

UDC 78

## EUROPEAN “CONTEXT” OF THE GEORGIAN MUSIC AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURIES

Nana Sharikadze, PhD

V.Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire, Griboedov str 8-10, 0108, Tbilisi, Georgia

### **Abstract**

*The question regarding the European context of the Georgian Music has risen with new strength after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Georgian professional compositional school of Post Soviet time introduced variety forms of stylistic/genre models and musical language as well. It should be mentioned that the process became essential and peculiar for both old generation (already being on a stage since 70, 80th) as well as composers of new generation (came out in 90th). It's not about matching two different cultures – Georgian and European (being Georgian means being European) - but more overcoming the language of the music under soviet rule; consequently European context of Georgian music on one hand coincides with the identity problem but on another hand lies in a row of problems concerning correlation between globalization and national.*

*Following issues will be examined in the article: Crisis as awareness of danger and possibility as well; different aspects of the renewal process and how the various compositional principles (only few of them will be discussed shortly here) have been realized in Georgian musical reality; process of synchronization with the west.*

**Key Words:** *process of synchronization with the west, identity, soviet rule, crisis, musical language*

The Chinese use two brush strokes to write the word 'crisis': the first one stands for danger; the other for opportunity. In other words “crisis” might be described as awareness of danger but at the same time it is recognized as the opportunity; the development of the art is the history of the crisis and perceived possibilities. The turn of the centuries in Georgia is often characterized as a period of deep crises due to the political-economic circumstances as well as cultural development. The crisis that Georgian music experienced in the 90<sup>th</sup> of the last century encompassed both: danger and opportunity for its further development; the opportunity was seen as a chance to gain its own place on the musical map, to become a part of the vivid musical processes, to be thrown in a diverse musical experiments, to get free from the “semi true reality” and the most important to win back the interrelation between individual and global. Obviously, problems concerning above mentioned period have been discussed openly and become essential for Georgia particularly after Soviet Union has collapsed; and consequently the topic about interrelation between individual and global has risen with a new strength; at some point it was understandable, since Georgia had been cut off from the global context during the soviet occupation and had also been kept beyond the iron curtain; the more, problem of wider global context, has become one of the most sensitive subjects in the contemporary Georgian art science; consequently it has been reflected by the recent works of Georgian musicologists (M.Kavtaradze, R.Tsurtsunia, N.Loria, G.Gvinjilia, N.Dekanosidze, M.Nadareishvili and etc).

What defines the European context of Georgian music on the turn of centuries? Finding similar stylistic trends or compositional principles are enough for identifying the context? Using and getting familiar with the main features of the compositional thinking are putting us in the European context? What about the mindset and its main “moderator”- language? As Ralph Waldo Emerson said we infer the spirit, mindset of the nation in a great measure from the language, which is a sort of monument to which each forcible individual in a course if many hundred years has contributed a stone. Therefore while working on the topic about the European context of Georgian music I was full of doubts and questions and did realize that in the brief speech I was framed with the things that lie on a surface; Therefore with this paper I intend to explain how important it was for Georgian compositional school as a whole to get rid from the Soviets, to be thrown in a world without restrictions and to be able to find ways out. It’s not about matching two cultures - Georgian and European - but more overcoming the language of the music under soviet rule.

Obviously it’s impossible to cover all issues related to the above mentioned problem, thus the present article will deal with the following key topics: different aspects of the renewal process and how the different compositional principles (only few of them will be discussed shortly here) have been realized in Georgian musical reality.

### **Crises – awareness of danger**

During the soviet times nearly all cultures have been put under the threat of locking up the minds and messing up the languages since the language including musical can be an efficient means of political control.

What defines the danger in particular? I would refer to Herta Muller<sup>1</sup>, who described the awareness of danger in totalitarian regimes thoroughly: it’s important to introduce semi true reality, to create ideological folklore with its mass songs, glorifying the communist party, to ban even a hint on authenticity of the national roots; all above mentioned aimed to “rebuild the mindset” and to build the new myth of existence... How to reach that? Erasing certain important issues such as religion, cleaning from “not correct” symbols and markers of national identity (renaming well known symbols, or art works and etc) helps language to become a powerful tool; that’s enough to invade and occupy minds through language. Those working for totalitarian regimes experienced the press of ideological rule fully [1]; and unfortunately Georgian professional music was not an exception. We, Georgians are also coming from that mythology of great existence, full of invented symbols revealed through everyday life, celebrations needed to be accompanied by the relevant music, honorary titles in contrary to enemy of people and etc.

How the crisis was reflected by the Georgian professional Music? The Georgian professional composition school was established in the beginning of XX century and significant works (including establishment of classical opera and etc) starting from Paliashvili, Arakishvili, Dolidze, Sulkanishvili were written during the countries independence times; The occupation of the country (1921) introduced certain rules for “musical behavior”; and exactly in that very time the history of crisis as danger as well as opportunity has started, thus the preservation and reconsideration of musical identity had become essential. But it also should be mentioned that this time is affected by the keeping and resisting the ideology in a different ways. On the turn of XX-XXI centuries the process of reconsideration has started and it’s remarkable that it was not only about identifying oneself with the national culture but more about the interrelation between individual and global which therefore turned out to be topical.

### **Crisis - opportunity for renewal.**

The social – political turbulence resulted by the turning down the barriers of the old ideological system on the turn of centuries; However for the process of rebirth it was important to get rid of the “unique” soviet experience, to learn and adapt the information have already accumulated in the west, to learn how to swim in a space without borders and make mistakes.

---

<sup>1</sup> Herta Muller - the Romanian born German novelist, poet, essayist and 2009 Nobel Prize receiver in literature for *The Land of Green Plums*(1996)

Consequently it's essential to understand what factors made an impact on the renewal process and what acts as the main source the changes? Due to the complexity of the topic and not least because the Georgian music of Post - Soviet era has gone through different stages and created various musical-linguistic, as well as genre models it's impossible to respond to it without having a complex overview. Therefore following key factors fostering renewal process on the turn of centuries might be highlighted:

- composers strive to enhance the view and reflect to the processes taking place in the II half of the XX century [2];
- in addition to that, Georgian music turned to be prepared for the changes since 80<sup>th</sup>; to be exact the turning-point started in 80<sup>th</sup> to a large extent defined the changes in the 90<sup>th</sup>
- The Global musical processes also played its role; since there was a coexistence of the diverse musical styles, directions, tendencies – computer music, spectral music, various compositional techniques, minimalism, polistilistics, postmodern music, eclectizm, multimedia and etc – and the chance of free choice had been giving frameless opportunity to the post-soviet composer.

Next question that we have to answer is – who used the **crisis as an opportunity** from the Georgian composers of post-soviet era. Let's have a glance on the end of the last century: in fact we have 3 generations of Georgian composers: so called “fathers” (Mamisashvili, Kancheli, Nasidze, Svanidze, Gabunia, Kvernadze); generation of 70-80<sup>th</sup> (Bardanashvili, Nadreishvili, Bakuradze, Shaverzashvili) and the generation of 90<sup>th</sup> came out on a scene after the soviets has collapsed (Virsaladze, Chabashvili, Memanishvili).

If we could give name to the process it might be drawn out in the following way - “Distancing” (from Soviet rules) / “overcoming” (from Soviet rules) / “adapting” European experience; There are no clear stages for the above mentioned process; and I consciously don't emphasize the role of each generation within the process of distancing/overcoming and adapting; but all of them have contributed to certain extent to the above mentioned process as a whole; though the process is reflected by the language and resistance should come from language as well. It should be mentioned that the synchronization is done through distancing/overcoming from the music of soviet rule and adapting to the European music reality; and definitely it's a big issue to examine the levels of this process. For instance Natela Svanidze's musical language and its novelty is the evident example of the above mentioned process

It was justified that the finding individual way in the global musical processes lied through the reconsideration of the tradition and musical language. Therefore I think it's essential to percept that “Since language plays such an important part in the construction of the self, when the state subjects you to constant acts of linguistic aggression, whether you realize it or not, your sense of who you are and of your place in the world are seriously affected. Your language is not just something you use, but an essential part of what you are. For this reason any political disruption of the way language is normally used can in the long run cripple you mentally, socially, and existentially. When you are unable to think clearly you cannot act coherently. Such an outcome is precisely what a totalitarian system wants: a population perpetually caught in a state of civic paralysis” [3]. In the regard of the interrelation between musical language and the contemporary compositional principles the post-soviet musical culture faced a new challenge; new reality had not had any questions towards the national uniqueness and the diversity, nevertheless the correlation between the individual compositional language and the global musical tendencies have risen with a new strength [4]. It was obvious that Georgian school had to find both ways of **synchronization** with the west as well as possibility to keep its **individuality**. Let's expand on that from above mentioned perspectives.

Crisis as an opportunity for renewal encompassed first of all the **Synchronization with the west**. While arguing about the problems of the Georgian culture of the last century its diffused opinion to make synchronization with the European processes through the postmodernism. I would

like to emphasize that postmodernism in music is not a stylistic category (however it uses the certain features of postmodernism), while makes a hint on epoch that came after the modern [5; 6]: mixture of styles, dialogue of epochs, “mobilization of the history”, fragmentation and eclectizm, performance (Chabashvili “waxen tears” performance for instrumental theatre 2000), activation of associations (Virsaladze – “the weeping of the moon” for flute and guitar 2002, where the allusion on Schoenberg’s “Pierrot lunaire” is used by the composer; another example of the allusion is Steps in the snow from Debussy), multimedia (Chabashvili – wondering wishies opera’ exhibition 2002-2010), polistilistics (bardanashvili - opera “A journey to the end of millennium 2008; Nadareishvili – opera “Aphaniptera et Formicidæ” 2000), minimalism (Memanishvili). This is an incomplete list of the features characterizing the epoch after the 80<sup>th</sup> of the last century and the composers with the very complicated term **postmodern**.

It’s also essential to analyze which ideas and compositional concepts turned out to be topical for Georgian music? In 80<sup>th</sup> the process of the radical changes raised also an issue about the art synthesis. It followed by the idea of bringing different art forms and media together. This encompasses theatre, dance (gesture, movement), light, natural voices, el music and etc; as a result we got form sort of mixed media [7]. E.Chabashvili’s works are evident example of such approach (audio phonic story “galery”1993), 666 (absurd theater performance), 7 wonders of the world, noisy and the fury for instrumental theater. When it comes to the certain compositional techniques we can find actually all of them in the creative pieces of Georgian composers (Virsaladze, Chabashvili)

Was the context of the Europeanism linked only to the use of stylistic trends and compositional techniques of the west or it also meant new approach to the tradition? Since the tradition is the broad term I would narrow it to the belongingness to the roots through using the folk musical language. That might be considered as a mighty tool for emphasizing the correlation between individual and global.

I would expand on this issue: folk music language has always been considered as a tool for identity especially in Soviet times where it was essential to emphasize the difference and belongingness to WE and OTHERS. So the use of folk music as a natural language, as an archive where the experiences, knowledge and beliefs of a community are stored (Fernando Lázaro Carreter) seemed to be crucial and definitely not only for Georgian music. The more, it was sort of hint on national ideology (prohibited by the soviets) and served as a mighty tool in certain cases emphasizing the difference and belongingness, and at the same time it might be understood as an identity marker as well.

But the question on the turn of centuries is - has the concept of national been expressed in a traditional way? How the correlation between folk and contemporary music compositional principles has been done; The Georgian music after 90<sup>th</sup> of the XX century is an example of preservation and reconsideration of fold music tradition. If “WE” is a general expression of belongingness to the certain group, through using folk music composers identify musical language with the certain national roots and therefore having no demarcation between “Individual” and “WE”, while in the end of XX century the attitude towards using the folk material was changed from “I=WE” in favor to “I” – “National” [8].

One of the representatives of Georgian music E.Chabashvili states that “While talking about national roots the folk source might be used directly through citing folk music material... but at the same time any type of nonmusical national source might be also considered as a tool for identifying the roots; for instance well known pieces from literature, that have been associated with the certain values of the nation and etc” [8]

#### 1. Using Folk music through

a) **Quoting of folk melodies** – e.g. “Poet” written in 1996, for accapela mixed choir; Fresco 2001, for piano, clarinet, flute, marimba, tam-tam, violin, cello. It’s natural that in the beginning of the way composer declared its identity through emphasizing belongingness to the national roots.

b) **Quoting of Folk instruments** – e.g. Diffusion. The piece is written in 2006 for Georgian folk instruments (Salamuri, Duduki, Doli, Panduri, Chonguri, Chianuri).

2. **Allusion** on traditional Georgian music – the declaration about the distancing from the Folk music has come out later on and the Chorale is an evident example of such approach; the piece was written in 2006 for accapela mixed choir (text by G.Tabidze).

Therefore the European context of Georgian music on one hand coincides with the identity problem but on another hand it lies on a line of problems concerning globalization and national.

Turn of centuries in Georgian music give space to everyone in terms of development. The problem about to what extent the Georgian music got free from “unique” soviet experience could not be solved explicitly and definitely. Therefore, instead of conclusion, I would establish a fact Georgian music found strength and live instinct to convert crisis into the opportunity and paradoxically it happened in the brutal 90<sup>th</sup>.

### Reference:

1. Bradatan C. - Herta Müller's Language of Resistance - Literature & Culture 2014, Boston review; 18 March; <http://bostonreview.net/books-ideas/costica-bradatan-herta-muller-cristina-double>
2. ქავთარაძე მ. სტილი, როგორც ნიშანთა სისტემა პოსტმოდერნისტულ ხელოვნებაში; 4 აგვისტო; სემიოტიკა (2010):  
<https://semioticsjournal.wordpress.com/2010/08/04/%E1%83%9B%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%98%E1%83%9C%E1%83%90-%E1%83%A5%E1%83%90%E1%83%95%E1%83%97%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%90%E1%83%AB%E1%83%94-%E1%83%A1%E1%83%A2%E1%83%98%E1%83%9A%E1%83%98-%E1%83%A0/>
3. Bradatan C. - Herta Müller's Language of Resistance - Literature & Culture 2014, Boston review; 18 March; <http://bostonreview.net/books-ideas/costica-bradatan-herta-muller-cristina-double>
4. Sharikadze N. Eka Chabashvili's works through some aspects of musical identity; GESJ: Georgian Electronic Scientific Journal 2015 | No.2(12) [http://gesj.internet-academy.org.ge/en/list\\_artic\\_en.php?b\\_sec=muz&issue=2015-12](http://gesj.internet-academy.org.ge/en/list_artic_en.php?b_sec=muz&issue=2015-12) pp 15-19
5. Welchman J.C. Art After Appropriation essays on art in the 1990s; published by Routledge, 2003 NY, USA
6. Kramer J. "The Nature and Origins of Musical Postmodernism." In: Postmodern Music, Postmodern Thought, Studies in contemporary music and culture, volume 4; pp. 13–26; edited by Lochhead Judy and Aunder Joseph, 2002 New York: Routledge. *ISBN 0-8153-3820-1* Reprinted from Current Musicology no. 66 (Spring 1999): pp. 7–20.
7. შარიკაძე ნ - თეატრალურ-ვიზუალური საწყისის შესახებ ეკა ჭაბაშვილის შემოქმედებაში GESJ: Georgian Electronic Scientific Journal 2010 | No.2(6) pp15-20 [http://gesj.internet-academy.org.ge/en/list\\_artic\\_en.php?b\\_sec=muz&issue=2010-12](http://gesj.internet-academy.org.ge/en/list_artic_en.php?b_sec=muz&issue=2010-12)
8. Sharikadze N. Eka Chabashvili's works through some aspects of musical identity; GESJ: Georgian Electronic Scientific Journal 2015 | No.2(12) [http://gesj.internet-academy.org.ge/en/list\\_artic\\_en.php?b\\_sec=muz&issue=2015-12](http://gesj.internet-academy.org.ge/en/list_artic_en.php?b_sec=muz&issue=2015-12) pp 15-19

