TATAR FOLK MUSIC AND ITS INFLUENCE
ON THE FIRST NATIONAL BALLET

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this monograph is to introduce Tatar national music to the Western world by focusing on the influence of Tatar folklore on the first national ballet, quite possibly the most beloved and popular musical work of Tatars to this day.

The monograph will include a brief discussion of the history of Tatars, as well as historical background of Tatar folk music and its importance to the development of concert music in Tatarstan. An analysis of characteristic elements of the folk music of Tatars and their influences on the music of the first Tatar national ballet will also be discussed.

In my study, I rely on available sources, including books, articles, reviews, dissertations, recordings, and musical scores. I hope my monograph will help to promote Tatar national music and spark the interest of English-speaking scholars and musicians.
DEDICATION

In memory of my grandmother, Elizaveta Blumfeld
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To begin, I would like to express my abiding gratitude to my wonderful advisor, Dr. Charles Abramovic. His invaluable advice and guidance helped me to crystallize the thoughts that shaped this monograph. I am also grateful to my committee members; my dear former teacher and mentor, Dr. Eduard Schmieder, and my excellent Temple professors, Dr. Alexandr deVaron and Dr. Lindsay Weightman, for carefully reviewing my work. Their feedback helped me finalize my dissertation.

I would like to mention how thankful I am to my editor, Heidi George, whose assistance helped tremendously. My father, Ramil Shagidullin, who obtained materials from Tatarstan, Russia, made a huge contribution to this work, for which I will always be grateful.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

If one should desire to know whether a kingdom is well governed, if its morals are good or bad, the quality of its music will furnish the answer.

— Confucius

Figure 1. Map of Tatarstan.
Tatar folk music played a crucial role in the development of Tatarstan as an independent state. As Gayaz Iskhaki, a prominent activist of the Tatar national movement said, “Perhaps, no one would argue that the most important foundation in the development of race as a civilized nation is its folk music.” However, the Tatar nation had to go through rounds of transformations before it could finally declare its very own musical tradition. Tatars first shared a culture with the Far East, then became greatly influenced by Arabic-Muslim traditions. Most importantly, Tatars had to become a part of the deeply Orthodox Russian State. All this history precedes their turning into a cultural phenomenon with a unique character. The richness of native Tatar musical language combined with academic compositional practices resulted in the works of Tatar composers of the twentieth century.

The work of the twentieth century Tatar composers is deeply rooted in Tatar national traditions and culture. The surviving sources from the beginnings of Tatar culture and its ethnic background are very limited and vague, with too little evidence that could shed light on the traditions of ancient times. Tatars are one of the very few nations that are much more known by myths and misconceptions than facts. The nation does not have one unified ethnic root.

The first ancestors of the Volga Tatars were Bulgars, who lived in the Middle Volga region during the tenth through twelfth centuries. By 1230, Tatar-Mongols occupied Bulgaria. Despite the heroic resistance of the Bulgars and other Volga peoples to the Mongol Tatars, Bulgaria on the Volga became part of the Golden Horde in 1241. When the Golden Horde fell apart, the Kazan, Astrakhan, and Siberia Khanates were formed. The Kazan Khanate became the political and economic center of the newly united nation
formed on the basis of the Bulgarian one. The population of that nation largely consisted of Bulgars, though the ethnic composition eventually changed because of Tatar-Mongols.¹

The process of a historical development paused when the fall of Kazan happened in 1552. In order to understand the depth of trauma that it caused for the nations of the region, one must realize that it was not just an average medieval war that aimed to occupy new territory. Rather, it aimed to destroy the entire culture and age-old traditions of the Tatars. With the fall of the Kazan Khanate that caused such tremendous destruction, the new era in the history of the Tatar nation began. Noticeable cultural changes occurred, and social oppression was aggravated by national oppression. The Kazan region became a center of national-colonial politics of the Tsarist autocracy. All these events impacted the culture of the Tatars, and, their music.²

After the Siege of the region, the secular music and military wind instruments disappeared. Entire musical-poetical genres were forgotten, and those that were not were transformed into new ones. The folk genres that were practically eliminated were mainly ones connected to traditional societal celebrations and holidays, as well as epic, historic, heroic, playful, and joyous music genres. Mass deportation of Tatar farmers from their lands, the abusive Tsarist successors, farmers’ protests and the cruel governmental punishments following them, as well as unbearable taxation, practically paralyzed the normal economic life of the nation. Naturally, it was affecting the national art: the melancholic, meditative, dolorous songs about a misfortune that called for the unity of the people, a

domination of ornaments over the tectonic style, and the lack of sweeping, broad motifs; all of these traits had become typical for the music of Kazan Tatars. The difficult and oppressed life conditions of Tatars dictated such constriction of art.³

The end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century was marked with critical events in the societal life of Russia. As a result of the Pugachev’s Rebellion, the Tsarist government came to the realization that they could count on reliable support within the Muslim clergy and began the enforcement of Islam and Sufism. The nationalistic clergy started Islamist propaganda under the motto of national culture, which aimed to suppress and destroy everything genuinely national.⁴ Often fanatical and uneducated mullahs interpreted Islam arbitrarily, declaring singing, dancing, music, and other kinds of national culture out of Sharia. The nation, finding itself under this oppression, was not able to fight it. This is how a correspondent of the journal, Sovremennik [“Contemporary”] Pashino describes the joyless picture of Kazan Tatars-Muslims living in a village in the middle of the nineteenth century as the following:

Every Tatar village looks rather sad: passing by it one may think there is a plague and everybody is hiding indoors, fearing of getting it. Only a group of children is visible here and there, huddling by the fences… Occasionally, especially in the evening, somewhere by the currant, one can hear a dolorous Tatar song accompanied by the harmonica …all of that leaves a rather sad impression. Seeing a few villages like this one it may be believed that there is no life in these places—no joy, no fun.⁵

The only breath of fresh air for Tatar culture was the celebration of Djien, a favorite holiday of Tatar-Muslims. The mullahs tried to forbid any expression of national cul-

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³ Iskhakova-Vamba, Tatarskoe narodnoe, 44-46.
⁴ Iskhakova-Vamba, Tatarskoe narodnoe, 53.
⁵ Iskhakova-Vamba, Tatarskoe narodnoe, 58.
ture in order to suppress the nation’s faith in its own creativity. Therefore, many of them zealously protested education, as well as singing, music making, and other forms of entertainment. Even though the orthodox mullahs managed to minimize all the different forms of everyday music and forbid many musical instruments and dancing, they did not have the power to eliminate the tradition of *Djien*.6

Finally, the beginning of the twentieth century brought together people that were not afraid to openly judge the mullahs’ attacks on art. Music, singing, and dancing came back into the celebrations and everyday life of the Tatars. As a result of this important national victory, the first collection of Tatar songs for voice and piano was printed in 1901. It was the first and only pre-revolutionary edition of Tatar songs with accompaniment. The famous Russian composer A. Gretchaninov collected, harmonized, and edited the songs with great care, realizing their uniqueness and potential. Soon after the first fruits of Tatar concert music, and as a result, professional vocal and instrumental performances begin to appear.7

6 Iskhakova-Vamba, *Tatarskoe narodnoe*, 62.
7 Iskhakova-Vamba, *Tatarskoe narodnoe*, 64.
CHAPTER 2

THE IMPORTANCE OF FOLK MUSIC IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TATAR CONCERT MUSIC

Tatar folk music can be divided into five main genres:

- *Bait* (story song)
- *Ozyn köi* (slow, lyrical tune)
- *Auyl köi* (village tune)
- *Kyska köi* takmak (fast tune)
- *Uyen köi* (playful tune)<sup>8</sup>

*Baity*

One of the ancient musical-poetical genres of Tatars is *baity*. The subject of *baity* can vary from the depiction of a family’s everyday life to its historical roots. Unlike regular songs, a *bait* is often performed by “master-narrators,” elderly men and women commonly found in villages. A *bait* usually begins with the date of a specific event and the theme or story of that event. It may also begin with a Muslim prayer. Usually, poetry takes the leading role in *baity*. The text of a *bait* is often lengthy and consists of a developed plot that is sung to a tune that repeats itself. Interestingly, there are many *baity* that

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<sup>8</sup> Iskhakova-Vamba, *Tatarskoe narodnoe*, 106.
share the same tune. *Baity* usually have a narrative character and are sung in a moderate tempo.

Another important feature of *baity* is a rhythmic figure of an iambic character before a cadence. Iambics are very typical for traditional Tatar music in general. Its origin comes from the nature of the Tatar language, where the accent is always on the last syllable. The formula of *baity* is square and laconic: ABB, AB, or AABB. The repetition of the parts sometimes depends on the length of a *bait*. However, often a second part repeats solely to establish a tonic.

Eventually, *baity* as a genre took a step away from a traditional narrative style after being influenced by the *ozyn köi*. As a result, *baity* acquired new dramatic intonations. In trying to reflect the new poetic state of *baity*, performers significantly changed their stylistic approach. At some point, the two genres became so similar it was hard to tell them apart. *Baity* such as *Bashmaghym* and *Taftiliau*, especially as performed by certain singers, transformed into *ozyn köi*. Today there is no noticeable usage or development of *baity* as a genre, but they undoubtedly had a strong influence on other genres, especially the *ozyn köi*.  

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**Ozyn-köi**

The genre of *ozyn-köi* appeared throughout the 15th and 16th centuries. The *ozyn-köi* were known by their rhythmic dramaturgy, specifically the chanting of certain syllables of text which depended solely on the artistic imagination of the singer. The songs of that genre offer an especially smooth flow of melodic development which lacks abrupt or

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9 Iskhakova-Vamba, *Tatarskoe narodnoe*, 110.
broad tonal leaps. All large leaps that are present are usually “veiled” under the rich ornamenti-\n\ntations that essentially serve as the bridges connecting the tones that form the melody. That results in remarkable flexibility, flow, and delicacy of the melodic lines.\n
[see Fig. 2.1]

![Figure 2.1 Alliyki [Alliyki] folk song](image)

The caesuras play very important roles in Tatar lyrical songs. They divide an improvisational melody into phrases and other microstructures, making the songs easier to recognize. The caesuras are expressed through a longer fermata on a particular note with or without a rest after it.

The tunes of Tatar lyrical songs can have various structures of periods. The most common period consists of two sentences, where each is divided into two smaller phrases. Rhythmically, ozyn-köi are more complex, sophisticated, and imaginative than the tunes of any other genre in Tatar folk music. The rhythmical structures of lyrical songs may be the most potent demonstration of a rhythmic diversity in the entire tradi-

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\[10\] Iskhakova-Vamba, *Tatarskoe narodnoe*, 111.
tional Tatar folklore. Music takes the leading role in *ozyn-köi*. Not limited by meter, rhythm, or the rhyme of poetry, the melodic lines of *ozyn-köi* can be expressed to their fullest potential.\textsuperscript{11}

The thematic content of *ozyn-köi* may vary greatly, from love sentiments to philosophical lyricism, from social songs to ones praising nature. An interesting peculiarity of *ozyn-köi* is a lack of heartbreak, despair, or overly sentimental sensuality on the emotional side of the songs. This genre of Tatar music possesses a fascinating moderation of emotional expression.

The development of the lyrical song genre and its exceptional place in Tatar culture comes from a solo tradition of singing, as well as from the harmonic peculiarities of the Tatar music. The pentatonic base with its rather simple consonant contours allows a delicate way of singing melodic ornaments, while the ornamentation adds beauty and depth to the melody. Hence, the ornaments in *ozyn-köi* songs create a special plane that compliments the main melodic structure.

Performing the lyrical songs requires a remarkable vocal mastery and artistic taste. The lightness and clarity of the ornamentation is a hallmark found among the best performers of *ozyn köi*. It is very important for the structure of a song that the ornamentation does not stand in the way of the primary melodic line. *Ozyn köi* are mainly performed by the higher voices since it is easier for the high, light, and flexible voices to manage very complex, melodic figures performing difficult ornaments of the genre.

Often the lyrical songs are sung without accompaniment or are accompanied by the violin or another national instrument known as the kuraj.\textsuperscript{12} They are also performed

\textsuperscript{11} Iskhakova-Vamba, *Tatarskoe narodnoe*, 112.
on the violin or the kuraj as instrumental pieces.\textsuperscript{13} Due to the virtuosic nature of melismatic ornamentation, the virtuosity of a performer can be observed even more keenly in the instrumental music. The technical possibilities of violin, for example, allowed execution of the melodies of different ranges. Among them, the ozyn kői songs with their complex ornamentations were the most impressive.

The path the genre of Tatar song took was that of the most delicate ornamented chanting of the syllables while keeping a precise rhythmic structure and a certain modality of the tune. The very moment of the syllable chanting plays a crucial role. A singer can freely add vowels and even other syllables that are not in the lyrics. Sometimes the opposite occurs. If the vowels or some syllables are in the way of the metrical and rhythmical flow of the melody, they can be removed from the song altogether. The ozyn-kői songs, more so than others, depend on the performer’s interpretation. The ornamentations in the chanting of the syllables and an improvisational nature create the variety of interpretations of the same songs. The main musical nature of ozyn kői is an ability to “sense” the unwritten law of the Tatar melodies and the culture of Tatar melismatic ornamentations. Such knowledge can only be inherited by the singer through family traditions or a traditional ethnic environment.

Gradually some of the lyrical songs started interacting with the fast songs, takmak, eventually creating so-called “mixed songs,” a more complex kind of lyrical song. Mixed songs have a characteristic chorus—fast, rhythmical, and square. The examples of such songs are Kara Urman (“Dark forest”), Salkyn Chishme (“Cold Current”),

\textsuperscript{12} Violin and kuraj are among the most popular instruments in Tatar culture\textsuperscript{13} Iskhakova-Vamba, \textit{Tatarskoe narodnoe}, 113.
and *Sibele Chachak* (“Dying flowers”) [see Fig. 2.2]. The possibility of using drastic contrasts like the width and freedom of the melody with “square” and very rhythmical inserts creates the vital and charming character of mixed songs. Yet it should be noted that it is not just a mechanical coupling of the ornamented lyrical melody with the fast song. The very character of the initial slow part is usually very different from any *ozyn köi* that were discussed earlier. The mixed song is a completely different and special kind of genre of lyrical song, a kind which came to life based on the principle of ornamentation as one means of expression. The very principle of melodic development in mixed songs is different. Despite a seemingly ornamented and improvised nature, they are strictly structured from a very square metric base that can be interpreted with only the slightest freedom.14

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14 Iskhakova-Vamba, *Tatarskoe narodnoe*, 118
Figure 2.2 Salkyn Chishme [Cold Current] folk song

*Ayl köi*

*Ayl köi*, or “village tunes,” occupy a very special place in Tatar music folklore. Almost every Tatar village has at least a few songs in that genre. For this reason, many of those songs are either named after their place of origin, *Archa, Atnia, Sombel, Kun,* or simply, *auyl köi*. The subjects of these songs vary. There are village tunes about love, family and everyday life, love and longing for the homeland, humorous songs, and many

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15 Names of Tatar villages.
more. The lyrics of these songs are usually not exclusive to a certain tune and are often improvised by the performer. The tunes themselves also normally consist of two structural levels: the first half is based on a subdominant, and the second half on a dominant. Village tunes are usually written in one of the following forms: AB, ABB, AABB, and more rarely, AAA.

_Auyл kөi_ are most often performed outdoors on special holiday celebrations and are always accompanied by harmonica. The simplicity of the form, descending direction of the melody, and a stable meter and tempo are all characteristic features of the genre. In many cases, the overall descending melodic development in village tunes is based on simple variations of the same phrase. _Auyл kөi_ gives folk singers and musicians a great opportunity to display their imagination through the variations. The best interpreters are the ones who can bring a very special and different color to each couplet.

Almost all _auyl kөi_ are based on the traditional pentatonic major scale. The tuning of harmonica or a folk harp is also based on that same mode. It is likely that the genre of _auyl kөi_ is the reason why the special kind of harmonica called _taliyanka_ became so popular among Tatars. Its tuning is ideal for the specifics of the village tunes. Usually _auyl kөi_ start with just one voice initiating the song, which is joined by the rest of the participants in the second or third measures. _Auyл kөi_ is one of the liveliest forms of traditional Tatar folk art.

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16 Subdominant harmony in left hand, mixolydian major in right hand, and a tonic pedal.  
17 Iskhakova-Vamba, _Tatarskoe narodnoe_, 119.
Kyska köi: Takmak

An important place in different song genres belongs to kyska köi, or “fast, short tunes.” Their main features are a squareness of the structure, motivic repetitiveness, and a two-part form (AB, AABB, ABB). The range of subjects of kyska köi is very broad, much like auyl köi, and may often have different lyrics. The tempo of these tunes is quite fast, stable, and has a two-beat meter. Chanting is not usual for kyska köi, but melismatic ornamentation is used quite often. Kyska köi existed in Tatar culture from ancient times, but its true rebirth occurred at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. In other words, during Soviet times. Despite the simplicity of the form and melody in fast tunes, as well as their general “lighthearted” tone, the Tatars managed to express a broad range of emotions in them.¹⁸

One of the traditional forms of kyska köi is takmak. Takmak are short tunes that have a one-part or binary structure with a two-beat meter and are usually of recitative, declamatory character. The subjects of the takmak can vary from lyrical to satiric to humorous. Sometimes the takmak are even built on a base of simple rhythmic rhymes that usually serve to accompany dances if no harmonica is available. The takmak can be an independent piece, but most often serves as a chorus to other songs.¹⁹

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¹⁸ Iskhakova-Vamba, Tatarskoe narodnoe, 122.
¹⁹ Iskhakova-Vamba, Tatarskoe narodnoe, 124.
**Uyen kōi**

In the 1930s, another genre of folk songs, *uyen kōi*, or “playful” songs, started to emerge. No examples of early *uyen kōi* are extant, but there are many from Soviet times. Usually the *uyen kōi* were performed outdoors. Young people gathered together in a circle, held hands, and started singing and dancing. The *uyen kōi* songs most often have a complex structure. They usually start slow and are sung solo by one of the participants initiating the song, and then only by a group of male and female voices singing together, or as a dialogue in a fast tempo. The subjects of the *uyen kōi* are mostly love or humor.
CHAPTER 3

EMERGENCE OF TATAR CONCERT MUSIC

At the beginning of the 20th century, the cultural secular life of Tatar society, with the newly formed types of musical self-expression, begin to emerge. This is the period when the first national instrumental ensembles appeared based on the founding of the first Tatar dramatic theater in Kazan. The beginning of a series of public music concerts also began. Instrumental ensembles performed between segments or sections of theater plays. Since most of the musicians were Muslims, they performed essentially old folk songs.

For many centuries, the musical culture of Tatars developed within an individual vocal tradition, according to the traditions of Islam. The Islamic traditions called for a solo vocal mentality. At the beginning of the 20th century, the most important aspect of the spiritual life of the nation was still defined by the culture of singing. Instrumental performances, which existed in the lives of Tatars, were not nearly as rich as vocal ones.\(^{20}\)

Assimilation of foreign musical instruments into Tatar culture was occurring along with Tatar melodic resources, as noted by the predominance of the vocal nature of Tatar music. That also can explain the dominance of solo forms in instrumental music. Music ensemble performances taking place during national celebrations had features in

common with the leading vocal nature of traditional Tatar folk music. Essentially, that period in Tatar music ushered in a new, more European instrumental tradition that came to replace the old one, which was based on the principles of Eastern culture. The reasons for ensemble music-making were mainly created by the joyful and light atmosphere that accompanied mass national celebrations. Group music-making appealed to most people, and the instrumental performances of the folk songs within an ensemble were suitable for a festive spirit, thus becoming more and more popular.21

Introducing the piano into the first folk orchestras played a significant role in helping Tatar listeners develop a more homophonic mentality. That said, a performance of folk songs, particularly the slow and highly ornamented ones, could allow some elements of homophony. Such performances occurred when the most virtuosic musician of an ensemble started embellishing the melody with his own improvised ornamentations without disrupting the general melodic line. As a result, such interpretations created the effect of a quasi-unison with a singular melodic line that was embellished by only one of the players—heterophony. Of course, it was far from the real homophony, or even more so, polyphony, where each of the voices is perceived as essentially an independent one.

However, such a method created an acoustically polyphonic effect within the realms of a monophonic performance. Including melismatic ornamentations in only solo parts helped to preserve the usual execution of the folk songs, with its figurative chanting, without adding any heaviness to the song.22 Such a method of “orchestration” can be heard in the introduction to the musical play Kazan solgese (“Kazan towel,” 1923) by S.

21 Zagidullina, “Orkestrovaya tekhnika.”
22 Zagidullina, “Orkestrovaya tekhnika.”
Saidashev for oboe and a string quintet. The melody is given to the violin and oboe, playing it in an octave, where the violin, being more virtuosic and more similar to the vocal sound, has all the ornamentations, while the oboe, doubling the melody has it without the melismas. S. Saidashev uses this method in order not to disturb the beauty and uniqueness of a tune’s national color.

Melismatic ornamentations belong to purely solo genres, and the task of preserving them creates an inevitable issue in homophonic transcriptions because the ornamentations must not lose their lightness and airiness. In this example, S. Saidashev managed to keep the national spirit of the sound by the notional division of the voices.\footnote{Zagidullina, “Orkestrovaya tekhnika.”} [see Fig. 3.1]
Figure 3.1 Musical Kazan Solges [Kazan Towel] by S. Saidashev

The composer’s entire orchestral oeuvre proves that the folk musical tendencies were the basis for the first samples of the Tatar concert music. The orchestral sound of his works stayed within the sonic preferences of Tatars, making the works familiar and “close to their hearts.” Beginning with S.Saidashev, the new principles of composition and modality start to make their way into concert Tatar music, first in a very simple form, then growing deeper and more substantial. These principles influenced the songwriting of the Tatar composers more than anything else. Leading artistic tendencies of Soviet Tatar songs developed in the 1920s and 1930s. Tatar Soviet songs were evolving in close proximity with Soviet Russian songs and were being positively influenced by the rich
tradition of Tatar music. The base for the musical structure of the Tatar Soviet songs became an interconnection of pentatonic folk melody and a major-minor heterophony.24

The process of pentatonic evolution unfolded in chamber, symphonic, and operatic music even more intensely than in the song-writing process. Pentatonic evolution in those genres is naturally built on a significantly broader creative base, such as the classical principles of musical composition, harmonic and polyphonic development, and a textural execution of thematic material. Depending on the artistic goals of a given piece or a section of a piece, the music often enters the sphere of such complex modal harmonic relations that the pentatonic takes an entirely different shape. According to Girshman, “A creatively bold attitude to the pentatonic modal system combined with a broad spectrum of the entire musical arsenal existing in a worldwide music practice makes pentatonic music a flexible and obedient tool for a realization of the most diverse ideas and genres. That shatters the myth that pentatonic is only suitable for an expression of the lyrical emotions in music.”25 Girshman believes that the best operatic, symphonic, and chamber works written by the composers of Tatarstan serve as the best proof of his statement. The widest range of emotions can be found in works of such composers as N. Zhiganov, F. Yarullin, A. Klucharev, M. Muzafarov, and R. Yakhin, among others. For example, in the heroic opera, Altynchach (“Golden locks”), by N. Zhiganov, various modal tools are used for a musical image of the main character, beautiful Altynchach. Specifically, an important part of her portrait is realized by a combination of pentatonic and a whole-tone scale [see Fig.3.2]. Such a combination adds an unusual color to the

25 Girshman, Pentatonika i ee razvitie, 146.
music and points to the fact that Altynchach belongs to both real and fantastic worlds. For a depiction of another character of the same opera, the expressiveness of pentatonic is increased by the harmonization of full of sharp chromatic chords. In the moments where the struggle of the opposite forces occurs in the plot, the composer uses a classical method of dynamic symphonic development based on pentatonic themes.\footnote{Girshman, \textit{Pentatonika i ee razvitie}, 147.}

Striving to create new material based on the ancient system, composers constantly searched for avenues to enrich and develop ways to incorporate pentatonic scales. Ogolevets, in his book \textit{Vvedenie v sovremennoe muzykalnoe myshlenie} ("An introduction into a modern musical thinking"), accurately notes that the most correct way for the development of a national musical art can be found through enrichment of the national melodies and their tonal and modal elaboration.\footnote{Girshman, \textit{Pentatonika i ee razvitie}, 111.}
For better comprehension of the ways pentatonic has been and possibly will be developed, it is necessary to realize that that tonal process is deeply connected to imaginary and artistic premises, as well as to modal patterns. These are the main “powers” behind not only the evolution of pentatonic but also to the understanding of its most important tonal elements, as well as the study of new patterns. Y. Girshman suggests that for all those reasons, “it is the most fair to see the development of pentatonic not in a complete rejection of a five-tone row and its gradual transformation into the other, more
multi-tonal rows, but rather as a process of a constant reorganization through the interaction with the other modal systems.\(^\text{28}\)

A harmonic verticality opened new possibilities for incorporating the non-pentatonic modal elements into pentatonic music. The pentatonic diatonic system starts to get freely combined with chromatic elements in the middle voices, and with chords based on the major/minor mode. Integration of the non-pentatonic modal elements into a melodic line became another "side effect" of such interaction. Naturally, such principles of interaction between a melody and harmony resulted in the expansion of a pentatonic system. However, even when entering the sphere of a major/minor system, the music still preserves a unique pentatonic color because elements of pentatonic play the most critical role in its tonal melodic development.\(^\text{29}\)

The tonal and structural features of the folk melodies influenced a formation of certain modal-rhythmical patterns in Tatar professional music. It is characteristic for Tatar folk songs to possess a varied or exact repetitiveness of microstructures, a certain mono-phrasing. Such repetitiveness unites the general process of development, which is especially important considering the number of improvised ornamentations and the long duration of the tunes. Along with the mono-phrasing, metro-rhythmic patterns also play central roles in shaping the features of Tatar music. In pentatonic melodies, which lack obvious tonality and modality, the rhythm essentially determines the placement of modal stabilities. The frequency of similar melodic patterns and the rhythm of modal stabilities, as characteristic features of the folk monophony, were implemented by the Tatar composers in a new environment of intricately organized homophony. Of course, the

\(^{28}\) Girshman, *Pentatonika i ee razvitie*, 149.

\(^{29}\) Girshman, *Pentatonika i ee razvitie*, 123.
features of modal rhythm are manifested differently in every piece. However, the structural elements of anhemitonic pentatonic modes serve as the starting point of modal rhythm in a majority of the works of that time. Melodies, that had the closest connection to the primary sources, such as folk songs and instrumental tunes, became the largest sphere of national expression in the music of Tatar composers. An updated tonal and rhythmical context of the melodies based on the traditional modality was expressed in the oeuvres of the older Tatar composers, and retained by their younger colleagues.\(^3\)

Especially interesting and complex is the question of homophony and polyphony in Tatar concert music. Analysis in this case concerns the artistic connection of such different systems as polyphonic art within an essentially monodic folk tradition. The aim of combining polyphony with the national traditions became an active artistic tendency in the Tatar professional music beginning in the 1960s. The Tatar composers were influenced by an awareness of the national traditions but were also striving to master the new compositional techniques. Such tendencies marked the 1960s through the 1970s as a period of renewal for the overall musical style of Tatar music. Turning to the principles of counterpoint technique, and the modern tools of musical expression, created an important task for composers’ national implementation of organic synthesis with the folk music traditions.

The “new” type consisted of actively dramatic, expressive, edgy themes that are not characteristic of Tatar music of the past. In their modal and tonal-rhythmical structure, an organic combination of original and adopted elements begin playing the most central part. The role of a rhythmical beginning in the themes of a dramatic type becomes

\(^3\) Girshman, *Pentatonika i ee razvitie*, 146.
especially interesting. Intricate and active rhythms of dramatic themes present a complex combination of patterns characteristic of both national and contemporary concert music. In the 1970s, a new wave of interest by Tatar composers in musical folklore takes place. The interest was sparked by the discoveries of folklore samples, which for different reasons had not been known before. A deep study of the layers of Tatar folk music resulted in a discovery of complex tunes, the origins of which are not entirely known. An interest towards those samples of Tatar folklore is characteristic of the oeuvre of composer Shamil Sharifullin, for example. The ancient folk tunes became the basis for many of his instrumental and vocal works, where the composer intermixed them with the “cluster” sounds. The works for choir by S. Sharifullin, such as Munadjaty (1975) [see Fig.3.3], and The Songs of Love (1977), serve as great examples of a realization of the polyphonic concept based on the monophonic folk tunes. Here, the composer is striving for growth of the former emerging from the roots of folk sonic art.

The influence of folklore on the concert music by Tatar composers was based on one main principle: combining folklore elements with the most modern achievements of Western music. Tatar music, a folk monophonic genre of the past, started to become music which inspired professionals. Such evolution stimulated the need for combining pentatonic with a rich arsenal of musical expressive tools that were already well-established; specifically, it dictated the necessity of incorporating the major/minor harmonic system.

31 Larisa Brazhnik, “Teoreticheskie problemy tvorchestva tatarskikh kompozitorov perioda 50-60-kh godov” (DMA diss., Moscow State Conservatory, 1982).
32 Brazhnik, “Teoreticheskie problemy.”
Figure 3.3 *Munadjaty* for choir by S. Sharifullin

into the pentatonic one. Naturally, all these novelties resulted in the development and enrichment of pentatonic. “An interaction of the national music cultures, monodic in the past, with a richly developed major/minor harmonic system, established in music of the European nations, does not rob the former ones of their uniqueness; on the contrary, it helps to highlight their modal, tonal, rhythmical, and melodic peculiarities,” states Girshman.\(^{33}\)

Modern Tatar folk (particularly concert) music allows musicologists to trace an interesting process of the enrichment of pentatonic. Some Tatar folk songs are great ex-

\(^{33}\) Girshman, *Pentatonika i ee razvitie*, 123.
amples of tonal, modal, and stylistic concepts organically implemented in Tatar pentatonic. In a very popular lyric song *Gusinye perya* (“Goose feathers”) [see Fig.3.4], the limitations of the pentatonic are significantly broadened due to a deep connection of the pentatonic and minor modes.

![Musical notation](image)

**Figure 3.4 Gusinye perja [Goose feathers] lyrical song**

Here, the melody is divided into two parts. The first part ends on a relative stability, and the second part on the stability. The melodic line is unfolding based on the quartal-quintal relations. However, the tonal and modal elaboration is not limited solely by the pentatonic elements of the song. For example, the elements of minor play just as important a

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34 Tonal head tones in pentatonic melodies that relate to each other by the perfect fourths and fifths.
role in a modal composition of the song. This can be heard in the opening melody, which is based on a minor triad. Working its way into pentatonic, such elements of minor bring a special color to the melody, enriching its means of expression.

The second part of the tune sounds more pentatonic. The frames of the five-toned system are also extended but solely on a pentatonic basis due to a correlation of the elements of different pentatonic mode types. If all the notes of the melody were to be put in a scale, a modal base of the song could be considered a natural minor. [see Fig. 3.5]

![Figure 3.5 a modal base for the song Gusinye perja](image)

However, this does not unlock the complex process of the tonal and modal development that is intrinsic to the melody. If the first part of the melody is indeed like the minor without a seventh tone, the lower cell of the second part of it is pentatonic from the beginning to the end. Such an organic combination of pentatonic base and the elements of the two related diatonic modes is most certainly one of the great examples of intermodal enrichment of pentatonic.

As can be seen, the characteristic elements of folk songs have had a significant impact on Tatar concert music. Numerous Tatar composers employ these elements in most of their compositions. In order to better understand their use, it is essential to analyze the premises and nature of the characteristic elements of Tatar folk songs.

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35 First measure.
The three most important specific elements of Tatar music are the pentatonic scale, monophony, and melismatic ornamentations. The foundation of Tatar songs is a solo tradition, which is formed on monody, and that is a distinctive feature of the culture. The two features that Tatar music shares with Eastern music are the five-tone scale system and ornaments. Those traits differentiate the music of the Eastern nations from other nations.
CHAPTER 4

CHARACTERISTIC ELEMENTS OF TATAR FOLK MUSIC:
THE PENTATONIC SCALE

The Anhemitonic Pentatonic Scale

There are four main types of pentatonic: anhemitonic, diatonic, mixed, and tempered. Anhemitonic pentatonic, also known as a whole-step, natural, or Chinese scale, is a five-tone scale where all its tones can be constructed of natural fifths. There are only two kinds of intervals between the neighboring tones of the scale; one, a major second, and two, a minor third.\(^\text{36}\) Due to the lack of half steps, the sharp modal gravitations cannot occur in pentatonic. The tone row of pentatonic does not have a certain tonal center. Therefore, any of the five tones can act as a primary tone. Due to that peculiarity, there can be five different variations of the pentatonic scale, all of which consist of the same notes.\(^\text{37}\)

Pentatonic is especially characteristic of the music of Eastern countries, such as China and Vietnam, as well as for such ethnic groups as Tatars, Bashkirs, and Buryats. The first theoretical explanation of pentatonic came from the scientists of ancient China. The five neighboring tones within an ancient acoustical system, that were combined into one octave were said to result in anhemitonic pentatonic with all its varieties. The first

\(^{36}\) For example, E-G-A.

five tones of the system, which comprised a half-stepless five-tone row, was the main Chinese pentatonic mode later known as the “Chinese scale.”

![Figure 4.1 Five variations of the pentatonic scale](image1)

![Figure 4.2 “Chinese scale”](image2)

**The Modal Role of the Tones and Tonic Center in Pentatonic**

It is known that the modal role of any given tone directly depends on its relations with the other tones. In pentatonic, just like in any other homophonic music cultures, the intensity and the direction of the modal gravity is very fluid. The most important role in pentatonic belongs to the relations between the perfect fifths and fourths, as well as those between the seconds and minor thirds. Domination of such relations and a complete lack of sharp half-step modal tensions create those expressive qualities of the pentatonic scale. These pentatonic scales differ from all other modes, particularly from such a central type of modal system as major and minor. As in all other diatonic modes, the tonal and modal development in pentatonic is based on a steady modal center that all other sounds of the

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38 “Pentatonicka,” [Belcanto.ru project](http://www.belcanto.ru).
mode gravitate toward. The uniqueness of the modal center that represents the tonic in pentatonic is in its tonal head tones, which relate to each other by the perfect fourths and fifths. Depending on the position of the tonal head structures that constitute the structural framework, there can be a quartal structure on top and a quintal on the bottom, or vice versa. When a tune is based on a tonal framework with a quintal structure on the bottom, the lower tone of the fifth acts as a tonic at the end. When the tune is based on a framework with a quartal structure on the bottom, the same tone becomes semi-stable and requires a resolution.39

The quartal-quintal relations between the tonal head tones play one of the most important roles in the tonal development of the pentatonic melodies. It is typical for pentatonic cadences to consist of a descending line that includes the entire tone row. The typical examples of such cadences are phrases from the songs Provojanie ("Seeing off") and Goluboe oko ("The blue eye"). A descending motion in only the lower quintal structure is also typical for cadences.40

![Figure 4.3 Provozhanie [Seeing off] folk song](image)

40 Girshman, *Pentatonika i ee razvitie*, 47.
The rhythmical structure of cadences is worth looking at as well. In pentatonic, like in other ancient modes, modal stability and instability largely depend on their metrical and rhythmical placement in the tune. Often it is the metrical relationships that fully unlock the melodic ones, compensating for the lack of “exciting” half steps. Perhaps that phenomenon explains a common tendency of the rhythmical pentatonic cadences to reinforce the primary tone. Such rhythmical cadence usually includes a triple repetition of the tonic (as in measures 2, 4, 7, and 9). The subdivision of the second beat in this case is accompanied by the neighboring tone, either on the top or bottom of the tonic [see Fig. 4.5].

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41 Girshman, *Pentatonika i ee razvitie*, 118.
Placement of the tonic in pentatonic melodies depends on the modal quartal-quintal base. Interestingly, it is not unusual for pentatonic tunes to end on a note which does not give the impression of a full tonic. That was often the reason for false conclusions about the tonal center of a pentatonic mode. The placement of a tonal center de-
pends on the general structure of the melody, its tonal and modal development, and most of all, on the placement of the tonal framework.\textsuperscript{42}

There are five main types of anhemitonic pentatonic [see Fig. 4.1]. The least fluctuating and definite mode types are the first and the fifth ones. Compared to the other types, these two differ the most from each other. They do not share the interval and structural similarities of the other types. The first and the fifth pentatonic types stand on the opposite ends of a pentatonic system and have more obvious major/minor hints to them than other types. Usually, the major or minor pentatonic types can be determined by the triad of a given row. The row can include a major third and a perfect fifth, or a minor third and a perfect fifth in relation to the primary tone.

At the same time, the relation of major and minor pentatonic is similar to the relation of parallel major and minor in heptatonic mode. The crucial role here belongs to the relations of the thirds and sixths.\textsuperscript{43} [See Fig. 4.6, \textit{Galiya-banu}].

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{figure46.png}
\caption{\textit{Galiya-banu}, [Female name] folk song}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{42} Girshman, \textit{Pentatoniika i ee razvitie}, 55.
\textsuperscript{43} Girshman, \textit{Pentatoniika i ee razvitie}, 56.
The melodies that are based on the first and the fifth types of pentatonic have a more definite tonal center as well: it either finishes the first half of the tune or finishes the entire tune. The second and fourth types of pentatonic stand in the middle of the pentatonic system. In relation to each other, as well as in relation to the first and the fifth types, they share more similarities than differences. That explains why the second and the fourth types express themselves not as independent and self-sufficient ones, but rather as leaning towards the first and the fifth types. The third type of pentatonic holds a special place among others. By its tonal composition and an interval structure it resembles the fifth type of pentatonic. However, with its quartal-quintal base, it differs from all other types by its modal structure. Essentially, this third mode type (built by a fourth up or down from the tonic of the fifth type of pentatonic), mimics it.\textsuperscript{44}

All modal peculiarities mentioned above determine the roles and places of particular types in the system. For instance, it is not a coincidence that the most common types of pentatonic in modern music are the first and fifth types. The two types include constructive stability and completeness that are more obvious than in the other modes. It is different, however, in the second, third, and fourth mode types, where the primary tones do not create an impression of a fully stable modality. For that reason, when determining the tonic in pentatonic melodies, the two points must be taken into consideration: modal peculiarities of pentatonic tone rows, and a possibility of their relations.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{44} Girshman, \textit{Pentatonika i ee razvitie}, 56.
\textsuperscript{45} Yakov Girshman, \textit{Pentatonika i ee razvitie v tatarskoj muzyke} (Moscow: Sovetskiy kompozitor Press, 1960), 57.
Correlation of Mode Types in Pentatonic

The most important feature of the pentatonic is the correlation of its types. Having similar tonal composition but different interval structure in every primary mode row can produce four inversions. Below is a possible scheme of such a system. [see Fig. 4.7].

![Figure 4.7 Inversions of pentatonic types]

Therefore, any of the pentatonic rows, depending upon the circumstances, can be either a primary mode type of pentatonic or its inversion. The primary mode types usually have stability and instability, or their own mode structures. However, their inversions do not have particular pillars. All four inversions gravitate toward the stability of the primary tone, which is common to all four.
Pentatonic rows have an ability to freely integrate into one another. As shown above, such ability is possible due to the unity of the tonal composition and an identical interval structure in certain sections of the pentatonic rows.\footnote{Girshman, Pentatonika i ee razvitie, 63.}

Due to the correlation of the rows that belong to the independent pentatonic types, entirely new qualities occur; an opportunity for melodic modulations can appear, as well as half steps, whose presence expands the five-tones system.

A crucial place in pentatonic tunes belongs to “playing around” the primary tones. The most simple and common way to embellish the tune is by surrounding the primary tones with the note-neighbors that belong to the same pentatonic row. Such ornamentation can either be in a form of alteration between stability and its neighboring instability (followed by the return to the former), or melismatic ornamentation of both. Such is the case for the tune, Galiya-banu.\footnote{Girshman, Pentatonika i ee razvitie, 50-51.}

A very important role in the melodic filling of a mode structure belongs to a phenomenon known as trichord.\footnote{A grouping (or set) of three notes of different pitch (or pitch classes). There is no standard scalar arrangement of three notes in traditional theory (as with Hexachord and Tetrachord), nor is the trichord necessarily a harmonic entity (a triad is a trichord, but a trichord need not be a triad).} Based on quartal-quintal relations, the concept of trichord is one of the most essential characteristics of pentatonic. However, the trichord in pentatonic is not only manifested through a succession of a few of these relations but also in their interconnection. Similarly, the quartal-quintal relations of the stabilities and instabilities constitute a mode structure of pentatonic. The trichord constitutes its melodic base. The tunes within a frame of the minor seventh were especially typical. The latter is a very characteristic feature of pentatonic music created by the two perfect fourths linked to-
gether without a middle tone between them. Such linkage of the two *trichords*, for example, can be found in the beginning of the popular Tatar song, *Apipa*.\(^49\)

![Musical notation](image)

**Figure 4.8** *Apipa* [Female name] folk song

Equally typical are the tunes within a minor seventh that are created by the linkage of the two perfect fifths or a perfect fourth and a perfect fifth. These can be heard in the song *Solovei-golubj* (“A skylark-dove”). Another important feature of pentatonic tunes common in folk music is “spinning” the tune around the upper tonal cell first, then subsequently around the lower one. The general descending melodic line that appears as a result is one of the most characteristic features of pentatonic music. Such a tendency can be seen when a melody is “opening up” by sections: first, around the upper and middle tonal cells, and later around the middle and lower ones. Thus, the features of the pentatonic modal system determine many aspects of the pentatonic melodies.\(^50\)

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\(^50\) Girshman, *Pentatonika i ee razvitie*, 87-88.
Figure 4.9 *Solovei-golubj* [A skylark-dove] folk song
CHAPTER 5

CHARACTERISTIC ELEMENTS OF TATAR FOLK MUSIC: MONOPHONY AND MELISMATIC ORNAMENTATION

The other two essential elements of Tatar national music, monophony and melismatic ornamentation, are deeply rooted in Muslim-Islamic tradition. Both elements were the fruits of the influence of the Quran recitations. Musical traditions of the Russian Muslims, specifically Tatars-Muslims, were not thoroughly studied and analyzed until recently. Therefore, the connection between folk music and religious Muslim rituals was not observed and noticed. Religious music notated by folklorists was either not published at all or was perceived as solely a folklore phenomenon. But the connection is obvious if one observes the roots of the most ancient Tatar folk genres.

For example, the very term of one of the oldest Tatar song genres, baity, points to the genetic connection of the genre with a Medieval culture of the Near and Middle East, both of which had a tremendous influence on the Volga Muslims.  

Since the singing of baity was an essential part of a Mavlid celebration, there were some specifics associated with that tradition in Russia. During the twentieth century, due to the prevailing national atheism, any religious holidays had to be celebrated on-

52 One of the most important Muslim holidays.
ly in tight family circles. Even during a few previous centuries, Islam in the Volga regions of Russia existed only in villages as a so-called “common Islam.” That historical premise influenced the beginning of an amateur female recitation of a Quran, a genre known as “book singing,” which became part of Mavlid celebration traditions. For that reason, musicologists and historians have included baity, munadjaty, and “book singing” in a system of musical folklore. Z. Saidasheva interpreted them as ancient folk genres, along with takmak and ozyn-köi, and stressed the connection between the ozyn-köi and religious singing: “…a genetic base of the Medieval tunes of the Bulgar Muslims, that is closely related to the art of phrasing the contents of the books, treatises, baity, and munadjaty, transformed into a genre of ozyn-köi of Kazan Tatars.”

Munadjaty, for instance, were the base for a whole genre of spiritual poetry and songs in the Middle East and Central Asia, and they too clearly developed their roots in recitation. Some surah and ayah from the Quran are often included in munadjaty that are performed at the religious celebrations. The genre of munadjat is connected to the difficult history and the overall culture of Volga Bulgaria. Even after transforming munadjaty into a more independent folklore genre, their essence still allowed them to reflect the psychology of Muslims, whose faith was to endure and overcome all the sufferings of life. In fact, the mentality of “enduring all sufferings patiently” found its reflection not only in the quiet character of the Tatar music in general but especially in the

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53 Munadjaty is one of the genres of the religious songs common in the Muslim world. The term munadjat is often interpreted as a monologue. The roots of the genre are in morning prayer, munadjat dua, which is considered the most intimate prayer directed to God.

54 Yunusova, Muzykalnie traditsii prazdnika.

55 A chapter in the Quran; Arab.

56 A verse in the Quran; Arab.
manner that Tatar folk music is sung or played. A soft, *mezzo voce* manner\textsuperscript{57} that expresses humility was so characteristic for the Tatar nation.

The reason for such integration of religious genres into folk culture was essentially the ban of Islam, and as a result, the estrangement of Eastern ethnicities from the Islamic culture. In the case of the Russian Muslims, the process was completely autocratic, with a total substitution of Arabic language with Russian. Islam as a religion started to become more and more “foreign.” In such a situation, transforming the religious genres into folk ones was simply an act of protecting cultural traditions.\textsuperscript{58}

By its musical style, the *munadjat* was a hybrid of musical folklore, Quran recitation, and “book singing.” The genre of *munadjat* in a way brought a sophisticated art of Quran recitation that derived from Arabic culture to the masses. An obvious connection that the now folk genre *munadjat* has with Quran recitation is the meter of its lyrics, one that is very similar to that of many *surah* from Quran. These factors can also explain a monophony that is typical for the Tatar national music. That music, one way or another, was rooted in a religious act of praying. Whether it is the Quran recited by one designated person, an *imam*,\textsuperscript{59} or a personal prayer such as *munadjat*, the music is most often interpreted as a “monologue.”\textsuperscript{60}

There is a very representative Tatar name for the collective music making that was popular among common people, which literally translates as “playing from the same mouth,” meaning that all players, regardless of the instrument, would play the same melodic line. Therefore, the principle of unison was a dominating one in folk ensembles. Of

\textsuperscript{57} As noted in Chapter 1.
\textsuperscript{58} Yunusova, *Muzykalnie traditsii prazdnika*.
\textsuperscript{59} An Islamic worship leader.
\textsuperscript{60} Yunusova, *Muzykalnie traditsii prazdnika.*
course, while performing popular song and dance melodies, musicians could vary the material with melismatic ornamentation and virtuosic elements. But this occurred only in cases where a tune consisted of a few verses and there was an opportunity for a solo within the song. Otherwise, everyone played in unison and was expected to be coordinated “like one voice” so the melody, according to the Tatar canons of beauty, would not lose its charm.61

The traditions of the musical phrasing of munadjaty, book singing, and baits continued to live on in one of the leading genres of Volga folklore, the ozyn-köi, and in many ways determined the features of its musical style. The lyrical emotions expressed through a calm, rather slow, pacing of a melody, and the realization of the syllabic, rhythmic formulas of the aruz system,62 created an astonishing musical phenomenon that Tatars call mong63 the skill of singing exceptionally soulfully, embellishing the melody with melismatic ornamentations. However, in a performing sense, the term does not refer to the melancholic character of a piece, but rather to an expression of the character, i.e., to an ability to sing with exceptionally heartfelt emotion, and to fill the melody with melismatic ornamentations. The latter came into Tatar folk music directly from a religious act of Quran recitation.64

Such ideas explain the rich melismatic ornamentation that is another hallmark of Tatar music. The aim of the melisma is to embellish the note, to add more charm to it, and to make a melody more flowing and beautiful, which is what the recitation of Quran aims to achieve. According to the story, the Holy Quran was sent to the people fifteen

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61 Zagidullina, “Orkestrovaya tekhnika.”
62 Aruz – a term applied to the metrical system used in Arabic poetry since pre-Islamic times.
centuries ago in order to allow believers to read, study, and live by it. Aside from the advice for how often to recite and reflect on it, the Quran contained “instructions” on how to recite it in a beautiful, heartfelt manner. According to the Quran, the essence of reading is to encourage people to strive to perfect their spirituality and morality. By reciting the Quran in a beautiful singing voice and with the right phrasing, the reader helps the listener to be fully affected by the *ayahs* and to absorb them into their hearts and minds. Imam Abu Khanifa reportedly encouraged people to recite the Quran by singing its verses, for it “softens the hearts of people.” He stated, “the Quran should be read beautifully, expressing melancholy and thoughtfulness.”

In general, the ornamentation has always had a leading role in Islamic culture. Even Islamic visual art is nearly always abstract and consists of ornaments rather than scenes or subjects. In a way, Islam itself dictates that a Muslim should perceive the terrestrial reality just as an illusion that only on the surface looks like the real, heavenly world. For instance, the “flowery style,” of the philosophers of the Medieval East saw an opportunity for humankind to express its dreams about peace, beauty, and happiness, even if only in a dreamlike, ethereal form. Thus, one of the most characteristic features of Arabic ornaments is a nearly unseen imagination that is evident in decoration, brilliance, and luxury. It was inherent in all kinds of Eastern arts and is one characteristic feature that defines the style in architecture, visual art, poetry, and music.65

Monophony, melismatic ornamentation, and all other hallmarks of folk music, that were discussed in the previous chapters, greatly influenced Tatar composers of con-

cert music of the 20th and 21st centuries. These characteristic elements are heard in Tatar symphonies, operas, chamber music, concertos, and vocal works. The biggest manifestation of the Tatar national spirit in music was the first national ballet, *Shuraleh*. 
CHAPTER 6

THE INFLUENCE OF TATAR FOLK MUSIC ON THE FIRST NATIONAL BALLET

The first Tatar ballet and the pride of Tatar national music, Shuraleh, was written by a twenty-nine-year-old composer named Farid Yarullin. Yarullin, born on January 1, 1914, in Kazan, Russia, was the son of the Tatar musician and composer, Zagidulla Yarullin. Farid Yarullin began special musical training in the town of Ufa, Bashkortostan, in 1923 at age nine. Upon completion of his training in Ufa in 1930, Yarullin returned to Kazan and began his studies at Eastern Music College. In 1933, he moved to Moscow to study with the head of the Compositional Department of the Moscow Conservatory, G. Litinsky. Yarullin remained in Moscow, where in 1938 he was commissioned to write a ballet for a forum on Tatar literature and art planned for the fall of 1941. He composed the ballet between 1938-1940 in partnership with librettist A. Faizi. The work was inspired by a poem from the collection of the Tatar national poet, G. Tukai.

As Shuraleh neared completion, Yarullin returned to Kazan to prepare the work for performance at the forum. A young, talented ballet master, Leonid Yakobson, was invited from Moscow to work with Yarullin. Together they developed new creative ideas as they prepared the piece for its first performance. However, the composer's ballet never reached the stage. The scheduled premiere was canceled as Hitler declared war on the
Soviet Union in 1941. F. Yarullin was sent to the battlefield, where he died in combat in October 1943.

The premiere of Shuraleh took place in 1945 in Kazan. In 1950, the ballet was staged in Mariinsky theater in Saint-Petersburg, Russia, with resounding success. “Since the middle of the last century, for decades, this ballet was among the most popular and beloved ones in the ballet repertory of the Mariinsky Theater,” states www.balletandopera.com. In 1955, Shuraleh was staged in Moscow in the Bolshoy Theater with Maya Plisetskaya dancing the main character, Sujumbike. Soon after its premiere in Moscow, the ballet began its triumphant journey throughout many theatrical stages of the USSR. “And so Shuraleh became a full ‘grand ballet’ that answered the call of the time and the social demands.”

The plot of Shuraleh inspired F. Yarullin to “paint” the scenes of everyday life “in the nation” through music. Shuraleh is a traditional figure of Tatar mythology, an evil forest spirit disguised as a man with a horn, and long fingers reminiscent of wood branches. The poem Shuraleh by G. Tukai is a classic of Tatar literature. A libretto of the ballet includes added plot lines from other Tatar folk tales, in particular a fairytale about bird-women. In the ballet, a young, fearless, and inventive farmer Byltyr wins a battle over evil Shuraleh, saving himself and the bird-woman, Sujumbike, whose wings were stolen by the forest spirit.

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66 The Leningrad Opera and Ballet Theater, named after S. Kirov.
All four parts of the second act take place in a Tatar village; they follow the folk scenes that accompany the wedding ceremony of Byltyr and Sujumbike. In these scenes, the composer is recreating the sound of Tatar folk music in a dance-like fashion. An example is the “Children’s dance,” which presents elements of takmak and the humorous dances of matchmakers. At the same time, Yarullin uses pure ballet genres, such as valse. A fourth such dance is “Girls with a Shawl,” where the Tatar folk melody, Taftiliau, is represented in a new rhythmical version. That, and other scenes of the ballet, became a model of “rethinking” the national melos of Tatar music.\(^6\)

Everything is new and unusual in Yarullin’s ballet; the tonal language, the rhythmic patterns, and the harmonic tools. There is no pure pentatonic in the ballet, but certain elements synthesized with other Eastern and Western elements are heard throughout all the themes of Shuraleh. Such combinations create colorfulness and originality of his musical language, truly unseen in a national Tatar art before. The composer quite freely brings into life both the elements of folklore traditions and the methods of classical and modern compositional writing. Yarullin incorporates folk dances into certain pieces of the ballet, yet manages to shape a unified, almost symphony-like dramatic composition.

Most of the scenes focused on the lyrical couple of the ballet—a hunter named Byltyr and a woman–bird named Sujumbike—belong to the most beautiful examples of Tatar instrumental music. Yarullin found the tools for realizing a dynamic musical process without losing touch with features known to be specific to Tatar music. The main principle of the musical dramaturgy of the ballet is the conflict of two opposing forces

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that are represented by the “real” characters of Byltyr and the nation, on one hand, and by the fairy-evil world of the wood spirits and Shuraleh, on the other. The main musical feature of the “human” characters in the ballet is reminiscent of traditional folk songs, with their softness and simplicity of melody and their flexibility of rhythmical patterns. As a contrast, the images of forces opposed to the humans (the fantastic creatures) are characterized by intricate rhythms and sharp dissonant harmonies.

Figure 6.1 Byltyr’s theme from ballet *Shuraleh* by F. Yarullin
Figure 6.2 Adagio Sujumbike from ballet *Shuraleh* by F. Yarullin
Figure 6.3 The “March of the Evil Spirits” from ballet *Shuraleh* by F. Yarullin

The main melodic and harmonic motif that accompanies every appearance of Shuraleh is realized through the anhemitonic pentatonic. In numerous repetitions of that motif, Shuraleh and his general “contours” always stay recognizable, even though their tonal, modal, and harmonic components are constantly altered.
Figure 6.4 Shuraleh’s theme from ballet *Shuraleh* by F. Yarullin

Very memorable and individualized features are given to the two other main characters of the ballet, Byltyr and Sujumbike. The composer gives a musical portrait of Byltyr in the first act: the “Entrance of Byltyr” consists of a pentatonic melody orbiting around a quartal-quintal base and melismatic ornamentations. All are elements of the tonal development typical for Tatar folk melodies. Another important detail in the melody of Byltyr is a repetitive ornamented tune within an anhemitonic tetrachord. A melody of
the “Entrance of Byltyr” is developing throughout the ballet and is accompanied by the harmony, which is essentially a reflection of the same tonal process in a different textural layer. It consists of an almost identical tonal complex and operates within the same quartal-quintal cells. The two famous valsees of the ballet are directly linked to the musical figure of Sujumbike and are the classical types of pentatonic melodies harmonized by the chords that often have that same mode feature. The melodic line of “Sujumbike variation” is built from the anhemitonic pentatonic trichords that are linked together.69

Masterfully intertwining pentatonic into the unusual harmonic progressions, F. Yarullin preserves the national tone for the entire duration of a ballet, thereby stressing its national belonging. The genies, shaitany, Shuraleh, and ubyri are all creatures of Tatar folk fantasy. Based on the folk musical and poetic traditions, F. Yarullin created the work that gained plaudits and wide-ranging recognition in both his homeland and abroad. Though created in 1941, Shuraleh remains the most famous Tatar musical composition to this day.

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69 Brazhnik, “Lado-garmonicheskaya stilistika baleta ‘Shurale.’"
Figure 6.5 Duet of Byltyr and Sujumbike from ballet *Shuraleh* by F. Yarullin
CONCLUSION

The folk music of Tatar people represents a unique musical tradition derived from the influence of Eastern, Arabic-Muslim, and Russian traditions. With its complicated turns of history, the Tatar nation endured many transformations which ultimately created its original musical style. Centuries of oppression affected and, essentially, shaped the national art of Tatars. One hallmark of Tatar music is its melancholic and meditative songs traditionally sung in a quiet voice. Another is its rather emotionally reserved manner of expression, which is neither overly sentimental nor overly dramatic. Finally, Tatar music is also known for its lack of sweeping, broad motifs. The richness of native Tatar musical language combined with academic compositional practices created unique works of art which inspired composers of the 20th century. I believe such works enrich the repertoire of curious performers and bring a new musical experience to Western listeners. From a performing perspective, this monograph will inform and educate musicians about the specific skills that are required for performing Tatar music. Developing a special state of emotion or a new technical talent needed for the execution of Tatar music would be beneficial for any well-rounded musician.

I hope my dissertation is helpful to future scholars of Tatar national music and provides a better understanding of the genre to English-speaking scholars and musicians.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


