to survive on “ordinary” pensions. “Can it be thought,” an editorialist opined, “that the brilliant voice of Vaçe Zela should now have a pension equal to the salary of a completely ordinary [*rëndomtë*] person?”

No, she and her colleagues haven't been and are not ordinary. ... The accordance of some special pensions for special people would cost the state budget nothing. The only thing

lacking is the agreement of those who map and propose the laws [and] we feel this necessary to ensure our society is cultured and democratic.⁴⁸

Postsocialist copyright reform, which for the first time promised authors compensation, further disappointed composers and vocalists. Because compositions deemed to have “communist content” had been taken out of circulation, most individuals rarely received broadcast royalties.⁴⁹ Others accused RTSH of instituting unfair and potentially undemocratic policies, charging that a “disorganized selection” overseen by post-1992 “Democrats” installed at the Radio had resulted in the “abuse” and “erasure” of socialist-era recordings.⁵⁰ Former elites further criticized selection committees at the Festival of Song, which they claimed disqualified their submissions in favor of “European” or “modern” songs by non-professionals. Several socialist-era composers even claimed sabotage. In 1995, Aleksandër Peçi accused organizers of attempting to poach his singer with offers of cash and prizes; former district director Naim Gjoshi, who had charged

48 Quoted in *Drita*, 16 January 1994, “Different times, and their fates should be different”: “[Artist of the People] Mentor Xhemali could not find a way to buy [a pack of cheap local cigarettes] *Partizani*, but smokes ordinary rolled tobacco [like a rural person would]. What will become of [Meritorious Artist] Tinka Kurti and Vaçe Zela, with [poet] Fatos Arapi and [playwright] Dhimitër Xhuvani, with [actors] Kadri Roshi, Violeta Manushi, and their retired colleagues?” Words like *ordiner* and *rëndomtë* carry a class connotation, indicating an individual “without culture,” whether rural, ill-mannered, uneducated, or even (for women) promiscuous.

49 An employee at Radio Tirana told me that while policies were put in place to compensate individuals for the broadcast of their compositions, many of these compositions were not broadcast because of their “communist” lyrics. She remembered the conductor and longtime RTSH employee Ferdinand Deda coming in to complain that he had received a payment that would not cover a cup of coffee.

50 Tish Daija, interview in *Drita*, 23 January 1994: “Let the actor be paid for the films that continue to be shown on the screen, let the singer be compensated for those songs that continue to be given on radio and television and that, according to the logic of the market economy, would have been collected on cassettes and albums[...].”

several RTSH-employed composers with “selling prizes,” claimed he was subsequently blacklisted.⁵¹

Early postsocialism thus disenfranchised many former music elites, who nevertheless struggled to articulate responses to retrospective constructions of the past as “unfree,” aesthetically “deformed,” or non-European. On the one hand, former elites could not formulate support for socialist-era creative practices without appearing “archaic” or “communist.” Dominant discourses portrayed postsocialist light music, much of it following western styles such as rock, metal, R&B, or hip-hop, as “reflect[ing] with sensitivity the transition.”⁵² Arguing in favor of the Festival of Song’s globalization, what she termed “the process of the liberation of our music from the past’s narrow norms,” musicologist Zana Shuteriqi cautioned older composers that “it does not seem correct that we take for models of a national song some [socialist-era] songs of the folklorized character, and with such an archaic burden forestall the civilizing processes to which contemporary Albanian society aspires.” On the other hand, Democrats’ audible re-constructions of the past were able to proliferate largely without challenge from non-state administered audio-visual media. Between 1992 and 1996, the Democratic Party-led government blocked attempts to license private radio or television stations, enabling RTSH to maintain a monopoly in musical representations of the past and present.⁵³

For Festival organizers and RTSH employees, anticommunist representations nonetheless posed potential difficulties. If the past had been a “jail” depriving individuals of creative faculties, how could one account for the historical weight of the Festival, or listeners’

51 I discuss this at length in the next chapter.

52 This response from the Festival’s then-Artistic Director Zhani Ciko and the following one from Zana Shuteriqi came during a roundtable discussion (Kushta et al. 1994).

53 See Fischer 2010:428. Cf. Muka 2008.

attachments to socialist-era compositions and performances? The treatment of former star vocalists, composers, or lyricists proved especially challenging. At times, RTSH organizers awarded “career prizes” to vocalists who, though they interpreted songs with political content, had not created them. The songs these vocalists were known for, however, in many cases were no longer broadcast due to their “politicisms.”⁵⁴ Finally, Festival organizers occasionally came up against hard limits as to how the past might be represented. Following the broadcast of the 1996 Festival of Song, for example, organizers broadcast a satirical montage of socialist-era footage depicting light song stars singing among sheep, in rolling green fields, and on tractors. Intended as a send-up of the politicized, anti-western content of “communist” aesthetics, the clip sparked outrage among viewers, and prompted an official apology from RTSH.⁵⁵

Registering Pluralism

Projects to retrospectively sound “communism” complemented moves to audibly register the progress and normalcy of democratic pluralism. Pro-Democrat intellectuals initially framed political pluralism and a market economy as “a return to a Moral life,” a turning away from a

54 This disproportionately impacted socialist-era composers, who according to the 1993 law received royalties based on how many minutes were broadcast on RTSH. Composers of texted works, which necessarily contained political material that would not be broadcast, received almost no royalties. This total boycott extended in some cases until the founding of private radios. One of the most popular radio programs in the late 1990s was put on by Miron Kotani, a Conservatory student and son of composer Vladimir Kotani. Titled “Songs of the Century,” it broadcast the “greatest hits” of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s in elaborate countdown shows (interview, Miron Kotani, 11 June 2010).

55 See “Pasfestivali injoron këngëtarët e 35 viteve të shkuara” [The afterfestival program ignores the singers of the past 35 years]. *Shekulli*, 20 December 1996, 6. “Singers, who for decades in a row interpreted on the festivals’ stage, were ignored [during the actual concerts], and then saw themselves among wheat and fruit, among the bleating of sheep. Liljana Kondakçiu, Tonin Tërshana, Afërdita Zonja, singers who sang those songs, which once were appropriate to the times, were made the object of ugly humor.”

system that had “made everything go against nature.”⁵⁶ Composer and studio producer Alfred Kaçinari, employed in RTSH’s editorial office during the 1990s, described socialism to me as “a completely worthless, completely abnormal laboratory for music” (interview, 3 June 2010). For Kaçinari’s cohort of Albania’s first composer-producers, a protectionist cultural program had denied musicians opportunities to remain up-to-date with global pop developments, fostering the emergence of a “deformed” popular music that sounded nothing like genres in Europe and the United States. These sentiments, however, were bound to a broader political program not simply to abandon “communism,” but to effect the nation-state’s return to “Europe,” whether in diplomatic, legal, or aesthetic terms.

Democrats sought to “modernize” light music through the incorporation of select elements of Euro-American popular music practice. Trained in composition, Kaçinari and like-minded composer-producers viewed themselves as accomplishing this through their early adoption of sampling and recording technologies. Assigned in 1990 to the Army Ensemble, Kaçinari used this position to requisition a 16-track Yamaha synthesizer. Following this “first contact with advanced technology,” the composer then worked in Italy in order to accumulate capital for the hardware (*paisjet*, lit. ‘devices’ or ‘equipment’) that comprised his own first, rudimentary recording studio (interview, 22 February 2010). Another of Tirana’s earliest composer-producers, Edmond Zhulali purchased a sequencing synthesizer in 1993. To give me a sense of the “psychological side” of the difficulties in procuring equipment, he explained how he funded his first “real” studio:

In December 1995, I went to work two months in Switzerland, to do music. Well, [the

56 These examples derive from two articles published in *Drita* during March 1993: 'Let's return to a normal life. As quick as possible! Literature is not written by all, nor is it read by all!', by writer Faruk Myrtaj; and 'Towards Europe, but not through its sewage pipes', by director Rikard Ljarja.

mostly Kosovar] Albanians there customarily pay tips, and in two months I made a lot of money not from a salary, but from tips. I made a lot, but this unfortunately was not for me—I was only there because of ... economic problems—but the music was ordinary, raki-drinking [music], and I worked for only two months. I couldn't take it in psychological terms. I bought a 24 channel mixer, analog, very good; bought a hard disk recorder from America, the first in Albania; [and] an effects processor, which was also very good at that time.... (Interview, 5 February 2010)

Composer-producers viewed recording technology as a means to break with a “communist” compositional aesthetic. According to Kaçinari, “socialist realism as a method was zero, damaging ... [it] mis-educated people—it was like telling schoolchildren that one plus one equaled thirty-one” (interview, 22 February 2010). For Zhulali, recording technology was a “necessity”: “we [once] joked, you can have a whole orchestra in your home, you don't need to get musicians together and have rehearsals. Of course, it is understood that the level is not that of live musicians, but in the initial [economic] conditions of the 1990s, technology gave us possibilities” (interview, 5 February 2010).

Composer-producers' adoption of recording technology enabled them to produce tracks that closely approximated the contemporary production values of western pop, R&B, hip-hop, or rock that they aspired to as indexical of a potential postsocialist modernity. Beginning at the Thirtieth Festival in 1991, organizers had used pre-recorded backing track over which singers lip-synched on stage. Performances *me superpozim*, or playback, initially ensured vocalists would not improvise live political statements. Postsocialist Festival directors, however, continued using backing tracks even as socialist-era elites condemned playback for enabling “amateurs” to participate in the Festival.⁵⁷ Playback, in necessitating pre-recorded, synthesized productions, also made obsolescent one of the music field's primary socialist-era symbols of

⁵⁷ In reality, the use of backing tracks arose in part through the new availability of recording technology in Albania in tandem with the RTSH's diminished technical capacity to broadcast the western-style, electronic tracks singers and producers began to favor.

modernity: the RTSH Symphony Orchestra. The Orchestra, however, could not simply be banished from the Festival stage. Throughout the early 1990s, organizers had musicians pantomime parts on stage in concert dress, which often posed an odd counterpoint to rock groups and singers themselves lip-synching to tracks without string sounds.

Productions created by composer-producers challenged deeply held compositional values concerned with formal development, one's ability to identify and incorporate folkloric material, and the personal expression of an artistic individuality. Previously, composers' musical enactment of field-specific standards of professionalism was integral to claims enabling compositions to be broadcast by state media. For composer-producers holding the technological means of access to the Festival, now both sequencers and practical studio knowledge, compositions incorporating folk elements or "elevated" devices were distasteful. Songs composed and produced by this cohort instead foregrounded synthesized production values, as in RTSH-employed composer-producer Shpëtim Saraçi's 1994 presentation "Të sotmen jeto" (Live for today). A production typical of Saraçi, "Të sotmen..." prominently featured a synth-bell melody line, live electric guitar, drum machine beat, and a synthesized string wash behind the vocals during the verse and refrain. Unamplified members of the RTSH Orchestra, seated in darkness at the back of the stage, gamely aped parts along to the recording. The upbeat "sheen" of Saraçi's production paralleled the forward-looking optimism of lyricist Alqi Boshnjaku's text. "Don't be disappointed by the yesterday that's gone," instructed vocalist Mira Konçi in the refrain, "Enjoy today! Seek the future! Live for today!" Considered one of Tirana's most stylish women in the 1990s, Konçi appeared as always with make-up, jewelry, and a fashionably contemporary ensemble—here, a white pantsuit.

For elites steeped in socialist-era professional-aesthetic discourses, the Festival's incorporation of non-local musical styles posed a potential challenge to careers and reputations. Yet older critics did not necessarily dismiss out of hand all "modern" compositions. Reviewing the 1994 Festival of Song, for example, composer Shpëtim Kushta lauded "Të sotmen jeto!" for exemplifying "an equilibrium between two extreme creative tastes: on the one hand, the narrative romantic (anachronistic) song ... and the other extreme, the screaming song, great noise, a vulgar, amateurish imitation of the European consumer song" (Kushta 1995:3).

It also avoided a false 'modernism' [often claimed] allegedly under the guise of [having] a European spirit. To be a song with a European spirit, it first should be original, professional, to have an original 'passport.' In this way, it takes an [Albanian] 'diplomatic' passport even as it walks through Europe. And Saraçi's song has these qualities. (Ibid.)

Unlike compositions that drew on hip-hop, rock, metal, or dance sounds, pieces like "Të sotmen..." were legible in so-called "professional" terms for local commentators. In part, Saraçi's compositions avoided a "false" modernity because of the composer-producer's reputation as a consummate professional among his former Conservatory professors, including Kushta. By demonstrating his "professionalism" through training in art music and skill as a pianist, Saraçi and his works were distinguished for local elites who may have had difficulty finding the language to describe and evaluate light songs that did not conform to art music-derived compositional discourse. At the same time, the kinds of global sounds Saraçi became known for adopting, especially up-tempo pop and power ballads, were commensurate with local aesthetic standards stressing lyricism and formal development.

Socialist-era elites' concerns about light music's "passport" notwithstanding, organizers promoted the Festival of Song as indexical of pluralism in terms of genre and participants. Previously, field-specific compositional ideals of periodic construction and narrative form, or

interpretational ones favoring control, discipline, and calculation, were iconic of each Festival's very structure. From carefully balanced *tematika* to choreographed set lists, a December Festival broadcast symmetry redolent of stability and order. In December 1992, this organic unity disintegrated with organizers' selection of 51 compositions—far more than the usual thirty or so, and including many acts performing western genres. Further, RTSH invited several Kosovar Albanian participants⁵⁸ and rock groups from Tirana and other large towns,⁵⁹ while few elites and no “privileged ones” submitted songs.⁶⁰ The inclusion of these new participants also heralded a policy toward the promotion of stylistic pluralism as, for the first time, heavy metal, hip-hop, R&B, and even reggae-influenced compositions came to predominate and mark a newly schizophrenic field (cf. Feld 1996).

For Tirana-based Festival organizers, the participation of Albanian-speaking artists from

58 Well-known songwriter Armend Rexhapagiqi, dressed fashionably in a yellow blazer and accompanied by two backing singers—one wearing a Madonna-style PVC dress with gartered black stockings—performed a pop song with synchronized dance steps. Other Kosovar Albanians used the Festival's platform for political statements: songwriter Ilir Shaqiri's composition “Mos ma gjuaj diellin me gur” (Don't throw rocks at the sun), performed by young singer Adelina Ismajli, as well as composer Xhevdet Gashi and lyricist Arif Demillo's “Zemra e plagosur” (The wounded heart), performed by actor and singer Sabri Fejzullahu, both commented on contemporary politics. I discuss the latter song below.

59 While carefully selected guitar groups performed “outside of competition” (*jashtë konkurrimit*) the previous two years on special programs “for new ones” (*për të rinjtë*), in 1992 a dozen guitar-based metal and hard rock groups participated. The Icebreakers (*Akullthyesit*), *Artinq*, the Sons of the Sea (*Djemtë e Detit*), and *Shook* (referring to the English word “Shock”) presented original compositions, while rock vocalists from other groups, such as Aleksandër Gjoka of X Group (*Grupi X*), performed songs by Tirana composers.

60 Exceptions included light song composer Vladimir Kotani, Conservatory professor Shpëtim Kushta, and Artist of the People Avni Mula, who participated with a song bearing the English-language title “Happy Day.” RTSH employees oriented toward light music also participated, including young editors Shpëtim Saraçi and Markeljan Kapedani, and longtime music editor Spartak Tili and TVSH director Osman Mula. Organizers also included a handful of non-elite district culture house directors or songwriters, some of whom had participated previously at lower profile national events, including the debut of Valentin Veizi, Berat's district house director, and Shirli Polena, a young singer-songwriter from Korça.

beyond the state's borders signaled pluralist progress:

For me there's been a great joy these past 2-3 years that we have been able, at last, to give the festival *mbarëshqiptar* dimensions. This has made us understand what the Albanian beyond the political borders of Albania and in the world creates. Before, we lacked this information and there is a great drama between Albanian creators and artists. [...] This year, participation, or this "geography" of authors, widened. Besides Albanians from Kosova, Macedonia, from the Arbëreshë of Italy that have been in the past 2-3 festivals as well, we have authors from America, Germany, and so on. The national identity of song, I believe, is being realized through the editions of the festival.... (Artistic Director Zhani Ciko, quoted in Slata 2004:68)

In Tirana, the participation of such artists served a performative function in signaling change. For Kosovar Albanians in particular, however, the Festival's stage represented a means to assert membership in an Albanian nation. Before 1992, the Festivals of Song across borders had provided Albanians in the former Yugoslavia a powerful vehicle for a sense of pan-national belonging. For many, participation in the Festival was the culmination, according to vocalist Mihrije Braha's words, of "a dream...just to hold the microphone at RTSH's studios."⁶¹

Organizers nevertheless viewed participants from beyond the nation-state's borders with a measure of ambivalence, using the term *mbarëkombëtar* to describe the geographically enlarged Festival. *Mbarëkombëtar*, meaning 'all-national,' signaled a contrast with *kombëtar*, simply 'national.' While Tirana's intellectuals had been weaving intricate webs of discourses on "national" music during the socialist period, Albanian-speaking intellectuals in Yugoslav republics or a western European diaspora had cultivated a more pragmatic sense of "the nation" as a symbol around which individuals might experience solidarity (cf. Hollinger 2006). Inflected by decades of institutionalized discrimination, the nationalism cultivated by Albanians in former Yugoslavia seemed too overt or raw to many Tirana elites. One composer, for example, described Kosovar Albanians to me as being nationalist (*nacionalist*) in a way he found "frightening" (p.c.,

61 Mihrije Braha, roundtable interview with Haxhi Dauti, Albërie Hadërgjonaj, Alma Bektashi, and Zhani Ciko. *Historia nis këtu*. TVSH, April 2011.

January 2010).

At the same time, Albanians from outside Albania played a key role in importing non-local genres, especially dance and hip-hop, at the early 1990s Festivals. To western-oriented composer-producers, Kosovar producers posed potentially stiff competition. Having lived under Yugoslavia's relaxed cultural policies, Kosovars were more likely to have firsthand experience with rock, pop, and hip-hop genres, as well as the business acumen and capital lacking in Tirana. Yet Tirana's composer-producers viewed Kosovar competitors as having technical studio skills, but lacking "professionalism." Composer-producer Edmond Zhulali, for example, described the influence of Kosovars on his work as follows:

Yes, we had links to some composers, Enis Presheva, Xhevdet Gashi, Naim Krasniqi, who did good work like we did. They had openings to the world, got to go there to the west, to buy [studio equipment and musical materials]. But my thought is this: that they, even today—to compare [us with them]—in some aspects [Kosovar studio productions] sound better ... [but] they are a bit more uneducated [*pashkolluar*]. A composer like me, Shpëtim [Saraçi], Fredi [Kaçinari], [Selim] Ishmaku, we really know this field, but also know symphonic music, while a segment of them are just for songs. This is our advantage, though they are more real and more concrete, more exact. (Interview, 5 February 2010)

In using left-handed compliments such as "real," "exact," or "concrete," Zhulali seemingly praised Kosovar producers' successful insertion of non-local genre markers into Albanian-language songs, which his cohort sought to emulate, while at the same time portraying them as less "professional." Indeed, Festival entries submitted by Albanians from the former Yugoslavia often outstripped Tirana-produced productions in terms of interpolating contemporary musical markers. Kosovar Albanian singer Adelina Ismajli's notorious 1996 performance "Zemrën nuk ta fal" (I don't spare your heart), produced by Tetovo-based producer Wirusi, featured hip-hop scratching, repetitive samples, and a driving, ostinato bassline, and during the live Festival performance, Ismajli performed synchronized steps with breakdancers. Wearing jeans, a t-shirt,

and a furry purple coat, Ismajli at one point left the stage, only to return in a sheer red dress over red undergarments.

These compositions and performances of Albanians from beyond the nation-state's borders often proved aesthetically illegible to Tirana-based critics ill-equipped to discuss the content of "modern" productions, especially those that featured political subjects.⁶² One of the first Kosovar Albanian Festival compositions, "Zemra e plagosur" (The wounded heart) presented a call for a "free Kosova" from the viewpoint of a refugee living "far away, on foreign ground." In a simple, straightforward lyric over verse-refrain accompaniment featuring a sampled northern Albanian two-stringed chordophone, *çifteli*, the narrator dreamt of a mother and father whom he left, and his patient "black-eyed" girl. The refrain mapped a postsocialist Albanian geography novel to Tirana elites: "Over there is Prishtina, and there is Rugova/O wounded heart, there is Kosova." Even sophisticated urban listeners in Albania did not know Fejzullahu, a well-regarded actor and prominent vocalist in Kosova, nor did they necessarily recognize the conceptual remapping accomplished by this refrain. Fejzullahu referenced Kosova's capital, Prishtina, as well as an ethnographic region, Rugova, that was also the surname of intellectual Ibrahim Rugova, then-head of the recently founded LDK (*Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës*, the Kosova Democratic League), which promoted non-violent opposition.

Though Fejzullahu's "Zemra e plagosur" shared key imagery with the winning song at the 1992 Festival, "Pesha e fatit"—a male narrator dreaming of family, a female mother-wife figure waiting at home—they contrasted in aesthetic terms. The concrete language voiced by Fejzullahu's "refugee," for example, differed fundamentally from the stylized poetic tropes of

62 In general, critics lacked the ability to address compositions about political or social issues. In 1995, Ardit Gjebrea presented the song 'I thuaj jo' (Tell him no), about sex trafficking and Albanian women working abroad as prostitutes. Çesk Zadeja's review described the musical composition in great detail, but without reference to the lyric or its subject matter.

lyricist Alqi Boshnjaku's characters in "Pesha e fatit," as did the former piece's listing of place names from the latter's impressionistic, metaphorical language. For Fejzullahu and his collaborators, the Festival of Song functioned as a much-needed outlet for political statements, as Kosovar Albanian employees had been expelled from Radio Prishtina the previous year. For the many Kosovar migrants living in western Europe, the metaphor of Kosova as a "wounded heart" or "wounded bride" no doubt resonated viscerally. At the same time, Boshnjaku and Mula's composition aestheticized for Tirana audiences the experience of migration in terms as stylized as Fejzullahu's vocal performance was raw.

Despite organizers' rhetoric of pluralist inclusion, participants from former Yugoslavia did not necessarily feel accepted as full members of a postsocialist Albanian nation. In a 1997 interview, one vocalist complained that organizers viewed them as "the Kosovars," implying that non-Tirana artists served a purely performative function.⁶³ More recently, Kosovar singers have boycotted the Festival of Song, complaining that they felt like invited guests rather than integral participants.⁶⁴ During the 1990s, only rarely were Kosovar Albanian singers recognized with prizes. When Kosova-born Albërie Hadërgjonaj received first-place in 1998, with a composition by former state estrada singer and Tirana-based politician Luan Zhegu, local critics accused jury members of "corruption" and cheating. Unnamed sources even claimed Hadërgjonaj had lip-synched at this Festival, the first to be performed live since 1989. Kosovar singers' misgivings about the fairness of the process were founded on the near-exclusive monopoly on prizes held by RTSH employees. Of fifteen first-, second-, and third-place compositions awarded prior to Hadërgjonaj's disputed success, eleven went to individuals with connections to RTSH, with the

63 Adelina Ismajli, magazine interview. "Adelina, fenomenale!" [Adelina, phenomenal!]. *Spektër*, August 2005, 6-9.

64 I discuss this further in the following Chapter 6; see footnote 53.

other four presented to Tirana-based composers. One Kosova-based singer, Alma Bektashi, in a duet with Tirana-based Aleksandër Gjoka, received a share of second place in 1994.⁶⁵ As participants increasingly leveled charges of fraud at organizers, the rhetoric of ‘freedom’ and pluralism thus came to seem hypocritical.

‘Freedom’ and Social Order

As Tirana’s first Democrats targeted popular music and the Festival of Song for democratization, a critical distinction emerged between “freedom as an ideal, as articulated in struggles against particular regimes of power,” and “freedom” as “a mode of organizing and regulation... a certain way of administering a population that depends upon the capacities of free individuals” (Rose 1999:64). The latter notion usefully points to how efforts both to resound the past and to register the present were not simply “natural” reactions to transition, but part of a strategic rationality productive of certain forms of social order and a particular kind of personhood. Indeed, post-1992 projects to promote a democratic program of governance came to depend on the promotion not only of a “free” and “European” Albania, but also necessarily on the remodeling of the past. As Democrats sought to render and broadcast the contours of democracy, they also participated in projects to frame the past as unfree, and socialist-era artists as fundamentally incapacitated by “communism.”

In this way, a particular kind of “free” subject, bearing a psychological interiority and universal agency, came to be fashioned in musical and discursive terms. At the same time, Tirana’s Democrats’ actions might not be understood as wholly uncalculated. For many young or middle-aged artists, the cultivation of a nonsocialist or democratic public persona proved necessary to gain employment in PD-administered state institutions or to avoid dismissal from a

⁶⁵ Bektashi herself had studied voice in Tirana for several years. Several Kosovar singers did win various awards for “Best Debut,” Best Look,” and so on.

previously held position. All individuals in Tirana's cultural field, however, also became obligated to recognize themselves in the light of a particular form of knowledge about "communism" and "democracy," and in so doing, to begin to locate themselves and their work within a nonsocialist political-economic order.

CONCLUSION: SOCIAL REPRODUCTION AFTER SOCIALISM

While Albanian state socialism required a far-reaching system of symbolic production to forge an always-contested measure of legitimacy, "democracy" initially found legitimation in the simple fact of its difference from "communism" (Tarifa and de Gaay Fortman 1998). In the heady days following the Democratic Party's ascension to power, a rhyme began circulating among supporters of President Berisha and his program for a free, European Albania:

O Sali, Sali Berisha,	O Sali, Sali Berisha,
Ti na m'sove me dy gishta!	You taught us the victory sign!
Me dy gishta heroike,	With heroic victory sign,
Rroft' Partia Demokratike!	Long live the Democratic Party!
Kur t'rrihem edhe pak	When I grow up,
Do të bëhem demokrat!	I want to become a democrat!

Within several years, however, the Democrats' coalition came to be increasingly viewed with suspicion by widespread segments of the population, and Berisha's government characterized by a "growing authoritarianism" (Tarifa 1998:216ff.). Despite an initial popular mandate to facilitate rapprochement with "Europe," by January 1997 the Democrats were on the verge of losing control of the country. Though electoral irregularities had long alarmed some observers, the prevailing belief that a "strong hand" was necessary in Albania had lent President Berisha a measure of international support. Yet in mixing authoritarian and democratic features, postsocialist Albania's democracy increasingly conformed to a hybrid regime-type sometimes termed "competitive authoritarianism," typified by marginally free elections, a weak legislature and judiciary, and a tenuous relationship between the media and the state (Levitsky and Way

2002:54-8). The imprisonment of political opponents, assaults on journalists critical of the government, and instances of voter disenfranchisement, strong-arm tactics widely seen as directed by Berisha's party, eroded popular support in several regions (see Fischer 2010:427-9).⁶⁶

If RTSH-produced media supported the Democrats' cultural programs to reframe communism and reconnect with Europe, it nevertheless faced stiff competition from foreign media. In the late 1990s, one ethnographer visited the northern district capital of Mirdita, an area where local families in the small mountainous town previously received RTSH's fuzzy signal only on clear days. Once relocated to a shanty-town outside Durrës following the post-1992 collapse of Mirdita's local economy, the residents were able to watch even foreign "adult" programs via newly imported satellite dishes. Both sexes of all ages, the ethnographer worried, "watched these programs like robots, occasionally laughing embarrassedly, but never apparently worried by the impressions the films might be making on their offspring. The explanation seems to be that what is on television is 'modern' and hence must be harmless" (de Waal 2005:235). Strictly sequestered at home, young girls in particular spent hours watching soap operas, turning on the television when they awoke and watching until the electricity failed (ibid.; cf. Ginsberg et al. 2002). During my first trip to Tirana in 2004-5, a twenty-five-year-old friend surprised me by reciting verbatim lyrics by Jim Morrison, the lead singer of the American rock band the Doors. With a just-so story typical of the 1990s, he claimed he had learned English largely by recording rock and metal songs from the radio, holding up a small tape recorder to the speakers, and then painstakingly transcribing song texts. He did not follow Albanian light music during this period,

66 Berisha's identification with the Party, leading to the DP's identification with northern Albanians, had provided initial ballast to an emerging political divide between northern and southern Albanians that socialist-era integrationist policies and secret police had previously managed, albeit at great expense of time and resources.

though he sometimes tuned in to see the Festival's foreign guest acts—"when they didn't cancel," he laughed—before promptly turning off the television.

As late as 1990, light song continued to provide potential signs by which citizens might have identified as national political subjects. To what extent, however, did popular music produced in Tirana after 1992 offer postsocialist listeners viable visions of themselves, whether as democrats, capitalists, cosmopolitans, Europeans, or some other category? A friend, *Alban, related the following joke, which circulated through his district middle school in the mid-1990s (fieldnotes, 4 December 2009). At the beginning of each school year, the teacher would ask her students what they wanted to be when they grew up. A beginning-of-term tradition held over from the socialist period, this exercise once served to introduce students to teachers—and provided the "dear pupils" an opportunity to demonstrate their bushy-tailed optimism about the People's Socialist Republic of Albania's bright future. And what did one hope to become in a postsocialist district town during the 1990s?

"What do you want to be when you grow up, Zana?" asked the teacher.

"I want to become a doctor," answered Zana.

"And what do you want to be when you grow up, Agron?" asked the teacher.

"I want to become a lawyer," answered Agron.

"And Beni, what do you want to be when you grow up?" asked the teacher.

"I want to be a refugee!" declared Beni.

In the mock-serious tone of a teacher, friends would ask one another, 'and Beni, what do you want to be when you grow up?', causing Alban and his classmates to double over with laughter. On returning home from abroad, Alban reported, so-called "refugees"—the economic migrants fuelling much of Albania's 1990s remittance economy—wore nice clothes and owned the latest cassettes.

CHAPTER SIX. FINDING EUROPE

In market economy conditions, the state's budget politics for culture must prioritize nonprofit institutions and activities such as opera theaters, symphonic orchestras, [and folk music] festivals.... The state must gradually cease support for spectacles and light music festivals, [beauty competitions for misses, and so on, [events] which can and should have private sponsors.

—*Musicologist Zana Shutëriqi, Remarks at the 2001 “Cultural Politics in Albania” Symposium Organized by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Sports, and Youth*¹

In December 2009, I arrived at a rehearsal for the 48th Festival of Song and exchanged greetings with an organizer, singer-songwriter Françesk Radi, and a composer, Klodian Qafoku. The owner of a private studio and a researcher at the state's folklore research institute, Qafoku had previously won the Festival and represented Albania at the 2007 Eurovision Song Contest with a composition based on a polyphonic folk song. The seventeen-year-old vocalist whom he selected in 2009, Dorina Garuci, a recent semi-finalist on a Pop Idol-style contest organized by a private media company, had not yet arrived. The previous summer, Qafoku had emailed Garuci a demo

¹ Quoted in Leka et al. 2001:218.

version of his 2009 submission “Sekreti i dashurisë” (The secret of love), an up-tempo Euro-dance number with an “oriental”-sounding breakdown just before the refrain’s final reprise. “Pop, just pure pop” the composer later explained to me (interview, June 2010). Garuci agreed to the collaboration, and Qafoku produced a final mix at his Tirana recording studio, which a blind commission convened by RTSH organizers accepted and programmed. Though the composer depends on this studio for income, euros did not exchange hands. Instead, RTSH offered a small honorarium well below established market rates.

While waiting for the rehearsal to begin, Qafoku nevertheless joked with Radi, gesturing to me and saying, “Do you know how he will title the book? Light music, but heavy profits [*përfitime të rënda*]!” The juxtaposition of the genre name “light” music with “heavy” profits baffled the older man, who interpreted him as meaning “serious consequences,” a plausible alternate meaning. “What, meaning people have been persecuted for this music?” Radi turned to me, “‘Serious’ in what sense?” I shrugged, indicating I did not understand the quip. “No, no, in the sense you make *this*,” Qafoku explained, rubbing his fingers together in the universal gesture for money.

In this chapter, I analyze how the emergence of a private music industry in Albania has facilitated the systemic penetration of capital into composers’ work and senses of artistic personhood.² Since 1997, new practices of collaboration, local distribution networks, private radio and television media, and digital recording technologies have reorganized the music field, obligating composers to find new techniques to conceptualize and navigate local market structures. Two key policies at the national level have inflected how composers cultivate

² This chapter examines the experiences of composers, a specific and limited subset of the postsocialist cultural field. In the interest of clarity, I use the term “composer” to refer to a group sharing particular characteristics: all graduated from Tirana’s Conservatory, many hold state jobs in the arts, and some operate private recording studios.

approaches to postsocialist light song production. First, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth, and Sports (hereafter, MTKRS) has identified popular culture as a sphere government cedes to the private sector as part of a more “natural” arrangement under capitalism.³ Second, a national politics of European Union (EU) integration has framed the nation-state’s future in terms of attaining membership in the “European family.” The MTKRS, for example, recently created a campaign publicizing Albania as “the new Mediterranean love,” while elite politics have centered on politicians’ visions for putting the nation on “the road to Europe,” shorthand for EU accession.⁴ In the sections below, I first describe how light music came to privatized during the late 1990s, followed by an analysis of how composers approach and manage privatized production. Finally, I consider how the Festival of Song, as a site policed by intellectuals and constructed as outside economic interests, nevertheless articulates composers to now-hegemonic political projects on the identity politics of Albania’s “European” future.

3 See the epigraph to this chapter, which I reproduce because it most closely reflects how the MTKRS has implemented budget policy toward light music. Other intellectuals, however, continue to demand popular music be “overseen” by competent state authorities. See Zhani Ciko in Leka et al. 2002:194ff. Cf. comments made by current AKVP director Sulejman Baltëza on the need for *turbofolk*, a pop-folk genre, to be “institutionalized” by composers who are “self-knowledgeable about art” [*të cilët janë të vetëdijshëm për artin*] (Vrapi 2012).

4 On the MTKRS campaign, see www.akt.gov.al/akt/item.php?id=92&lang=2. In 2009, both the Democratic Party and Socialist Party, borrowing recently elected United States President Barack Obama’s rhetoric, campaigned for “change” (*ndryshim*) with platforms centered on EU integration. Politicians and civil society representatives today interact with a far-reaching standards-creating integration apparatus premised on the notion that by making certain changes, the country may enter “the road to Europe.” Thus in the European Commission’s 2002 *Marrëveshjeve të Stabilizim Asocimit*, “the shared values and principles overseeing the relationships between the EU [and Albania] are defined,” including the creation of efficient governmental institutions, the development of democracy and human rights, as well as the encouragement of the free movement of goods and the development of a market economy (see ‘The Road To Europe: The European Union and the Western Balkans, available online at ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/financial_assistance/cards_publications/general_al.pdf, last accessed 27 July 2012). Cf. Walters and Haahr 2005 on “integration” practices and discourses in relation to neoliberal governmentality.

CAPTURING THE POSTSOCIALIST FIELD

By the late 1990s, Albanian capitalism had fully disarticulated the nation-state's diverse fields of cultural production. Many intellectuals struggled to adapt to political-economic conditions demanding the cultivation of an entrepreneurial sensibility.⁵ If previously composers had formed a rigorously homogeneous bloc cohered by standards of professional conduct and an aesthetic-social "duty" to the listener, the transition fragmented this compositional "body."⁶ The field-specific metaphors of violation and a body rent often proposed by my interlocutors paralleled a more general discourse about what came to be known as the "riots of '97" (*trazirat e '97-ës*). By 1996, a staggering number of Albanian households had invested remittances, savings, and sometimes even the profits from selling their homes in a series of investment and pyramid schemes.⁷ The fall of these schemes in the first months of 1997 led to the disintegration

5 Elez Biberaj writes, "Intellectuals were among the groups most adversely affected by the transition. Although they may not have had a passionate attachment to communism, the intellectuals were coopted as its strongest public supporters, and as a result enjoyed a privileged social position. The democratization process and the transition to a market economy left many intellectuals behind. Many lost their status and self-identity, as few could become entrepreneurs" (Biberaj 1998:212). This assessment accurately characterized socialist-era composers to a certain extent. One composer I interviewed in 2010 was about to lose his part-time job as a public school teacher because, he reported, an ambitious local Democrat had criticized him to the school board as "an old communist." Chuckling, he freely admitted this charge. A minority of composers have translated socialist-era contacts and anticommunist credentials into government positions.

6 To composer-intellectual Shpëtim Kushta, composers trained in the 1950s Soviet Union formed the "head" of the composers' group, and were the "fathers" of Albanian music. Kushta and his colleagues, trained in the 1960s by these fathers, were the "children" that formed the "body." The generation trained by these men during the 1970s and 1980s were, in turn, the "legs," or "grandsons." Calibrated to the socialist period, these mixed metaphors of patrilineal descent and body excise from the compositional field all individuals without Conservatory degrees as well as composers trained after 1991 (interview, 5 January 2010).

7 According to Smoki Musaraj's literature review (2011:105, f.n. 5), between one sixth and one half of Albania's population invested money in schemes. The Albanian case surpassed participation elsewhere in the eastern bloc, reaching an "unparalleled level of penetration into the fiber of everyday life" (Musaraj 2011:85). The Democratic Party-led government supported these schemes, and elites identified themselves with the largesse created through unsustainable

of public order. Rioters looted arms depots, anti-government forces erected a parallel administration in southern Albania, and the Democratic Party was forced to hand over power to the Socialists in emergency elections held later that year. Financial schemes' popularity, as well as the redistribution of capital they enabled, deeply affected the music field. The normalization of conspicuous consumption helped to legitimize an emergent capitalist ethos among the music field's would-be entrepreneurs, especially composers affiliated with RTSH.⁸ The redistribution of wealth allowed a handful of savvy businessmen to quickly amass large reserves of hard currency, some of which came to be invested in a handful of private media companies.

Each shift contributed in transforming a homogeneous compositional body structured by forms of aesthetic distinction to a diversified one suffused with capital and organized by business networks. The nature of the socialist era's cultural institutions and their near-total postsocialist disintegration further enabled a small cohort of composers employed at RTSH to monopolize an emergent privatized music field.⁹ Socialist-era organization provided a ready-made network of

returns even following warnings from international advisors. See Pettifers and Vickers 2009 chapter one for a summary account; also, Musaraj 2011:101-3. DP leader Sali Berisha's nickname at the height of the schemes' popularity was Sali-Bollëku [Sali-Bounty], though several months later angry crowds chanted "O Sali, o fajdexhi" [O Sali, o you usurer] (Musaraj 2011:101; Pettifer and Vickers 2009:9).

⁸ Newspaper reports on a 1995-6 recording and concert tour project by Ardit Gjebrea (*Projekt Jon*), for example, often celebrated the large sums of money he expended to record the group in Italy, equating Gjebrea's "investment" with patriotic sentiment (e.g., Sokol Balla's November 1997 article "Ardit Gjebrea: In Perfectum," *Revista KLAN*, 42-5). Gjebrea himself cultivated a public image of leisure and economic largesse. The 1996 clip "Makina e memorjes" (The car of memories), for example, almost advertised a specific, gendered postsocialist vision of "the good life": European cars and beach vacations with frolicking, swimsuit-clad girlfriends.

⁹ As one composer explained to me, "This generation finished school—boom!—right in 1990, 1991, and started working. They have had time to create these contacts with people from the beginning, when the revolution of the festival happened. This is when it all changed. It is not really that [elite composer-producer Alfred] Kaçinari worked at the Radio, you know, because look at [RTSH employee X]? Or [RTSH employee Y]? They work there, but what songs do they

music professionals that tended to centralize production. The RTSH recording studio, Albania's only space for producing songs into the early 1990s, had remained overseen by a small editorial office, while artistic commissions channeled the evaluation and programming of musical material to a handful of influential individuals. Early postsocialist policies barring private media broadcast licenses, the defunding of estrada and other performance ensembles, and aspiring entrepreneurs' lack of capital also concentrated musical production at RTSH. By 1997, the RTSH-organized Festival of Song thus remained the only state-funded event left largely intact, and Tirana's print journalists increasingly reported on its unseemly "privatization":

While all Albanian life is smothered by rising corruption, there is no way a festival can be saved from this thing, especially when at the head of a jury is a person who not a week ago won a political mandate with fixing and cheating [*dallavarë dhe mashtrime*]. After the organizers took prizes for themselves, they figured they'd leave some for the others: Festival Director, Adrian Hila, first prize; Artistic Director Alfred Kaçinari, best orchestration, festival stage designer, career prize; the Festival orchestra, a special prize; the omnipresent [Jorgo] Papingji (with four texts in the finale night, [so] if not one then the other would take a prize), two or three prizes; the conductor [Edmond] Zhulali, the best composer [award], and so on.¹⁰

To critics, RTSH-employed composers in effect "captured" Tirana's postsocialist music field by controlling access to the Festival of Song. Composer-producer Adrian Hila especially became a lightning rod for criticisms. After graduating from the Conservatory in the mid-1990s, Hila secured an editorial position at RTSH and directed the Festival between 1998 and 2001, winning twice during this period. As artistic director, Hila was criticized publicly for "selling songs": producing commissioned pieces for singers, whom he also assured prizes or placement in the Festival's final night. Vocalists would submit Hila's compositions under their own name,

have? No, it is that these guys *established* themselves during that time. I am young, so of course, I didn't have all of these contacts in the beginning" (p.c., 12 January 2010).

10 This quote is taken from an anonymous editorialist who criticized the Thirty-Ninth Festival of Song in the daily *Gazeta 55* (19 December 2001:20).

allowing the composer to profit from multiple commissions.¹¹ In 1998, the press first reported rumors Hila had “sold” a song to a well-known estrada star for 800 euro and pressured jury members to place her in the finals. The following year, a journalist termed Hila a *padron* (Ital. *padrone*, colloq. ‘Mafia boss’), naming him as a member of “the *nomenklatura* of Telebingo,” a lottery ticket game show hosted by Ardit Gjebrea.¹² Following the 2001 Festival, then-student composer and arranger Miron Kotani, the son of elite composer Vladimir Kotani, published a scathing article accusing Hila of composing eleven of the Festival’s twenty songs, which several singers further corroborated in the press (Kotani 2001).¹³

11 One 1990s organizer told me there had technically been no explicit rule against multiple submissions because no one had ever submitted more than one song. The adoption of a rule in 2000, however, initially did little to stem anonymous submissions. The biggest scandal involving Hila occurred in 1999 and had to do with allegations about his influence over the jury. On the final night of the Festival, the jury announced that vocalist Rovena Dilo had won with a composition by Alfred Kaçinari. The following morning, however, RTSH announced that the votes had been “incorrectly tallied.” Hila and his singer Aurela Gaçe were awarded first prize. Several individuals told me that a government official, and close personal friend of Hila’s, had intervened on his behalf.

12 See the 11 November 1999 edition of *Gazeta Shqiptare*, p. 19.

13 Tipped off by another disgruntled competitor, a newspaper journalist contacted several singers in 2001 after RTSH publicized the names of participating singers but not the composers or lyricists. Suspicions grew that the names were withheld so composers could submit multiple compositions. The journalist later reported the following scene from a Festival dress rehearsal: presenter Alban Dudushi, introducing newcomer Jonida Maliqi’s song, announced Hila’s name as the composer, lyricist, and orchestrator. Following a short debate among organizers, which was accidentally overheard in the hall, Dudushi returned to correct himself by naming Kosova-based musician Sami Piraj, whom Maliqi later claimed she had never met, as the composer. Maliqi asserted she did not “buy” the song, but also did not know who the true author was—though she suspected it was Hila: “It’s not the first time such things have happened. There’ve been years when this is the procedure in the festival, not only of these directors, but also prior ones, because maybe, for example, a composer might have done 2-3 songs, only in one song with X-singer he puts his name. The other songs he then sells and puts another name.” Jonida Maliqi, interview, “Nuk e njoh kompozitorin tim” [I don’t know my composer]. *Albania*, published 18 December 2001, 9.

RTSH-employed composers were able to accumulate economic capital without competition at the Festival of Song for several reasons. First, increased demand for Festival spots from first-time and non-professionalized singers began to overwhelm the capacity of RTSH's December and Spring Festivals. Though several early rock bands disbanded or emigrated in the mid-1990s, an emerging cohort of would-be vocalists holding the capital for commissions and seeking to promote themselves created competition for Festival spots.¹⁴ Second, the Festival's continued use of playback obligated participants to submit finished audio tracks, termed "orchestrations" (*orkestrimë*), rather than written scores. This had far-reaching implications for the organization of the postsocialist field. On the one hand, the increased availability of sampling keyboards, inexpensive digital recording hardware, and computers facilitated the extraction of capital by the RTSH-employed composer-producers who operated rudimentary recording studios. Because top composer-producers worked at the Radio and directed the Festivals of Song, they controlled access to the small but growing market of potential singer-clients. On the other hand, early composer-producers were able to form themselves into diffuse, capitalized networks, usually centered on strong individuals with powerful business and political

¹⁴ Demand first encouraged organizers to create an alternative festival composed of participants whom a commission had eliminated from consideration from the primary Festival in 1996. My predominantly male acquaintances often recalled this shift in gendered terms: "[Around the troubles of 1996-7,] all the members of these rock groups had to get jobs, had to work. Maybe they grew up now, I'm not sure. But after this point, all everyone wanted to see were Bleona Qereti and her chest, to see half-naked women—this became a huge selling point, all anyone wanted. It was all about sex and racy kinds of things on stage. [Laughing] The capitalism virus touched everyone!" (p.c., 15 October 2009). New, non-professionalized vocalists spurred debate especially among seasoned vocalists whom selection committees now sometimes ignored. In 1999, star vocalist Irma Libohova and her sister, Eranda, traveled overnight from Macedonia to complain in person when their Festival submissions were not selected. One complained to the reporting journalist, "without friends you can never get ahead. It looks like this is our fatal mistake and unforgivable naïveté. You can never express [your musical] values if you aren't playing the underground cards, which are oftentimes more powerful" (quoted in *Gazeta Shqiptare*, 11 November 1999).

connections. In local parlance, these networks are termed “clans” (*klanë*). No longer beholden to socialist-era notions of professional or artistic duty, entrepreneurs instead began to conceive of themselves and light song production according to notions of democracy, freedom, and market principles.

Private Media Access and Participation

Since 1999, events organized and broadcast by private media have proliferated. The creation of several televised “spectacles” (*spektakël*) and private song festivals, which enabled a much wider participation, have in effect “democratized” song. Private festivals *Kënga Magjike* (Magic Song, 1999-present), *TopFest* (2002-present); and *Mikrofondi i Artë* (The Golden Microphone, 2001-5), as well as Pop Idol-inspired singing contests *Ethët e së premtës mbrëma* (The Friday Night Fevers, 2003-8), *Gjeniu i Vogël* (The Little Genius, 2007-present), and *X-Factor* (2011-present), have gradually diffused song composition and production from RTSH to a network of private media, enabling a broad pool of potential performers to access media. As one shop-worn joke heard in Tirana puts it, ‘For a nation of four million, it seems like there are four million-and-one singers.’¹⁵ The selection process at private song festivals, according to several participants with whom I spoke, also facilitates access to televised broadcasts. As one aspiring singer-songwriter and private festival participant claimed, “you just show up and give them a disc, nothing more” (p.c., Çimi, 4 March 2010).¹⁶ Established singers with existing fan-

15 Çimi, a guitar student at the Conservatory, estimated that almost every student in his high school class in the northern district capital of Lezha auditioned for *Ethët e së premtës mbrëma*. He described it as a “kind of mania,” saying, “everyone wanted to be a star” (interview, 28 January 2010).

16 A man who sold cigarettes from a small cart outside my apartment told me he composed a song for his niece several years ago: “I made the song, and then made the compressed disc [i.e., master] and sent it in [to TopFest], and received no response. They said that it was “lost” [giving me a knowing look]. So I went back to my brother's studio—I didn't have my studio [i.e., a PC, MIDI keyboard, and microphone] at the time, made another disc, and this time my brother

bases participate in private festivals, but so do a larger number of unknown or aspiring vocalists with dreams of economic success. Indeed, access to local private media has made western-style pop stardom appear to be a viable option or pathway for young people.

In structural terms, the growth of private festivals has not simply facilitated access to the stage or television screen for aspiring singers, but has exponentially expanded the number of spaces available for the presentation of studio-produced orchestrations. While the Festival of Song averages between seventy and one hundred song submissions annually and programs between twenty and thirty songs, private festivals account for several times as many. Magic Song and TopFest, the two private festivals active during my fieldwork, alone accounted for almost nine times the thirty-odd compositions broadcast by the Festival of Song: at Magic Song, singers presented approximately sixty new compositions, while at TopFest, over two hundred. In addition to song festivals, established singers also commission song productions for music video clips (*klipë*) or as part of albums or singles' compilations, school-age singers commission productions for children's song festivals, and private media commission backing tracks for televised musical variety shows or singing competitions. In sum, if the total number of song compositions broadcast at the RTSH festivals during any one year in the mid-1990s totaled approximately sixty, split evenly between the Festival of Song and Spring Festival, today producers create many times this number.

If vocalists with the financial means to commission productions find few barriers to private festivals, not all composers have equal access. For composer-producers, festivals are often governed not only by artistic considerations, but also by business relationships, as some

brought it—he knew the boss (*shefi*). It was put in to the festival” (p.c., Adrian, 21 September 2009). Not all private festivals, however, are as open: Ardit Gjebrea emphasizes during broadcasts that Magic Song's compositions undergo a rigorous and transparent selection process with a commission, in part to distinguish his event from others.

individuals are allied with particular television channels. Magic Song, for example, is viewed by many observers as notoriously skewed toward a small “clan” of composer-producers. The numbers at the 2009 Festival seem to lend such charges a measure of credibility. Of the fifty-seven songs broadcast,¹⁷ four individuals produced twenty-five backing tracks and five composed twenty-four songs:

<u>Adrian Hila:</u>	6 compositions, 5 lyrics, 7 productions
<u>Florian Mumajesi:</u>	6 compositions, 3 lyrics, 5 productions
<u>Pirro Çako:</u>	5 compositions, 9 lyrics, 0 productions
<u>Florent Boshnjaku:</u>	5 compositions, 0 lyrics, 7 productions
<u>Shpëtim Saraçi:</u>	2 compositions, 0 lyrics, 6 productions
<i>Percentage of total:</i>	42% 30% 44%

Private festivals also function to advertise albums or compilations while “branding” private media companies. One parent company often owns the station on which a song is initially broadcast, but also the business interests that press, distribute, and sell albums. Immediately following festival finales, music stores have available for sale multi-volume CD sets, and the winning songs may also be included on vocalists’ albums or a record company’s seasonal compilation. The genres broadcast by a festival also brand private media channels. TopFest’s mix of alternative rock and hip-hop, for example, mirrors its parent company channel’s image as a “modern” and “independent” voice. If previously Festival of Song programs were dependent on the consensus of composers, the RTSH editorial staff, and artistic commissions, today, private festival programs depend on corporate branding, marketability, and the demands of commissioning singers. Detractors thus criticize private festivals as promoting fleeting “fashions,” disseminating a crush of “here today, but gone tomorrow” songs.¹⁸

17 Many more songs were certainly submitted, with rejected ones then possibly sent to other festivals.

18 One musicologist, describing to me how despite his criticisms of private festivals, he did not feel it necessary to polemicize them in public forums (i.e., in newspaper articles), explained,

From the viewpoint of singers or non-professionalized producers, a private model has “democratized” access to the music field. Theoretically, anyone able to marshal capital, whether personally or through corporate sponsorship, may participate in the field by commissioning a song, provided a producer agrees on collaboration and the fee. The nature of Tirana’s media companies cements this new structure: record companies (*shtëpia diskografike*) attached to private media companies do not identify talent, but facilitate financial relationships between previously successful artists and producers. In this way, even top composer-producers remain subordinated to singers. One composer, widely viewed by younger colleagues as a “taste-maker” who enjoyed relatively open access to private media, complained to me privately that when he has no projects scheduled he must “sit and wait, because if I approach a singer, I have to pay them” (p.c., February 2010).

This decentralized private model of musical production has not simply challenged a RTSH-centric one, but has created new forms of competition among composer-producers for singers. In democratizing access to media outlets, private festivals have fostered the emergence of a singers’ market, which in turn shapes relations among composers based on artistic reputation, singers’ perceptions about a composer’s connections to business networks, as well as extra-musical relationships. If grades of professional-aesthetic distinction immanent to the compositional field previously organized a hierarchy of composers jockeying for state resources, capital and so-called “clans” now condition composers’ ability to access a potentially lucrative commissions’ market. Competition under these conditions requires a set of skills very different from socialist-era ones, skills composers trained at the Conservatory often lack. Composers must

“Songs are created that serve the interests of those who direct these festivals, the mass media that put them on. These are the people with interests in them, not the critic” (p.c., 18 November 2009).

thus cultivate an entrepreneurial self in order to navigate the privatized field, which they do by forming an understanding of the capitalized “system” as well as finding ways to administer creative identities in the recording studio.

KNOWING THE FIELD

Outside or only partially incorporated into postsocialist popular song’s networks of private production, many composers charge the privatized festival model outlined in the previous section with encouraging unethical and professionally suspect practices. Socialist-era composers and recent Conservatory graduates complain most vociferously.¹⁹ For these individuals, the “music industry” encourages “anti-culture” (*antikultur*), which connotes a range of practices: the imitation or bald appropriation of foreign musical forms and genres; “selling” songs to untalented, lip-synching amateurs; or the “abuse” of folklore in vulgar or banal (*vulgar, banal*) compositions. The capitalist “system” itself is viewed as conducive to the creation of “music of the moment”: “fast music, just like fast food” (p.c., male singer, April 2010). A composer trained in the 1960s described contemporary songs to me as “deformations” that do not “sound Albanian” because they are “borrowed” or “stolen” from non-local sources (p.c., January 2010). To this particular composer, non-professionalized songwriters who operate recording studios are *këngëxhinj*, or “songsmiths,” a term coined by adding a Turkish suffix to create a pejorative. Female singers, a middle-aged male singer ungenerously (and falsely) related, are *rrugaçë* (“of the street,” meaning “whores”) (p.c., February 2010). Dismissively referred to as the “computer,”

19 Critiques revolving around socialist-era notions of professional distinction and artistic standards in part reflect the concerns of a particular segment of musicians and listeners whom, because my fieldwork focused on the Festival of Song, I met, interviewed, and in some cases befriended. Before 1990, the younger composers whom I knew would have been assigned to culture house positions in large district towns or elite positions in Tirana. A self-selected group invested in a conception of popular or light song as “Art,” as well as the Festival of Song as a national “institution” for professional music, my interlocutors formed the core of current Festivals’ participants.

the recording studios that contemporary composer-producers use to produce songs are viewed as something that “damages music” and creates “anti-values” (*antivlera*).

Those composer-producers attempting to navigate “the music industry” (*industria muzikore*) must thus come to terms with a privatized music field their peers describe as “chaotic” or “disorganized.”²⁰ An understanding of an essential difference between “composers” and “songwriters,” or studio producers without Conservatory training, inflects composer-producers’ approaches to private production. For the postsocialist standard-bearers of “culture and the arts,” the songwriter exemplifies the faults of privatized popular music production. At the time of my fieldwork, Tirana’s most sought after and successful non-professionalized studio producer was arguably Florian Mumajesi.²¹ Mumajesi operates a private studio and, with a keen musical ear and fine knowledge of international pop trends, is in constant demand among the most prominent singers in Albania and Kosova. A musical chameleon, Mumajesi is able to translate non-local pop, rock, dance, and hip-hop production values into his Albanian-language productions. He is also a fashionable young man, who puts himself and his own voice into collaborations. As “Flori,” he is a popular solo draw in Albania, Kosova, and the diaspora. To composers, however,

20 As Zhani Ciko put it, in an interview titled “Chaos in Music”: “I would prefer to compare [current popular music production] with the urban development in the main cities of our country. Just as there has been a great development, we could say a “boom” in the urban aspect and in technology, where there exists a bold vision, the same thing is happening in music as well. Today there is a “boom” of festivals and activities of all kinds. And just as there is an urban confusion, so too is there a creative confusion” (*Gazeta Tema*, June 2006).

21 Formerly a member of an early Albanian hip hop group, The Dreams, in 2004 Mumajesi began creating pop songs and studio arrangements while employed at a private radio station. His compositions for then-girlfriend Soni Malaj between 2006-7 established Mumajesi as a hook-oriented lyricist and author; more recent compositions for singer Elvana Gjata cemented this reputation. During the first four months of my fieldwork, Mumajesi had ubiquitous hits with a Kosovar Albanian rapper based in Paris, a student from Tirana studying in Florence, and singers based in both Tirana and Prishtina, contacts my interlocutors lack. While I use ‘songwriter’ to describe him and others for the sake of clarity, these individuals sometimes refer to themselves as “producer,” *producent*.

Mumajesi was not a “true” composer because he neither “knows notes” (*nuk di nota*) nor graduated from the state conservatory. Yet self-trained songwriters who have a flair for self-promotion and contacts among a transnational group of Albanian-speaking urban cosmopolitans have broken composers’ monopoly on song production. Faced with competition from such better-connected, more up-to-date producers, composers must conceptualize and navigate a field they perceive as antithetical to several professional principles, albeit in ways that structure their future opportunities.

The Postsocialist Song Composer

*Dritan graduated from the Conservatory with a degree in composition in the early 2000s.²² His father had been a culture house director in a small town several hours drive from Tirana during the socialist period, and in the early 1990s relocated the family to the capital in search of work. Until several years ago, Dritan had not composed songs. He described himself to me as “uninterested” in contemporary pop music, and several of his classmates related, independent of one another, that he had a reputation as the most promising composer of art music in his class. I first met Dritan in 2004 through a mutual friend at the state-administered cultural agency where he worked. On arriving in Tirana for my dissertation fieldwork, I called to arrange a visit to the small recording studio he had recently opened in a storefront space on the outskirts of the capital.

When I arrived at the studio, Dritan was waiting to hear the 2009 Magic Song program due to be announced that day. Hopeful but not overly optimistic, the composer felt his singer, a nineteen-year-old university student, did not have “much of a voice.” This in turn had obligated

22 Interlocutors who criticized other composers or businesses with whom they work often requested anonymity. In some instances, I have modified minor identifying details to preserve this anonymity. Information for this section derives from an April 2010 interview and several more informal meetings between September 2009 and June 2010.

him to rework her vocals too much with software to correct pitch and rhythm. Dritan played several excerpts from recent studio projects: song compositions entered in festivals, a theme he had composed and produced for a television program, and remixes from his senior Conservatory thesis—film score cues, which he hoped would secure him future television gigs. As we chatted, the university student’s mother texted several times seeking Magic Song updates. Finally, Dritan googled “*kenga magjike participants*” and, quickly scanning the list of singers, failed to find his vocalist’s name. He resignedly tapped out a text message to the stage mother and shut off his phone. Before I could inquire further, two older men knocked at the door, and Dritan winked. Vocalists and his father’s district friends, the men had paid him a total of 1000 euro to write, record, and produce a *kolazh* (medley) of folk songs from their hometown. We stepped outside to smoke a cigarette while they listened to the final mix. Dritan explained how he had synthesized all of the parts except for a live *fyell* (end-blown folk flute) and clarinet, which he had subcontracted to two former Conservatory classmates for 300 euro. Now that the singers had approved the mix, Dritan would hand over the master to a distribution company. As I prepared to leave, Dritan’s wife arrived and, angry about Magic Song, told me I should expose how “these contests are often fixed, that people pay money—often other composers steal foreign songs, too, and just put in Albanian[-language texts].” Dritan disagreed, arguing “That doesn't happen with this contest. My singer was just weak.” I left with the sense Dritan was primarily concerned with what rejection indicated about his relationship with festival organizers. The song, after all, was “weak,” and the composer had collected a good fee from the student’s mother.

More lucrative than one-off festival entries, Dritan explained in a later meeting, are substantial commissions from established singers for albums or singles. In late 2009, *Lejla, a moderately successful singer known for light music and commercial pop-folk, called Dritan to

request a ballad. As a headliner at concerts in the Albanian diaspora, Lejla commands up to seven thousand euros per appearance. Dritan had met the singer through a mutual acquaintance, the wife of a friend, and I had the sense this commission was something of a coup for him. After preparing several demos, Dritan invited Lejla to his studio and they agreed on a piece. The company with which Lejla had a contractual agreement, *Star Records, released two thousand euros for the commission of the light song and two arranged folk songs. These three productions, along with previously recorded songs she had presented at prior music festivals and with music videos, were to form the core of an upcoming album. Because Dritan composed and recorded the light song, and produced the two folk songs, he received the entire sum: one thousand euros earmarked for the light song, and one thousand for the two arranged folk songs. For the light song, Dritan himself commissioned a text from the well-known lyricist *Besnik, a man in his late fifties, requesting a “love song.” Though Besnik returned with a text on a social theme, the trafficking of women, Dritan accepted the text and paid Besnik two hundred euros. After approving a demo of the song and text, Lejla recorded her vocals, the only live sound on the track, in Dritan’s small recording studio, and then took the master copy to Star Records. Because the song would become the title track of her next album, Star Records paid a Macedonian video production company three thousand euros to produce a music video clip featuring Lejla in a series of formal dresses. A private television station owned by the parent company of Star Records immediately inserted the clip into heavy rotation, while another company pressed and distributed the album to a Star Records-owned chain of stores for sale.

Tirana’s recording industry structured Dritan’s opportunities in several ways. First, technological factors conditioned Dritan’s ability to participate in the music industry. To buy and import studio hardware using the online auction site eBay and the shipping company DHL, he

initially outlaid significant capital—no easy task, he told me, with an annual salary of less than 300 euro. He then learned how to use this equipment, relying on internet resources and advice from contacts he knew through the Conservatory. Professional training, in “harmony, history, the usual things,” had little prepared him for digital recording and entrepreneurship. Dritan did not, however, find the learning curve for editing and mixing software to be steep, as one may visually edit waveforms or create loops. Second, local intellectual property laws provide authors little protection, so the production of a single song, whether a hit or a flop, brings its producer only a lump sum without the possibility for royalties. The composer must constantly seek collaborators for commissions, cultivating and maintaining a web of personal relationships dependent not only on compositional skills, but also on business relationships. Finally, top producers earn more not by finding many collaborators, but by charging each singer more per production. Yet to attract vocalists who will pay large fees, the composer must forge a reputation for composing hits, or, in some cases, making a song a hit by exploiting personal connections to the promotional machinery of private media. Conservatory-trained composers must build a reputation over time, and often without access to private media networks.

Interests

Composers feel obligated to cultivate entrepreneurial strategies while at the same time accommodating a notion of song-as-art that necessitates rejecting the indiscriminate penetration of capital into their work. In part, composers manage their entrepreneurial selves by finding ways to come to terms with their subordinate position in the “industry.” Young composers occupy a spectrum of positions vis-à-vis the recording industry, ranging from idealists who maintain close ties to older composers, hold state positions, and participate only in the Festival of Song, to realists, who operate studios, have less investment in state jobs or work in private media, and

participate in all the festivals. While the former engage in polemics over the state of the industry, whether publishing exposés in the press or complaining privately in cafés, the latter demonstrate a more pragmatic approach by developing ways of perceiving the private industry in order to position themselves within it.

Composers employ a heterodox language to describe how they negotiate what they perceive to be the potentially polluting effects of entrepreneurship on creativity. One composer-producer, however, offered me his exceptionally coherent, personal terminology. According to *Genti, singers and composers are obligated to conceptualize opportunities based on a calculus determined by financial motives he termed “interests” (*interesa*). In a narrow sense, to “have an interest” (*ka interes*) refers to one’s ability to profit financially from a song. For Genti, a singer’s interests seemed clear: the promotion of oneself through music video clips, compilation CDs, television appearances, or song contests. This “promotion” (*promovim*) in turn facilitates personal appearances at Tirana clubs, coastal resorts during the summer, or on a diaspora concert circuit.²³ Because these live or lip-synched performances comprise singers’ primary source of income, they have a strong interest in promoting themselves by cultivating a fan base, especially through video clips. A “scandalous” (i.e., provocative) clip accompanying a hit song, for example, together with a new romantic relationship or conspicuous shopping habits, might keep a singer’s name in Tirana’s gossip pages for weeks.

A composer’s calculus differs from that of a singer, which Genti illustrated with the example of the music video clip. He would not commission a video for a song he produced because “there is no interest” (*s’ka interes*) for him: the outlay of funds would promote the

23 On singers’ interests, see recently published estimates on the costs of clothing, clips, hair and makeup, transportation, and houses available at <http://www.panorama.com.al/panorama-plus/sa-harxhuan-dhe-sa-fituan-kengetaret-shqiptare-gjate-vitit-2011/> (last accessed 20 July 2012).

singer, but he would not profit. Lax copyright enforcement limits a composer's ability to profit directly from a song, compromising his or her intellectual property rights. Since 1992, the Albanian parliament has legislated a series of laws, often simply translated into Albanian from western sources, and has allowed the formation of a performing rights organization, Albautor, to administer musical rights. Many artists, however, do not register their works with the performing rights organization, believing that no political will exists to exert pressure on private media companies to respect royalty agreements.²⁴ Anecdotal evidence suggested to me that most composers either misunderstand what rights the producers of intellectual property enjoy, or feel powerless to assert these rights in the face of business interests that militate against enforcement.

A composer's interest, in the narrow financial sense, thus depends on either producing more songs or charging singers more per production. Because composers set rates based on their artistic reputation and singers' perceptions of their business connections, one in turn has an interest in "creating fame" (*krijon famë*), or a reputation, which is accomplished by presenting songs at festivals.²⁵ In addition to the state-funded Festival of Song, the "big festivals" for Genti included private song contests Magic Song, TopFest, and the now-defunct Golden Microphone. Private festivals represented opportunities to make money, though Genti approached each with slightly different expectations. Singers commission songs and, because composers or songwriters may submit multiple songs, they have an economic interest in acquiescing to singers' requests.

24 I am grateful to the Executive Director of Albautor, Idar Bistri, for discussing his organization with me in June 2010. Cf. Nikolli 2012.

25 One singer's father, the non-musician friend of an acquaintance of mine in Tirana, told me he negotiated between three hundred and one thousand euros for compositions based on his assessment of composers' previous works, but also, for the upper figure, the ability to place a song in the finals of a private festival. When we met, the father told me he was in discussions with a prominent Tirana composer to secure his daughter a place in the finals of TopFest (p.c., March 2010).

Yet because TopFest did not publicize producers' names, Genti did not view it as a venue to “create fame.” Because Magic Song organizers promoted composers and lyricists during televised shows in the months leading up to its concert finale, Genti viewed this festival as a potential site not only to accumulate capital from commissions, but also to forge a reputation.

At the time of my fieldwork, success in the industry seemed elusive and confusing for Genti. One could create a reputation by collaborating with top singers or composing successful songs, yet a song’s success was measured not by sales, but by recognition at private festivals or through inclusion on seasonal compilations, both of which in turn often seemed to require connections. Moreover, though his specialized training at the Conservatory accorded Genti prestige and a measure of cultural capital, his degree in composition had not prepared him for the privatized field. By inculcating in him aesthetic discourses antithetical to market practices, Conservatory training may even have hampered him. One Conservatory pedagogue, who recently described why he believed his students should have a higher profile as light song composers, unwittingly demonstrates several key reasons why composers have difficulty competing with non-professionalized songwriters:

I put such a strong emphasis on the coagulation of national values in light music songs because, on the extreme side, today we see that we have authors who have become practitioners, who take ready-made rhythmic formulae from the [outside] world and add a totally simple and ordinary melody on top, and are able to penetrate [a festival] jury’s filter [with this]. I think that our [Conservatory] students, too, should be involved with light music, because they take some important insights in school that they should display in light music. The introduction of studios makes it so that these students cannot take part at all in the festival’s competition. Once the festival was a big deal for all creators, while now the song must be completed [i.e., produced at a studio] and this technical possibility makes it so many young composers who graduate from the Academy of Arts do not have this technical mindset [...].²⁶

26 Pedagogue and critic Nestor Kraja, interview with Julia Vrapı, “Festivali i Këngës në RTSH duhet të synojë vlerat artistike nacionale” [The RTSH Festival of Song should target national artistic values]. *Agjensia e Lajmeve SOT*, published 27 October 2011. Available at http://sot.com.al/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=8699:nestor-kraja-festivali-

In this pedagogue's estimation, Conservatory students may lack technical know-how, but could contribute "values" through their compositional individuality. One's individuality, however, is not readily convertible to economically profitable collaborations. My sense is that composers sometimes misunderstand the irrelevance to the privatized field of one's melodic inventiveness, ability to develop complex themes, or skill in "coagulating" national values.²⁷

For a composer navigating the recording industry without full knowledge of its inner workings, "interests" provide a potential means to begin conceptualizing the field in monetary terms. To Genti, the economics of music production were not a question of one's individual sense of the field, but rather a negative aspect of social reality he believed all professional composers must confront. Yet composers have various relationships to this cultural field. Technological barriers may impede composers, as one needs a specific set of technical skills and a capital-intensive studio, though during my fieldwork composers were increasingly accumulating funds to buy inexpensive digital recording technology.²⁸ One young composer,

[i-kenges-ne-rtsh-duhet-te-synoje-vlerat-artistike-nacionale&catid=222:kulture-gazeta&Itemid=483](#), last accessed 20 July 2012.

27 That songwriters who write "simple and ordinary" melodies are rewarded by the market thus seems inexplicable, and encourages the circulation of rumors or conspiracy theories. One composer told me a successful songwriter, despite his lack of professional skills, had established himself "overnight": Gjebrea, according to the angry composer, must have been bought off, because he awarded this "talentless" musical illiterate several top prizes at Magic Song, thus launching his career (p.c., 13 February 2010). Other conspiracy theories revolve around charges of collusion between individuals sharing business or social relations. For one detailed example, see Besfort Hasanaj, "Exkluzive: Shikoni fotot si kan votue klanet e Familjes Koçi ne Kenga Magjike 2010!" [Exclusive: See the photos of how the Koçi Family clan voted at Magic Song 2010!] (22 November 2010). Retrieved from http://www.besfort.de/article_read.php?a=325, 3 August 2012.

28 One's ability to work and succeed as a composer is also located within gender regimes of long standing. In 2009-10, no women owned studios in Tirana, and the kinds of networking and acquaintanceships the composer must cultivate in order to be successful remain dependent on

laughing, discussed a very successful composer-producer widely thought to employ shrewd and, in the view of this young person, often unscrupulous business dealings, as an “exception”: he “had his own market.”²⁹ Finally, the composer-producer often believes that industry success within the singer-directed system may threaten the sense he has forged of himself at the Conservatory as an artist with an “individuality.”

NAVIGATING THE FIELD

Composers do not necessarily utilize knowledge about the privatized music industry—however incomplete it may be—to maximize profits, but rather to manage the infiltration of capital into their recording studios. The recent availability of inexpensive recording technology has enabled many individuals to establish small recording studios. A typical Tirana studio consists of two rooms: a larger “control” room, often composed of a desktop computer, some hardware, a MIDI-enabled keyboard, speakers, and couches, as well as the “studio,” or small, soundproof recording chamber. The “heart” of the recording studio is a computer-based DAW (“digital audio workstation”), most often a PC with an aftermarket soundcard and software, which allows the composer to record, edit, and play back audio (see fig. 1).

specifically male forms of sociability, especially glasses of beer or liquor, shared in smoke-filled cafes over “conversation” (*muhabet*) or “chatting” (*llafa*).

²⁹ Since leaving Tirana in July 2010, I have increasingly seen interviews with young producers who discuss taking singers “under management” (*nën menaxhim*), which I understand to mean a form of pseudo-contractual exclusivity. In late 2009, I asked one composer if he felt there were singers with whom he could not work because they had exclusive relationships with certain producers or composers. This was rare, according to him, and he named only two individuals who “managed” singers in this way. My sense is that “management” is an emerging collaborative practice among successful producers.



Fig. 1: Composer Klodian Qafoku in his studio, June 2010 (photo by author)

DAW-s allow composers without much space, or the funds to acquire expensive hardware, to generate, record, mix, and edit digital signals at a fraction of the cost of an analog studio.³⁰

Ethnographic perspectives on sound engineering have recently investigated recording studios as spaces enabling novel social practices (e.g., Meintjes 2003; Bates 2010). Composers utilize the recording studio to administer an entrepreneurial self in professional terms. In Tirana, composers employ diverse compositional and collaborative practices in the studio, which they frame in moral and ethical terms as “correct” or “professional.” Some individuals thus transform the studio into a site to propose and claim new forms of distinction while at the same time inoculating privatized production’s potential threats to a self-image as a “creator.” Though the recording industry may structure their opportunities in the capitalized field, composer-producers utilize the studio itself to manage their integration into the private sector. By generating novel

30 Early studios in Tirana depended on recording hardware into the late 1990s and early 2000s. Composer Edmond Zhulali, whom I discuss in the next section, first bought a sequencing keyboard in 1994. Between 1996 and 2001, he acquired more hardware, including a 24-channel analogue mixer, a standalone hard disk recorder, and an effects processor. In 2002, he switched to a computer-based workstation (interview, 5 February 2012).

studio strategies, composers are able to navigate aspects of privatized popular music production they view as ethically problematic in terms of collaboration, composition, and artistic expression.

The Studio as a Site for Collaboration

In the cramped quarters of private studios singers commission songs, and composers negotiate fees. Privately, composers complain that anyone able to marshal the financial resources may become a “singer.” My interlocutors decry “amateurs” who, according to them, “have no voice” and view music as a hobby (*hobi*). According to lyricist and poet Agim Doçi, the blame lies partly with composer-producers who “remain anonymous, and make these quick songs for cash.”³¹ Though this clichéd critique overstates the number of talentless dilettantes seeking singing careers, so-called “amateurs,” whether they come to popular music from beauty competitions, reality television programs, or simply a personal desire to perform, represent a key potential market for composers’ songs.

Composers often propose that Tirana’s market of potential singers should be better regulated. Earlier, Dritan derided a university student who, despite being a “weak” singer, had commissioned a composition and studio production he had “corrected” in the studio. A popular weekly sketch comedy program, *Portokalli*, satirizes one group of would-be pop stars with a recurring character named ‘Ela.’ A high-school-age girl, caterwauling and accompanied by an aggressive, chatterbox stage mother teetering in designer heels, Ela is a send-up of the rich, spoiled, talentless amateur.³² Previously, programs at socialist-era Pioneer Houses or Culture

31 Evening roundtable discussion with Aleksandër Gjoka, Redon Makashi, and Eni Koçi, “Muzika dhe komercializmi muzikor” [Music and Musical Commercialism]. *News24*, 7 November 2009.

32 Ela is a clear sendup of Tirana’s uncultured “new money. In one sketch, the audience learns that “Ela” is short for a fashionable, western-sounding name her uneducated parents gave her. *Host*: And what is your name? *Ela*: I am Ela. *Host*: Just Ela? *Ela*: No, *Salmon-ella*.

Houses created a dispersed network of forums and ensembles ranging in size, experience, quality, and age-level through which singers passed, evaluated at each step by members of the music field. Today, televised singing contests following a Pop Idol format have replaced this far-reaching apparatus: singers compete by learning foreign cover songs and light music classics, coached by the studio-arrangers with whom they will later collaborate, and viewers text votes each week during elimination rounds. Many of the singers in this second group have good voices or some training at the LAJM; all potentially benefit from establishing connections with Tirana-based entrepreneurs. Finally, former models or reality show contestants, whom composers generally assume to be poor vocalists—a notion fueled by several, in local parlance, showgirls, such as Çiljeta or Inis and Ingrid Gjoni—comprise the postsocialist market’s third group.³³

Producers fix poor vocal performances in the studio with auto-tune software, and because a segment of singers never perform live and appear only at pre-recorded television events or in music videos, their vocal performances do not necessarily matter. Several composers, however, told me they will not work with untrained singers. When I asked one composer, *Arbër, about composers who wrote songs for “amateurs,” he explained how he believed some unscrupulous composers to operate: “[They just] take songs out of the drawer. ... So if you go to [Composer X's] studio, and want a song, he just has a bunch of songs already written. 'You like song #1? No, okay, #2? How about #3?' until you find one that you like” (p.c., April 2010). Arbër perceived this practice to result from a lack of artistic integrity coupled with the insufficient protection current copyright laws provide authors. According to his analysis, if a composer's profit ends

33 A popular Friday night television program *Zonë e Lirë* [Free Zone] hosted by Arjan Çani, one of Tirana’s first radio jocks, seems to have a contract with record companies to feature model-singers promoting new singles. The host Çani often subverts these promotions, mocking the singers or requesting they sing live, the implication being that they cannot sing on pitch. My sense is that participants believe any exposure, even notoriety, is good publicity.

when he delivers a song because copyright laws do not function, economic motives “inevitably” trump artistic considerations. For Arbër, “taking songs out of the drawer” has led to a mass-production model that maximizes profits at the expense of artistic quality. The composer’s professionalism thus provides the sole barrier to so-called “mercenary,” “commercial” studio collaborations with “amateurs.” While the composer-producer no longer directs collaboration, he may exercise a modicum of control by refusing commissions, and Arbër claims to have turned down singers without voices he considered well-trained—at the same time refusing their euros.³⁴

The Studio as a Site for Composition

Not only a site for collaboration, the studio is also potentially a site for composition. Composers view producers who have not graduated from Conservatory as hopelessly dependent on their “computer,” the DAW. My interlocutors, exemplified in the following composite quote assembled from several different sources, believe those “non-professional” songwriters simply

...sit down [at the computer], click 'new file,' open up a loop, open up another loop, then 'cut-paste-cut-paste-cut-paste' x number of times, and when that is over, the song is over. Then they put a melody over that ... The computer does the work, because the person at the computer does not know notes, piano, harmony, polyphony, none of this—nothing. ... Working like this, anyone can sound like Timbaland...[But he does] not create an individuality. ... (Interviews with four different young composers, September 2009 to May 2010)

Yet because the demand of local listeners—and thus, singers—creates a market for songs adhering more closely to the U.S.-model than that favored by most composers, these men preserve a certain conceptualization of the compositional process to the detriment of potential profits.

34 Composers’ protestations may, however, be disingenuous. One composer whom I interviewed often states vehemently on television programs that he will not work with a singer if she does not “have a voice”; over drinks following a visit to his studio, however, told me he sometimes will, with the provision his name not appear on the resulting video, album, or compilation (p.c., June 2010).

For composer-producers, the studio is a “tool” one must know how to use “correctly”: a site for the arrangement of musical materials generated by a compositional process closer to an art music model. Composition should occur at a piano or with “paper and pencil,” rather than on the computer screen. Klodi Qafoku, a successful producer and folk music researcher introduced in the opening to this chapter, operates a small but busy studio in Tirana. While a state job might pay the equivalent of two- to three-hundred euros per month, a composer with Qafoku's reputation earns four times that much with the production of one song. Yet Qafoku has strong feelings about not only collaboration, but also the compositional process itself once he has agreed to a commission. He described the visit of a university student to his studio last March to me as follows:

We talked about what she wanted, a ballad, a pop ballad. We agree to this. ... She is excellent, has an excellent voice. ... So I am writing a song for her right now, the genre that she requested, and I will do a demo. This is how I always do it: I sit down, compose at the piano, go through different ideas, until I have an idea of what I will do. (interview, 30 April 2010)

For Qafoku, composing at the piano is the only “correct” way to write a song, and for many of my interlocutors, skills at “the keyboard” were perceived to constitute a bare requisite for claims to musicianship.³⁵ As another intellectual complained,

A lot of [young] people don't really know the keyboard. They play something, hear that it sounds good, then cut-paste eight bars, cut-paste eight bars [on the computer screen]. They know what Europe wants, what the world is into.
N.T.: But they have [musical] ear?
Ah, *normal*, they have ear, but they don't have anything else! There is one arranger ... he can't read notes at all. Just a bit on the piano, then just cut-paste, cut-paste. A lot of these people just play a bit of piano—this was my secondary instrument at Liceu, and I play better than them! (Personal communication, 19 December 2009)

35 Producers also need, and have, at least some keyboard skills in order to input MIDI through a keyboard controller, something my composer-interlocutors do not recognize as “true” musicianship.

My sense here is that piano skills—though not necessarily needed for loop-based composition—function as an imagined barrier between constructions of amateurism and professionalism, a technology for a particular, narrow sense of “originality.”

Yet singers do not necessarily want “original” melodies, but rather seek songs with a good “sound” or “beat” (*saund* or *bit*), a conception closer to recent Euro-American notions of popular music and its emphases on timbre and production values. Most artistically problematic for composer-producers are singers whom they denigrate as simple analogues of western artists. Tirana-based singer Elvana Gjata, for example, who initially debuted as a semi-finalist on a televised singing competition and later through several provocative music video clips and a print advertising campaign, has released several songs and video clips that distinctly evoke beats and arrangements released by Beyonce Knowles and her former group Destiny’s Child. In the music video for her 2011 single “Kudo që jam” (Everywhere I am), Gjata’s bodily comportment itself—her dance moves, mannerisms, and how she holds the microphone—evoked Knowles, while her vocals, which alternate between lyrical passages and a more stilted singing-speaking style, drew on the sound of Destiny’s Child, exemplified, for example, by the contrast between the refrain and verse in the group’s 2000 hit, “Say my name.”

The careful replication of Anglo-American styles proves attractive to many singers and listeners.³⁶ One composer told me singers routinely approached him not only with song ideas or

36 Some fans do complain about emulation they perceive to have crossed into mimicry. One blogger posted the following short review of Gjata’s 2007 release “Mamës” (Mama) on the website *Albaniac* in 2008: “The song is just ok, cool rhythm, the video seems like it’s one of those spots for Pepsi or American Idol (at the refrain)...I don’t know if this is good or bad, I’m just saying. In the song she sings ‘there’s no beat like this/there’s no flow like this’ [*si ky beat ski ni/si ky flow ski ni*]...now telling the truth, we’ve all seen MTV at least once. Huh? ‘Cuz this beat I seem to know from Beyonce and Destiny’s... In fact, I’d ask if you take away the look *alla* J’Lo, singing like Beyonce, and the rhythm like Destiny’s Child, what remains of Elvana?” (reproduced at www.forumishqiptar.com/showthread.php?t=74903, last accessed 30 July 2012).

genres in mind, but also with the tracks of specific artists in hand for him to copy—which he will not do (p.c., June 2010, Alfred Kaçinari). By too closely appropriating the timbre, or sound of western-style pop, the composer-producer may be charged with “plagiarism” (*plagjiaturë*). In one recent example, the composer Pirro Çako was accused of plagiarizing U.S. pop artist Pink’s 2010 song “Fuckin’ Perfect” in his composition “Botën do ndryshoja” (I’d change the world), presented at Magic Song 2011. The songs’ first verses and refrains shared much the same arrangement: a sparse, acoustic-guitar texture leading into a simple drum-kit accompaniment in the opening verse, and a driving kick-drum beat in the refrain. The melodies were also remarkably similar, though Çako did not reproduce “Fuckin’ Perfect” note for note. Çako responded to criticism by publishing lead sheets comparing the songs’ melodies and harmonies: “All that I can do today,” he lectured a journalist, “is give you the two parts of the two songs, where any ‘artist’ included in this libel [*sajesë*], if he or she knows how to write and sing notation, let him or her sit at the piano and find harmonically and melodically where this supposed theft occurred.”³⁷ The challenge to Çako, as his response demonstrated, was not a legal one, as no one would necessarily prosecute him, but rather a professional one. By letting “the notes” speak for him while ignoring questions of arrangement and timbre, or sound, Çako invoked his own professional expertise about what constituted non-plagiarism.

37 Criticism first surfaced in a 29 October 2011 article in local newspaper *Panorama*, “Pirro Çako: Kantautori, te ‘Kënga Magjike’ me muzikë të vjedhur nga Pink” [Pirro Çako: The singer-songwriter, at Magic Song with music stolen from Pink] (www.panorama.com.al/panorama-plus/pirro-cako-kantautori-te-%E2%80%9Ckenga-magjike%E2%80%9D-me-muzike-te-vjedhur-nga-pink/, last accessed 30 July 2012). Çako’s then published his response in the 31 October 2011 edition of newspaper *Shekulli*, “Gjebrea: Akuzat për këngën ‘Botën do ndryshoja’ dashakeqësi e planifikuar; Pirro Çako publikon partiturat e këngës” [Gjebrea: The accusations about the song ‘I’d change the world’ are premeditated malevolence; Pirro Çako publishes the song scores].

The Studio as Site of Creative Self-Expression

In a final, related sense, composers view the studio's "correct" role in the compositional process as mediating between one's artistic self and the commissioned song. In the previous example, a young singer approached Qafoku to commission a pop ballad; all composers field requests for any number of genres, especially hip hop, techno, house, R&B, or pop rock. Endri Sina, a member of the composition faculty at the state conservatory who has recently opened a private recording studio, insisted he cannot, in his words, compose "songs on order" (*këngë me porosi*). "I do what I do because of who I am," he explained, "and I must be true to myself, not to the demands [of the market of singers]. My songs have to do with the individuality I have created for myself as a composer" (interview, 10 March 2010). For Sina, the studio is both an experimental foray into entrepreneurship and a technological means without which his light music songs would not be heard. The composer, however, remains something of a throwback to the socialist era. As a professor at the Academy of Arts, Sina is not necessarily oriented toward "song," but rather art music.

Sina chooses popular music collaborations carefully, and rarely participates in private festivals, though he competes annually in the Festival of Song. Moreover, he collaborates with a small number of "professional" vocalists. He often returns to vocalists for several years in a row, especially 1990s star Rovena Dilo who, like Sina, competes selectively and is not financially dependent on a pop music career. Collaborating with a like-minded singer allows the composer to remain true to his own image of having a unified expressive self. According to Sina, the songs he composes for Dilo do not follow trends, but seek to express "values." Discussing their most recent collaboration, "Përtej kohës" (Beyond time), Dilo, who pens her own song lyrics, identified "dangers" the economic and technological dimensions of the recording industry pose

to “values,” such as “love.” “Today love has become a commodity, something ordinary, usual,” she said. “It is not that love does not affect people deeply [...]. But I have the impression that people have become cool, they are robotized by technology, and love has lost romance [...].³⁸ Individuals like Sina and Dilo worry that the mediating effects of studio technology might distort what they view as non-commodified “values” by splitting their artistic selves from the song. Implied is an understanding of a song as “art” that expresses the creative self of the composer, and I have heard Sina lauded as someone who, in local parlance, “brings values” (*sjell vlera*) by expressing his individuality. Related to this, Sina told me he does not concern himself with the composition of genres he feels do not speak to his “individuality” as a composer. Nor is Rovena Dilo concerned with appealing to a mass audience. In an interview, Dilo acknowledged her songs do not meet the demands of most listener-consumers, claiming her fans are what she termed an “elite public” comprised of those “listeners with culture” (interview, 15 June 2010).

The notions that capital and “true art” are incommensurable or that capitalist modernity threatens “true creative expression” resonate to a certain extent with socialist-era Tirana’s non-capitalist discourses. Yet uninflected by capital, if not politics, composers never developed specific strategies to deal with the economics of popular music production. Sina and Dilo’s speech shares more common ground with anti-capitalist critiques forged by western authors analyzing what they viewed as the “alienation” inherent under capitalism. Theodor Adorno’s critique of music’s “mass production model,” exemplified in the 1941 essay “On Popular Music,” most closely parallels local concerns about the alienating effects of capitalist production on art. In 2007, a musicologist colleague of mine in Tirana, after reading an English-language version of Adorno’s article, said to me: “This is exactly what is going on here! This has to be

38 Rovena Dilo, interview “Martesa, destinacioni i shumë ëndërruar” [Marriage, the much-dreamed of destination]. Panorama, 5 June 2010.

translated into Albanian!” Similarly, Erich Fromm used much the same language as Dilo in describing the deleterious effects of modern capitalist society on individuals—for him, “alienated automatons”—in his 1956 *The Art of Loving*. “Love is often nothing but a favorable exchange between two people,” Fromm asserted, “who get the most of what they can expect, considering their value on the personality market” (Fromm 2000 [1956]:78, 75ff).

Postsocialism and Artistic Personhood

As composers negotiate roles as entrepreneurs, durable socialist-era creative discourses may be rearticulated to an economic order opposite from the one that initially produced them. Through prior notions of correct collaboration, compositional practices, and individuality, the composer manages potential opportunities, conditioning his engagement with the recording industry in ways governed not simply by economic considerations. In part, this is because composers also find competition with savvier non-professionals difficult, demoralizing, or even demeaning. My fieldwork in Tirana ended just sixteen months before twenty-two year-old producer Elgit Doda presented four songs and received two prizes at Magic Song 2011. I had never heard of this non-professionalized producer while in Tirana, though a local gossip blog, AlbaVIPNews, recently reposted a December 2011 newspaper interview calling him “the phenomenon of modern times.”³⁹ Below, I reproduce excerpts of this interview (italicizing the interviewer’s text):

-Two of your four songs were evaluated with prizes in this edition of Magic Song, one of them even placed in the top ten. How do you feel about this fact? I believe that for every composer it’s a beautiful thing when his songs are well-received by the public, especially when they are presented in one of the biggest competitions in Albania. I feel very valued by Magic Song and I thank the singers who participated with my songs.

39 Elgit Doda, interview “Më frymëzon gjithçka e bukur” [Everything beautiful inspires me]. “Bluetooth” supplement to *Shekulli*, December 2011 (available at www.balkanweb.com/gazetav5/artikull.php?id=108652, last accessed 30 July 2012).

-Even though you've been in music only a short while, you've achieved great successes, what are your goals? To be a true professional [profesionist i vërtetë] and to contribute much more in Albanian art.

-What inspires you to create music? Everything beautiful and emotional that surrounds me. [...]

-Is there someone whom you have as an example in music, whom you emulate [referohesh]? Yeah, the someone I emulate is Elgit Doda. [...]

Doda's productions at Magic Song used auto-tuning, big looped beats, and samples, illustrating the kinds of compositional methods critiqued by my interlocutors in the previous section's vignettes. At the same time, Doda seems to view himself as legitimated through his prizes at Magic Song, even if his self-conception as an artist shares no common ground with those of my composer-interlocutors.

Composers who neither create loop-based pieces nor attempt to insinuate themselves into private media networks forego "non-professional" compositional and business practices in part because they threaten one's professional status. When Doda describes himself as a "true professional" and "composer," he draws, consciously or not, on the language of a prior music field that in practical terms does not inflect his position in the industry. Whether a privatized field of production including composer-producers, private media interests, songwriters, and singers recognizes Doda as a "professional" or "composer" is beside the point. The singers with whom he collaborates, for example, do not judge potential partnerships according to this criterion. Nor would claims by a producer like Doda be accepted were he to seek a position at a state institution, where one's status as a "professional" is an unstated condition of employment. Yet by maintaining their identity as "professionals," entrepreneurial composers may stake claims to artistic positions both in state enterprises and the music industry. For the composers in my vignettes above, each not coincidentally an employee at a state institution in some capacity, the strict policing of artistic integrity may well be worth the economic trade-off. In managing the

infiltration of capital into one's work in the studio, one simultaneously secures the professional qualification necessary to remain eligible for opportunities in a state sphere focused on folk and art music, whether at the Ministry of Culture, Conservatory, or research institutes.

Composers' studio practices, however, are not wholly reducible to intentional economic motives, or what my interlocutors sometimes dismissed as oversimplified "calculations." One might also speak of a kind of composer-intellectual habitus; a sense of approaching composition that generates new strategies to approach postsocialist music production (cf. Bourdieu 1977). Forged through pedagogical links at the Conservatory, prior creative-aesthetic discourses provide composers resources to understand themselves as artist-entrepreneurs. By rearticulating socialist-era notions of correct compositional practice to contemporary situations in the studio, they may orient themselves while simultaneously conditioning their integration into the industry. For composers, a more rational system would allow professionals a greater measure of control over capitalized musical practice. Today the Festival of Song most closely approximates this ideal.

COMPOSING A SONG FOR EUROPE

A site for the postsocialist cultivation of "national" values, the contemporary Festival of Song is policed by organizers as a non-commercial space that exists apart from the quotidian circulation of capital among producers, singers, composers, and lyricists. Tirana-based intellectuals oversee the selection process, and frame the Festival as a more "cultured" or "national" counterbalance to private contests. RTSH sets a payscale, or *honorar* (honorarium), which is well below established market rates, and pays all participants, which allows composers to collaborate with or approach vocalists with a prospective composition. "The State" (*shteti*), rather than private interests, is said to oversee the Festival, which participants in turn understand as enabling organizers to program "national" songs. Following the Forty-Eighth Festival of

Song, for example, director Osman Mula described the event to me as follows:

The festival is important because it is a national festival, and what that means is that it is the only festival with Albanian songs. For our Festival, it is not important what songs will sell the most cassettes. These various styles [*rrymë*], such as alternative [rock], these are styles that appeal to a limited segment. They are for targeted audiences, and other festivals need them in order to sell CDs, to sell cassettes. (Personal communication, 8 January 2010)⁴⁰

Uninflected by the direct exchange of capital, song submissions are nevertheless explicitly shaped by a postsocialist politics of EU integration.⁴¹ Since 2003, the Festival of Song has served as Albania's selection round for the Eurovision Song Contest (hereafter, ESC). An international competition featuring nation-state members of the European Broadcasting Union (hereafter, EBU), the ESC was first broadcast in 1956. The contest has several rules: participants must be members of the EBU; songs must be three minutes or shorter; lyrics must not to be "political"; prospective countries must demonstrate the ability to, if they should win, host the following year's Contest; and all vocals must be performed live. For many spectators, the ESC provides kitschy entertainment and, in the words of one British super-fan, "generally runs at least ten years behind developments in youth-based genres, if not twenty" (Atkinson 2006). At the same time, those countries at the European Union's legal or economic borders conceptualize the contest as a forum to present visions of themselves to an imagined "Europe" (cf. Solomon 2007; Mitrovic 2010). A member of the EBU since 1999, Albania first participated in the 2004 ESC

40 In one sense, the competing songs themselves matter less than their "Albanian-ness," defined here negatively against non-local musical genres and "commercial" songs. Festival songs do not, and perhaps cannot, sell. Even those composer-producers oriented toward more "commercial" genres feel obliged to invoke platitudes about intellectuals' responsibilities and the role of art in society when discussing the Festival.

41 Each year, the composition RTSH selects for the ESC each year is discussed as part of a politics of integration and standards, recognized as such by even the prime minister, who usually meets with the winning singer, composer, and lyricist. Discussion here and elsewhere often centers on how Albania should be represented "with dignity" (*me dinjitet*).

with an up-tempo, Western-style pop song.⁴²

Composers approach the Festival of Song as a space both to demonstrate their professionalism and to render an Albania legible to “Europe,” two registers that interact and, at times, contradict one another. Though composers perceive the public Festival of Song as outside simple financial interests, it remains articulated to privatized production as a venue where one “creates fame” or earns a reputation. Authors’ names are displayed during the broadcast, RTSH airs interviews with composers and lyricists during nightly newscasts leading to the Festival’s four nights, and print media run pieces on composers. A good showing might enhance a young composer’s reputation overnight, enabling him or her to work with more established “star” singers at future Festivals of Song, or to attract greater numbers of lesser-known singers for collaborations at private festivals.⁴³ At the same time, the ESC is viewed as a site to “represent the nation to Europe,” a notion resonant with the rhetoric of EU accession standards and a domestic political program to set Albania on the “road to Europe.”

Protecting Culture

Music intellectuals conduct debates about the relationship between RTSH, the Eurovision Song Contest, and the Festival of Song within a broader argument concerning the State’s duty to protect “culture and the arts.” RTSH organizers publicly portray the Festival of Song as a space overseen by “professionals,” which they publicize as an exercise in transparency (*transparencë*). During the 2009 Festival, artistic director Selim Ishmaku, a longtime arranger, composer, and

42 Anjeza Shahini placed seventh at the competition in Istanbul, Turkey, with the composition “The image of you” (an English-language version of the Festival of Song entry, “Imazhi yt”) by composer Edmond Zhulali and poet Agim Doçi.

43 When composer Klodian Qafoku first began composing songs, he collaborated with fellow students from the Academy of Arts. He called the Festival of Song his “green light”: after winning in 2006, he became able to make a comfortable living from his pop compositions, and has since presented Festival songs with more established singers (interview, 12 June 2010).

Radio employee, framed the selection process to me explicitly “against the practices of private festivals” (interview, 24 October 2009). In September, participants submitted compact discs accompanied by a printed lyric and information sheet listing the composer, singer, and lyricist. RTSH hired a secretary specifically to receive submissions during the initial selection period in order to “create a distance between the organizers and composers.” “At private festivals,” Ishmaku explained, “someone just calls the organizer, or makes a phone call, or knocks on the door” (ibid.). The secretary then collated the songs, identifying each by title and number rather than by name, and distributed them to a commission, which Ishmaku called a “jury of professionals”: “professional critics, people trained at the Academy, some poets.” These professionals, primarily Conservatory faculty, journalists, and concert music instrumentalists, then evaluated the songs according to a predetermined points system. Ishmaku created this system several years ago because “composers, especially those [then] working at the Radio, internal composers, would call or knock on the door. Especially people with weight, the big names of Albanian music, would come to request their songs be included, and there was no way to say ‘no’ to them” (ibid.).

If selection processes serve to “protect” the Festival from the deleterious effects of capital, composers’ efforts to create “national” light songs articulate to broader state-administered cultural preservation projects. In 2006, for example, Klodian Qafoku received first prize for “Zjarr e ftohtë” (Fire and cold), in which he developed a motive from a southern polyphonic men’s song, “Hape derën” (Open the door). While employed at the Institute of Folk Culture, a public research institute based in Tirana, Qafoku heard a recording of the folk song and began improvising around the piece’s distinctive concluding phrase at the piano. A colleague suggested Qafoku develop these initial ideas into a Festival submission, which was his first light

song composition (interview, 12 June 2010). Perhaps not coincidentally, the folkloric composition had also recently been included on a 2005 compilation issued by the MTKRS. Granted “intangible heritage” status by UNESCO in 2004, southern Albanian vocal polyphony thus fit into an intellectualist politics of national preservation and representation at the United Nations, MTKRS, and the RTSH’s Festival of Song. In part, this demonstrates how the Festival entries that composers, organizers, and “professional” juries hear as appropriate for representing the nation to Europe circulate within a broader musical-symbolic imaginary also deemed audibly “national” by MTKRS policy.

“Hello, Europe!”

The creation and presentation of a “song for Europe” occurs in a space policed by organizers and participants as non-privatized. Initiated and directed by composers, collaboration at the Festival of Song contrasts with the usual practice of the capitalized music field. With his song “Më merr në ëndërr” (Take me away to your dreams), Edmond Zhulali won the 2008 Festival of Song and the chance to present a slightly altered, English-language version of this song, translated as “Carry me in your dreams,” at the 2009 Eurovision Song Contest held in Moscow. The song featured samples of Albanian instruments, which Zhulali recorded live at his private recording studio, a pulsating dance beat, a text by poet Agim Doçi, and the young singer Kejsi Tola, the winner of a singing contest televised the previous spring. While Zhulali often works with Doçi, a veteran lyricist a decade or so older than the middle-aged composer, his collaboration with sixteen-year-old Kejsi Tola came about somewhat fortuitously. Then a student at the LAJM, Tola asked Zhulali’s daughter, a classmate, if her father would be interested in writing a song for her for the Festival of Song. Zhulali invited Tola to his studio in July for a rehearsal. Both composer and singer had incentive to work with one another. One of the “handful

of composers that guarantee you a chance to do well” at the Festival, according to one singer (p.c. December 2009), Zhulali’s name and, possibly, his connections at RTSH, promised a measure of success.⁴⁴ As a strong, young singer recently in the public eye, Tola had also received several song offers from other composers before committing to collaboration with Zhulali.

Each perceived the relationship to be based primarily on artistic considerations rather than any economic “calculation,” and thus to transcend the everyday practices of the recording industry. Zhulali viewed the Festival of Song as a non-commercial competition existing outside the concerns of the local recording industry, and approached the Festival as the selection stage for the ESC rather than an end in itself. The ESC is thus wonderful for its “musical diversity—there are just so many different states and cultures represented.”

[At the ESC], songs come from countries that try to give a sense of their national-ness. There are beautiful models—from Macedonia, Spain, Greece, Ukraine, so you know [when you hear a song that] this song is Greek, or this one Spanish. And I think I do this, too. Because that is the only way you will be noticed there! In that competition, you cannot go and simply say, ‘This is the best singer of the festival,’ because all the orchestrators, all the singers, all the composers are wonderful—so you are distinguished by your [musical] motives, [by]who has a special sound. (Interview, 22 February 2010)

With the ESC in mind, Zhulali presented a compositions that, in his view, sounded “both modern *and* Albanian.” In general he intends his up-tempo, danceable pop songs to have a sound “you hear, and it sounds Albanian.”⁴⁵

44 Several recent scandals at the Festival, though beyond the scope of my argument in this chapter, have implicated organizers, including Zhulali. As the Festival’s Artistic Director in 2007, he was accused of offering prizes in exchange for money and pressuring juries to award top prizes to his songs.

45 Zhulali represents one approach, though others hold differing views. The Artistic Director of the 2011 Festival of Song, composer Shpëtim Saraçi, stated that his hope was not for a program of songs that might fit into a future ESC program, but rather “beautiful music, which will focus on the Albanian motive” (Saraçi 2011). On the other hand, 2009 winner Ardit Gjebrea reported in televised interviews broadcast during my fieldwork period that he had created a three minute-song, with short, syllabic phrasing, so it would not need to be cut down in time and could be easily fitted to an English-language verse. Though organizers may claim that the Festival should

Zhulali's Festival submission "Më merr ..." employed several sounds one might hear as overtly "Albanian" musical markers. First, he incorporated two northern Albanian instruments: a sample of a *zumare*, a four-note hornpipe, set over a synthesized drone by a *lahuta*, a one-stringed spike fiddle.⁴⁶ Classified by local musicologists as the northwestern Albanian variant of the *pipëza*, another aerophone, the *zumare* has a timbre like "that of the sounds of the upper register of an oboe" and was traditionally used by young male shepherds in rural areas to perform songs, dances, and free improvisations (Sokoli 1966:54-9). Unlike the *zumare*, the *lahuta*, also found in northern Albania, Kosova, and Montenegro, has been invoked as a key national symbol since the 1910s. Historically, solo male singers called *rapsodë* or *lahutarë* used the instrument to accompany their singing of epic songs on historical or mythological themes.⁴⁷ While the *lahuta* may evoke in the average listener general national sentiments, the *zumare* is often heard as not fully "Albanian." Rarely presented as a symbolic marker of the nation in staged folklore, the *zumare* has been instead understood to be an instrument "borrowed" and

be focused on the Albanian public, to some extent, RTSH employees and the jury keep in mind what "Europe" thinks of their songs. Next to the live 2011 Festival webcast on RTSH's website was a scrolling Twitter feed so ESC fans outside Albania could micro-blog the Festival in real time. Most ESC fans' tweets, however, mocked participants. During one performance, for example, a British viewer tweeted "Next up: karaoke night on the Mediterranean cruise ship."

46 Folk musician Xhovalin Ndreca, from the city of Lezha, recorded the *zumare* live in Zhulali's studio.

47 The *lahutë* is the Albanian version of the *gusle*, cf. Lord 2000 [1960], and has functioned as a symbol of the nation in varied contexts. See also Gjergj Fishta's presocialist nationalist epic poem, 'The Lahuta of the Mountains' [*Lahuta e Malcis*], (Fishta 2005 [1902-9]). As imagined by organologist Pirro Miso, the foremost authority on musical instruments during the socialist period, the *lahuta* "has played and plays an important ethical and moral role [in Albania]" (Miso 1984:121).

indigenized during the Ottoman period.⁴⁸

At the same time, Zhulali's setting of these instruments might also be heard as a strategic, self-folklorizing move. By using the lahuta to provide a drone accompaniment for the zumare figure, Zhulali situated his song within a then-popular ESC "trend toward rewarding self-consciously 'ethnic' styles" (Solomon 2007:142). In the English-language version prepared for the 2009 ESC in Moscow, however, Zhulali excised what local listeners might hear as their "national instrument," the lahuta, leaving only the zumare with its dubious "Eastern" heritage. The effect is one of a general "ethnic tinge" oriented not toward Albanian listeners, but an imagined ESC audience.⁴⁹ By doing this, Zhulali fit the English-language "Carry me in your dreams" into a recently successful ESC model used by other potentially "eastern" countries (see fig. 2). In each song outlined in Figure 2, the "ethnic" section (represented in bold) functioned as a module to be inserted approximately two-thirds of the way through the song in order to provide a prominent national sonic marker for the country being represented, as well as a space for the (usually female) singer to dance on the ESC stage before singing a concluding verse or refrain.

48 Musicologist Ramadan Sokoli devoted several pages addressing the instrument's heritage in his landmark 1965 study of Albanian folklore, uneasily concluding it might be "Hebrew" [sic]. Each instrument, of course, is historically derived from Middle or Near Eastern ones.

49 The phrase "ethnic tinge" is one present in some English-language online ESC fan discourse. Brinner (2008-9) has also used this term to discuss an analogous aesthetic of hybridization more about "add[ing] a bit of "ethnic" flavoring or color" (41-2). Zhulali's use of the zumare might also be compared to the use a similar sounding instrument, the Armenian *duduk*, much used by world music artists.

0'00": Intro. outlining the "northern mode" 0'16": Verse 1 0'30": Verse 2 0'49": Refrain	0'00": Intro. with "folk" sounds (bouzouki) 0'18": Verse 1 0'36": Verse 2 0'50": Refrain	0'00": Intro. with "folk" sounds (alpenhorn) 0'31": Verse 1 0'43": Verse 2	0'00": Introduction 0'04": Verse	0'00"
1'05": Refrain x2 1'24": Verse 1 x2	1'10": Refrain x2 1'27": Verse 3	1'00": Refrain 1'28": Verse 3	1'00: Short interlude with folk instrument 1'49": Refrain	1'00"
2'00": Break featuring the zumare 2'15": Bridge 2'35": Refrain	2'02": Refrain x2 2'20": Folk instrument 2'38": Refrain	2'08": Break featuring folk sounds & vocalizations 2'26": Verse' 2'36": Refrain	2'15": Break featuring the lyre 2'24": Refrain	2'00"
Thank you, Europe!	Thank you!	Thank you, Europe!	Thank you, Europe!	3'00"
Kejsi Tola. "Carry Me In Your Dreams" (2009, Albania)	Kalomira. "My Secret Combination" (2009, Greece)	Ruslana. "Dances With Wolves" (2005, Ukraine)	Helena Paparizou. "My Number One" (2004, Greece)	

Fig. 2: Comparison of recent "ethnic" compositions at the Eurovision Song Contest ("National" or "ethnic" elements in bold typeface)

Despite contradicting socialist-era notions about correct, "national" compositional methods, this composition was, according to Zhulali, deeply Albanian not simply due to the use of local instruments, but also because he "developed" what he termed the "northern Albanian mode," or "Phrygian," in order to generate the melodic material for the vocal line. Yet in doing this, the composer felt he had encountered two difficulties. First, Zhulali said, "modern contemporary music" or "foreign [pop] genres are all in pure modes—major or minor," with simple harmony (interview, 22 February 2010). To sound "modern," the "Albanian" modal melodic material thus had to be fitted to a pop song model that Zhulali perceived as having certain harmonic conventions. While "ethnic" instruments may be inserted as one would a guitar solo, the composer viewed the harmonization of non-diatonic modal materials, which historically would not have been harmonized, to be difficult. Second, according to Zhulali "[out] in the world, Phrygian sounds very much like a Spanish song, and you can quickly run into problems and sound Spanish" (ibid.). Because the modal material is similar to what is often termed the "flamenco scale," with each sharing a distinctive augmented second interval, Zhulali feared that

his song might not sound sufficiently “national.” Yet despite his description of the mode as “northern Albanian,” it derives from urban, prewar, Ottoman-influenced musical practices.⁵⁰ The overall effect of the *zumare*, in tandem with the prominent augmented seconds of the “northern Albanian mode,” may not have evoked a clearly “Albanian” sound as much as a “Balkan” or “near Eastern” one for many local listeners. Zhulali nevertheless framed himself in terms of claims about “national” development and “professional” practice, and in so doing rendered his composition legible to both the Festival’s artistic commission as well as the ESC.

Identity Politics

Exercises in framing an “Albania” for “Europe,” the compositions presented at the contemporary Festival of Song and rewarded by its juries construct particular visions of the nation that resonate with a national politics of EU integration. Not all composers draw on “folk” sounds, whether urban or rural. Composer-producer Adrian Hila, for example, has presented “Mediterranean”-sounding compositions featuring acoustic instrumentation and accordion lines, a rendering seemingly in line with the MTKRS’s recent campaign, “Albania! The new Mediterranean love!” Yet by fitting their works to ESC notions about a European “family of nations,” all composers have become obligated to make calculations about what “Europe” wants to hear, and how “Albania” should sound. Because Albania lacks the internationally recognized musical stereotypes associated with other nation-states (Spain’s flamenco, Greece’s bouzouki,

⁵⁰ The lower tetrachord of both the flamenco scale and Zhulali’s “northern mode” has a prominent augmented second (C-Db-E-F). What Zhulali euphemistically terms “Phrygian” or “northern Albanian” would have been called *zyli* by *ahengxhijtë*, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century professional musicians who performed a makam-based, heterophonic urban repertoire for a sophisticated audience in northern Albanian cities. Yet Zhulali does not treat this pitch material as a mode, but rather harmonized it by ear and according to western chordal practice. Thus while in *zyli* the first degree is a tonic, and the fourth degree is a secondary tonic, “Carry me in your dreams” is based on the western harmonic relationship between the tonic and fifth-scale degree dominant.

and so on), composers may employ a range of strategies. Efforts to present an Albania that can be recognized by Europe, however, fail when ESC listeners do not hear composers' constructions as they intended. Following Kejsi Tola's performance at the 2009 ESC in Moscow, one anonymous British fan commented on the ESC official online message boards that "Albanian folklore seemed a bit harsh" for Europe's ears.

Elites' visions at the Festival, however, are also not necessarily legible to local listeners. While many young contemporary listeners identify with popular pop-folk genres derived from rural and urban folklore, such as *turbofolk* or *tallava*, ESC compositions like "Carry me in your dreams" or Qafoku's "Fire and ice" do not follow the strict conventions of these genres.⁵¹ Rather than a vision of the "nation" recognizable to local listeners, these compositions were oriented toward "Europe's stage."⁵² Nor are the winning compositions at the Festival of Song necessarily how the younger listeners who compose popular music's primary audience want "Europe" to hear them. Many young fans even profess embarrassment about Festival of Song compositions, believing that "Europe" would rather hear the contemporary rock, hip-hop, or R&B produced for the private festivals composers dismiss as non-Albanian. During the live webcast for the Fiftieth Festival of Song, for example, one young Albanian woman responded to insulting tweets from ESC fans, such as "Would've never thought Albania had so many different singers ... would've

51 *Turbofolk* is a technologically mediated, heavily sampled pop-folk genre that repurposes southern polyphonic folk songs, while *tallava* is a heavily improvised genre performed at weddings and parties by Roma musicians. Recently, this latter genre has found widespread popularity due to several recording stars, such as Muharrem Ahmeti.

52 The rhetoric of ESC claims that participants perform "on Europe's stage," or "for all of Europe," notions which local journalists often reproduce for Albanian readers.

never thought Albania had so many inhabitants!” The fan tweeted back almost apologetically in English, writing that Albania’s “true” pop music was to be found at its private festivals.⁵³

In this sense, the ESC-era Festival of Song has become a site for a particular kind of “identity politics.” Once charged broadly with the production and maintenance of the means by which individuals came to hear themselves as national, gendered, moral, socialist, or cultured subjects, intellectuals today have fewer opportunities to exercise “direction” over society. As a space for particular authorities to present the nation, the Festival now provides postsocialist composers with a means to retain the long-held prerogative of the intellectual to select, develop, and stage the nation in audible terms. Yet their efforts represent a permutation of the nationalist-modernist pursuits of the socialist period. Socialist-era intellectuals’ efforts to organize and produce the nation-state’s symbolic means gave rise to multiple registers of personhood projects. By claiming expertise over the symbolic source material of the nation, intellectuals had played a key role in the state’s project to present a strong, unified “Albania” to the outside world. But they also imagined a “nation” that local listeners came to “hear” as their own both before and after 1992.

53 Albania’s biggest pop stars, especially musicians oriented toward pop, hip-hop, and R&B, do not compete at the Festival both because their repertoire does not fit into RTSH’s mission, but also because composers do not necessarily have relationships with these individuals. Moreover, I have the sense that because the Festival is constructed as a space apart from the music industry, composers actively seek out vocalists who are lesser-known to the general public, but who have “professional” credentials. A further complicating factor is the role of singers from Kosova, many of whom are extremely popular in Albania. In recent years, few Kosovar Albanians have participated in the Festival, viewing RTSH organizers as anti-Kosovar. Prishtina-based singer Linda Halimi, for example, has most vocally termed this a “boycott,” saying in interviews that at previous RTSH Festivals she felt like “a second-class citizen.” Kosovar singer Teuta Kurti has blamed the organizers, saying, “They say the jury ‘is professional,’ but in fact they make a biased and improper evaluation” (see “Këngëtarët kosovarë bojkotojnë festivalin e këngës në Shqipëri” [Kosovar singers boycott the festival of song in Albania] in the Prishtina newspaper *Koha* [23 October 2011] available at http://www.koha.net/index.php/force_download/?page=1,5,74091, last accessed 20 July 2012).

If most contemporary light music composers have abdicated the latter strand of this project, presenting a nation to “its” citizens, the former strand remains under a new name at the ESC-driven Festival of Song: identity.⁵⁴ Thus intellectuals enact their own position of privilege by linking notions of identity to political projects about Europe, even as the speakers of an identity discourse frame it as a historical object free from politicization. Indeed, while state institutions such as RTSH or MTKRS mediate the identity projects music intellectuals propose today, such projects remain constructed as free from economic interests, a “natural” fact of social life, albeit one potentially threatened by the pollutants of capital and non-professionalism. Yet in claiming the “nation” as the domain of an elite, this discourse disqualifies a range of people, whether ethnic minorities, non-intellectuals, Albanian-speaking groups residing outside the nation-state, or local intellectuals framed as “communist,” from participating in the postsocialist nation’s construction. At the same time, though intellectuals formerly aimed to construct

54 An English-language borrowing, *identiteti* entered intellectuals’ discourse during the 1990s and lends the scientific veneer of non-local social sciences to older nationalist projects. Most recently used in Tirana debates on the “Europeanness” of an “Albanian identity,” local authors employ “identity” to posit a relationship between language, geographical location, and “values” in order to produce the country’s “European credentials” (e.g., Hysi 2010). The long-form essay *The European Identity of the Albanians* [Identiteti Evropian të Shqiptarëve] (2006), by leading Tirana intellectual Ismail Kadare, provides a prominent recent example. Kadare’s piece argued that recent scholarship proved the Albanians were not on the “edge of Europe and Asia,” or “Muslim,” and thus “looking to the East,” but rather an original European people. He traced a stable national identity to the fifteenth century, stating “nations are changed neither by occupations, nor [religious] conversions” (Kadare 2006:51). Kadare takes “identity” as an object that might be politicized (as Kadare viewed both “the communists” and some pro-Islam Kosovar Albanian intellectuals), but argues that while this is a mistake—a true understanding of identity-as-object is apolitical—it is an error of interpretation. Thus, “Albania” is an object to be discovered, managed, or protected, but only by intellectuals with the correct formation or training (*formimi*) to handle its precious semantic material. The subtext, alluded to by Kadare, was made clear by his supporters. “Our history is one of [military] stands, and today the biggest fighter in defense of culture, identity, and the European integration of the Albanians is Ismail Kadare. . . [And] opponents of this stand are the historical opponents of modernism [i.e., modernization], Albania’s integration, and Kadare” (Catholic leader and former political prisoner Zef Pllumi, quoted in Gjekmarkaj 2007).

“Albania” for local citizens by inculcating national feelings at a local level, the heirs to these men today orient their visions of the nation to an imagined “Europe.” By placing Albania in the so-called European family of nations, the ESC comprises one key technology to bind composers to a hegemonic political project of integration that, at times, devalues the deeply felt sentiments of a previous form of modernity. This is not to invoke a sense of nostalgia for a more genuinely “national” time, but to recognize that for a postsocialist political and cultural elite whose legitimacy depends on fitting the nation-state into Europe, intellectuals’ cultural projects remain deeply political as they produce an “Albania” peripheral to “Europe.”

CONCLUSION: FINDING ALBANIA

During the socialist period, musical intellectuals played a key role in producing the symbolic means by which individuals came to recognize themselves as members of a modern, national social order. As an element of socialism’s cultural program to forge a particularly Albanian modernity “neither east nor west,” this means largely came to be disqualified following the “fall of communism.” What is the fate of previous projects to sound and perform the nation in market economy conditions and inflected by the nation-state’s “return to Europe?” Ardian Vehbiu, a prolific New York-based member of a young, transnational group of postsocialist intellectuals, has claimed that one of Albania’s most strictly enforced “taboos” forbids discussion about a “national” destiny that lies anywhere *but* in “the west” or Europe (Vehbiu 2008). While the Festival of Song appears to be outside market conditions, and thus “free” from the polluting effects of capital, it nevertheless articulates composers to a political-economic program of integration.

In transforming the quality of the music intellectual’s symbolic projects, postsocialism has also reconfigured his or her relationship to contemporary society. Luan Rama, the former

Albanian ambassador to France, described his vision of a “national cultural politics” at a 2002 meeting organized by the MTKRS and funded by the Soros Foundation as follows:

[C]ultural politics is the manifestation of the government’s desire to adopt and put into life a series of coherent principles, objectives, and means that attempt the defense and development of cultural expression and national cultural identity. I am under the impression that culture should be conceptualized as the **face** of a country, that which **reflects** the **thought** and philosophy of a nation. (quoted in Leka 2001:17)

What Rama envisioned drew together postsocialist concerns with identity and socialist-era ones with the **face** of the nation. While the two registers seem able to be fitted together, Rama insisted this politics be “raised on the basis of principles that have to do with Democracy, pluralism, and the Rights of the person and respect for foundational freedoms” (ibid.:18). In participating in a national cultural politics, postsocialist composers thus find ways to wed both socialist and postsocialist creative-aesthetic registers in a manner that does not seem on the surface to be overtly political. Indeed, composers even find a measure of pleasure in “competing” in a way that is unencumbered by the effects of capital on the privatized music field, much as occurred before the emergence of a private industry in the late 1990s. Yet the project of identity, so deeply implicated in the postsocialist state’s broader program to locate an Albania within Europe, simultaneously serves to articulate contemporary composers to the governmental practice of Albanian postsocialism.

EPILOGUE: MUSIC AND GOVERNMENT

The first regime, that of the monarchy [between 1925-39], had poverty, and a good part of the population was illiterate, but preserved some good customs: hospitality [*mikpritje*], honor [*besa*]; there was also a freedom of thought, because the constitution only stated you must not bother the royal family, otherwise you could do what you wanted. From this side, it was more liberal. In the time of [communist] takeover [*pushtimi*], it was simply a takeover, and I do not admire that form, but I would also say there was a side, perhaps, in among the mostly negative; there was a movement of products, of thought, and of literature. The communist system had one good thing, the solidarity of individuals, a great work was done for education, for culture, but there was also that suppression of thought, there was not a space for thought. But on the side of utopias, of ideals, it was a good side, because it gave hope, and so individuals had an ideal.

Today is now more prosperous and better for creative persons, for journalism, for writers, businessmen, intellectuals. This is freedom that approaches the complete, but it is not complete, because here there is also self-censorship of money, if not ideology.

—*Former LAWA Secretary Dritëro Agolli*¹

In the opening pages of this dissertation, I described singer Elsa Lila's performance of the 1979 light song "The Words of the Candle" at a May 2010 hunger strike staged by the Socialist Party. As her voice echoed out through the loudspeakers to the gathering crowds, Lila situated her

1 From a 2004 interview with Blendi Fevziu, in Fevziu 2010:278-9.

support of this localized political struggle within the broader contours of a social order that has come to be naturalized over the course of the twentieth and now twenty-first century. “In your midst I’ve remained,” Lila addressed the crowd, “To give you just a bit of light—to turn the night to day.” With her measured diction and controlled delivery, Lila, over the course of only a few bars, embodied the distinction generative of a social structure predicated on the difference immanent to differentially capacitated social bodies. In Albania today, knowledge about the nature of society and its potential futures often centers not explicitly on the government of a “cultured” body as I have developed this notion over the foregoing chapters, but rather on several proxy debates: the difference between northerners and southerners, “Albanians” and “Kosovars,” “democrats” and “communists,” and so on. Yet the naturalized distinction between society’s directing force and its object—the makers of light, and those masses dwelling in darkness—remains a key element grounding the individual and group senses of personhood that govern national social order.

Since 1944, listeners and intellectuals alike have come to recognize themselves through “culture and the arts” as political, social, cultured, national, and modern beings, subjects endowed with certain capacities and limitations, duties and obligations, possibilities and potentials. One key assumption underpinning this dissertation has been that those procedures of formation and positioning that local social bodies have undergone must not, and indeed, cannot, be wholly reduced to the fiat of elites holding or seeking to maintain power. While the exercise of coercive or repressive techniques in socialist and now postsocialist Albania has formed an important strategy of government, each has acted in tandem with a range of cultural programs, technologies, practices, and knowledges productive of an ordered and organized reality amenable to particular forms of intervention and projects of betterment, whether in the name of

communism, democracy, the nation, “Europe,” or simply “culture.”

At the same time, policies targeting “culture and the arts” have remained embedded within broader social-economic programs, political teleologies, and explicit political strategies that only unevenly penetrate targeted populations. Consider the following example. During a live 2009 RTSH telecast celebrating the recently inaugurated holiday “Youth Day”—12 December, the date of the founding of the Democratic Party in 1991—Democratic Party deputy Mesila Doda spoke. Evoking the Democrats’ 1991 slogan, “We want an Albania like Europe!”, she called out, “Today we have a true European state, with its culture! Today we have an Albania like Europe!” RTSH soon cut away to a clip of then-Minister of Culture Ferdinand Xhaferri greeting Finnish rock band Sunrise Avenue with a small gift the previous day. After a handful of local pop singers lip-synched recent hit songs, Sunrise Avenue took the stage and performed a half-hour live set. Few in the crowd knew who they were and, as rain began to fall, most rally attendees left.²

Ordinary listeners may dismiss a Democratic cultural program emphasizing the foreign over the local even without expressing sympathy for a previous order. A waitress at a restaurant close by my apartment in Tirana’s center once described her ambivalence about “the dictatorship” as follows. On the one hand, life was more stable. There were no “ups and downs,” which she indicated by moving her hand in a straight line. Singers and artists had “culture,” were educated and had “graduated from school for *canto*”: “Today, any girl can go out on the street and grab a microphone, record a song, and become a singer. No education, no culture, no

2 Information in this paragraph derives from my fieldnotes, 8-9 December 2009. The group Sunrise Highway had performed in Tirana and the southwestern city of Vlora in support of an album titled *On the Way to Wonderland*. A staunch social conservative, Doda has cultivated an outspoken image and is often invited on political news programs in Tirana for her polemical and heated discussions.

training. And *these* are the songs that people want to hear!” (p.c., 15 November 2009). Similarly, an elite composer from the socialist period interrupted a café conversation toward the end of my fieldwork in order to indicate an employee standing idly without clearing tables. “The problem today,” the composer stated, “is that the person is not administered” [*njeriu nuk administrohet*], insinuating that one’s sense of self and relationship to fellow citizens had in some way atrophied (p.c., 21 May 2010). Discussing children’s names with me, the waitress cited above criticized young parents’ choices of “fashionable” names: “They see these names on television, on *telenovela*-s, and then give them to their kids. The name Xhebezda—whoever heard of such a name?” The problem, she concluded, was that “The world came into Albania, and Albania disappeared” [*Në Shqipëri ka hyrë bota, dhe u zhduk Shqipëria*] (p.c., 15 November 2009).

In this dissertation, I have demonstrated how socialist and postsocialist policies on popular music came to be formulated at the interstices of often contentious processes of professionalization, elites’ aspirations toward forming a “good,” “cultured,” or “modern” audience, and political projects to shape a cultural field of production conducive to administration. In doing this I have raised several broader issues of potential use to scholars of musical and cultural production not only in socialist and postsocialist Europe, but also under complex modern orders more broadly. First, I have argued that music scholars’ emphasis on resistant forms of agency may miscast, ignore, or fundamentally mischaracterize the nature of musicians’ and listeners’ agency, particularly under inegalitarian political regimes. I have suggested that this may be due in part to received disciplinary understandings of the musician-as-agent that, embedded within broader western/capitalist modes of knowledge production about “freedom” and political action, necessitate revision. Second, I have employed a framework combining Michel Foucault’s notion of governmentality and Pierre Bourdieu’s fields of cultural

production in order to better articulate how a national cultural administration functions at the level of both policy and practice. In doing this, I have provided one possible example of how an ethnomusicology of government might more explicitly locate both national cultural programs and the work of musicians, critics, and cultural bureaucrats within specific political-economic institutional arrangements.

By detailing how musical practice has articulated to and inflected practices of government in Albania, this extended case study has argued that music scholars should revisit several core disciplinary assumptions about music, power, and identity. One starting point might be the role of music in establishing and maintaining inegalitarian social relations through a focus on not only the capacitating, but also the incapacitating effects of musical practice on constructions of modern personhood and individuals' embodied senses of self within post-World War II nation-states. This would oblige the study of musical authorities, or those cultural elites concerned with policing and administering the distinctions between "good" and "bad" musics, and administration's relations to social organization, especially the difference between state agents and their subjects. An effort to construct audible histories of the positions of the governor and the governed would, in turn, provide opportunities to contribute musical perspectives to postcolonial studies and postsocialist studies (cf. Solomon 2012), as well as critiques of actually existing capitalisms, whether flexible (Harvey 1989), disorganized (Lash and Urry 1987), or neoliberal (Chomsky 1999, Harvey 2007).³ An ethnomusicology of government would thus provide a novel window onto key disciplinary concerns with modernity and the musical interpellation of subjects into modern social orders, as well as provide a point from which to contribute more broadly to humanistic and social science critiques of the postwar nation-state.

³ Cf. Stokes 2002. See Packman 2011 and Condry 2006 for exemplary analyses of musicians' work within particular forms of capitalism.

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APPENDIX A: A TYPICAL 1950S RADIO TIRANA PROGRAM (WEDS. 24 APRIL 1951)

Morning Emission

- 645 Program of the Day
- 650 Morning exercises
- 700 Music of the Soviet Estrada
- 715 News, and the reading of *The Voice of the People's* lead article
- 735 Stylized Albanian songs
- 750 Romanian [folk] dances
- 800 Dictation of the news

Afternoon Emission

- 1300 Program announcement
- 1303 Folk music
- 1330 News and announcements
- 1345 Russian pieces with balalaika orchestra
- 1400 Reflections on the press
- 1410 Rhythm [i.e., popular dance] songs
- 1430 “In the socialist country,” travel impressions with Sofokli Lazri
- 1450 Songs performed by Soviet artist [tenor Ivan] Kozlovsky, laureate of the Stalin Prize
- 1515 [Folk] music from Përmet and Myzeqe
- 1530 Emissions for children
- 1550 Lepin: Pieces from the opera *There is a small city on the Volga*
- 1600 Folk songs by a characteristic group
- 1630 Close of the program

Evening Emission

- 1730 Program notes
- 1731 Opera fragments
- 1800 News and announcements
- 1815 Slovakian [folk] music
- 1830 Emission for young people
- 1845 A piece by the USSR Ensemble of Soloists
- 1900 Various songs by the [Radio's] instrumental-vocal group, with soprano Maria Kraja and tenor Zioni Berati
- 1930 Conference: Impressions from the USSR, by [LAWA Secretary] Dhimitër Shutëriqi
- 1950 Choral Georgian songs
- 2000 News, notes of the day, and weather
- 2020 Pieces with *bajane*
- 2030 Nightly link to Moscow for its Albanian-language program
- 2100 Stylized Albanian songs
- 2115 Theater piece, *Motra e fshatit* (The village's sister)
- 2200 Collection of the day's primary news, and last news
- 2215 Songs for peace
- 2230 Light and dance music [by Albanian authors]
- 2300 Tomorrow's program and farewell