

Circassian Music & Musicology

(Songs and melodies mentioned in the text and comprehended in the accompanying CD are marked by an asterisk)

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Circassian Culture and Folklore: Hospitality, Traditions, Cuisine, Festivals and Music (Kabardian, Cherkess, Adigean, Shapsugh and Diaspora) Chapter 5: Music

According to social scientists, the music of a nation is a reflection of its mores and psyche. It is also an expression of its love for life. Pleasant harmonic music delights the senses of man everywhere, and the Circassians, in spite of imperfection of their music, were charmed and cheered by it. Music was indispensable at festivals as accompaniment to dances and recitals of ancient and traditional poetry, and it certainly livened up their conversations.

Circassian music has always been rich in dance tunes and melodies, which are in general produced by an orchestra, as opposed to a single musician. The solo accordion player producing melodies for the songs and dances is a relatively recent introduction. The rhythm of the music was made to be in tune with the singing words by using different techniques and ad-lib modulations, which also served to adorn the melodies. Generally, dance music was played in 2/2 or 6/8 time with a background chorus (R. Adighe, 1956, p101).

Musical lore had been preserved by minstrels by oral transmission until the 1940s, when the process of collection and recording was started in earnest in a systematic manner. By the 1970s, much of the music and songs had been collected and preserved. Some songs commemorate events that go back to the fourth century AD. According to the Soviet (Russian) composer M. F. Gnesin (1937, p30), 'The musical art of the Circassians is very versatile and lively. It gives the impression of being the whole legacy of a rather sublime culture.'

Collection of music and songs started in the 19th century. However, systematic work only began in the Soviet period when many song collections were published. Books on history of Circassian music were also issued, toeing the line of communist historiography. Nevertheless, they remain seminal works indispensable in the study of Circassian music.

In the 19th century, a number of classical musical pieces and works were composed on Circassian themes, including (Daniel François Esprit) Auber's (1782-1871) *La circassienne: Opéra comique en trois actes* [1861; libretto by Eugène Scribe (1791-1861)]; Sir Henry Rowley Bishop's (1786-1855) opera *The Circassian Bride* (1809; words by Charles Ward); Johann Strauss's (1825-1899) 'Circassian March, op. 335'; Liszt's arrangement for piano of Glinka's 'March of the Circassians' (or 'Circassian March'), from *Ruslan and Ludmilla*; Léo Delibes' 'Circassian Dance' in the ballet suite *La Source* (1866); Sergei Rachmaninoff's (1873-1943) 'O sing no more Circassian maid, op. 4, no. 4'; Stephen Glover's ballad 'The Circassian's Dream' (1869; words by J. E. Carpenter); Franz von Suppé's *Fatinitza* [a comic opera in three acts] (1876; libretto is by F. Zell and Richard Genée, based on Eugène Scribe's libretto for *La Circassienne*: The opera opens in a Russian camp on the lower Danube. Vladimir, a Circassian cavalry lieutenant, is wakened from his dream of Lydia, a girl whom he has met but whose surname he does not know, and is ordered to act as the officer of the day); Augustus Voigt's (b. circa 1779) dance piece 'The Circassian'; A. Alabiev's 'Circassian Song' (for voice and piano); M. Holst's 'The Circassian Rondo' (1820); Wilhelm Iucho's 'Circassian Polka, op. 113, no. 3' (1854). In Georges Bizet's *Ivan IV* (1867; completed posthumously), an opera in four acts and six tableaux, there is a duet between Tsar Ivan and his Circassian wife Maria (Marie), and Prince Temriuk (Temrouk), her father, and Oleg, her brother, are featured.¹

The influence of Circassian folk music on Russian and Soviet composers in the 20th century, and the role that these musicians played in the development of Circassian classical music will be discussed at length.

Song

Ancient songs were usually performed in a singing voice, more or less drawn-out, but without missing the beauty of a single syllable. It was almost impossible to sing them without those tunes which gave the songs harmonic forms and brought verses into proper rhythm.

¹ An adaptation of Bizet's opera by Circassian classical musicians Zawir Zhiriq (Zaur Zhirikov) and Zhebre'iyl He'wpe (Jebraïl Khaupa) was staged in Nalchik in 2007 in celebration of the so-called 'Union' of Kabarda with Russia, a fictitious (non-)event used by the Russians as a pretext to perpetuate their hegemony over Circassia. The duet part was sung by the Circassian opera singers Muhediyn Batir (Batirov) and Asiyat Sherjes (Cherkesova).

Many of the ancient songs have been collected by Circassian researchers and scholars. Music-books of folk music and songs were first published in the 19th century. A very important collection of the time was *Music-Book of Kabardian and Balkar Songs*, published by Sergei Y. Taneyev, a Russian, in 1887. It included the scores of twenty songs. The Russian composer, Sergei N. Ryawzov, published a music-book of Kabardian songs in 1947.² Hesén Y. Qarden (Kardanov), a Circassian composer and musician, published *Song Collection* in 1960, and *Songs*, a collection of music-scores and words, in 1987.³

Qaplhen Tiqwe's *Circassian and Karachai Folk Songs and Dances*, published in Cherkessk, is a seminal collection of, and the reference on, folk and modern music of the Circassians in the Karachai-Cherkess Republic. The pieces are for wind orchestra, and they include such classics as 'Adiyixw', 'Zef'ak'we', 'Qesey', 'Qafe', 'Kabardinka', 'Mezgwäsche', and 'Wij'. Tiqwe, a Cherkess, is currently the President of the Union of Composers of the Republic of Adigea and is an accomplished and versatile composer and musician. He wrote about 300 folkloric and classical works, including a few opuses for traditional musical instruments. He is an ardent advocate of going back to the roots, to revive ancient music genres and present them in original forms.

Among the Kiakh (Western Circassians), Kuba Csaban (Gebelli) played a pivotal role in the collection of native songs and music. He published a large number of ancient chants and ballads with descriptions in his work *Folkloric Collection II. Ziramikw Qardenghwsch'* (Kardangushev) (b. 1918) and Vladimir Bereghwn (Baragunov) have collected, published and recorded many ancient songs, including some memorable Nart anthems. A number of their songs are included in the accompanying CD. Zubeir Yewaz (Evazov), who represents the new generation of traditionalists, studied the Circassian violin in Nalchik and has done work on collecting folk songs and melodies. He collaborated with Ziramikw Qardenghwsch' to preserve twelve Ubykh melodies, which he personally performs. He is the musical director of the National Dance Ensemble 'Hetiy' ('Khatti'), a group of young and talented musicians and dancers, and the artistic director of the Sirin Ensemble, which has a repertoire of ancient and traditional songs and melodies played on authentic Circassian instruments (no accordion or baraban).

² S. N. Ryawzov, *Ten Kabardian Songs*, Nalchik, 1947. [Music book]

³ H. Kardanov, *Songs*, Nalchik: Elbrus Book Press, 1987. [A collection of music scores and words, 84 pages]

These two groups play an important role in the dissemination and propagation of the Circassian musical lore amongst the young. Yewaz's most recent CD 'Adige Pshinalhexer' ('Circassian Melodies'), which utilizes authentic traditional musical instruments, includes a song ('T'oteresh yi Bzhipe Diqwaqwe' ['T'oteresh's Two-Pronged Spear']) and melodies from the Nart Epos.⁴ The epic recording received the seal of approval from the Circassian composer Zhebre'iyl He'wpe. His version of 'Labe Desxem ya Thewsixe'* ('The Plaintive Song of the Inhabitants of the Laba') is available on the accompanying CD.

History of song

The oldest surviving songs are those of the Nart Epos. The main themes are those usually associated with heroic tales: truth, honesty, patriotism, bravery, and struggle against oppression. Songs assumed the form of ballads, poems and song-poems. The corpus of Nart songs formed the core of Circassian classical music, which has been going strong for centuries.

The troubadours forged the Nart tales in song-like forms to make them more endearing to the listeners, which also helped to preserve them through turbulent years. Melody, which was usually short, was produced by voice or a Circassian violin, the main theme repeated throughout a song. Rhythm was usually fast, reminiscent of dance music and remained unchanged as the music was developed. However, the tempo was varied in accordance with variations on the main theme of the song and as other minor ones were introduced. The melodies of dance music were brisk and spirited. Melancholy tunes were not very frequent, lively music being the norm.

Nart songs started to be collected in the middle of the 19th century, and by the late 1960s the bulk of the corpus had been penned down. In addition, the music was set down to paper, and some of it was recorded. A monumental work was published by the record company Melodiya in 1987, a four-record opus that included some of the more famous anthems and melodies.⁵ The Nart tales were also a source of inspiration for Russian classical musicians who wrote many works on the theme. Truvor K. Sheibler composed a few works including a short symphonic overture 'The Narts' in 1951, and an opera-ballet of the same title in

⁴ 'T'oteresh' is a variation on the name of Toteresh, one of the fearsome personages of the Nart sagas.

⁵ 'Adige Nart Pshinalhexer' ['Circassian Nart Melodies'], Melodiya, 1987. [Features the great Vladimir Bereghwn]

1956-57. Alexandre V. Mosolov (1900-1973) wrote a symphonic suite 'Song of the Narts' in 1955.

In the Soviet period, Circassian scholars had to reinterpret the history of national music in the light of prevalent ideology. Thus, feudalism was purported to have given rise to melancholy and dirge music as these expressed the agony of the masses under the tyranny of the feudal lords who usurped and oppressed them. The popular songs 'Sermaxwe'* (Woe unto me!), 'Gwascheghagh yi Ghibze'* (The Elegy of Gwascheghagh), and 'Adiyixw'* were emblematic of the genre.

However, since some 'joyful' tunes and songs had been handed down from the 'Dark Ages', historiographers had to concede that not all music was of the bleak kind. For from this era we have the classic 'The Song of Andeimirqan'* , 'Martina', 'Dameley', 'The Song of Bzethel's Two Sons'* , to name but a few. There was also a large corpus of satirical and humorous songs, patters and parables, reflecting the humour and good cheer of the people. Among popular songs of banter were 'Kwipse', with light words and lively music, and the classic 'Siy Paq!'* ('My Snub-Nosed One!').

Scholars divided the Soviet period into five phases: the Civil War, collectivization, World War II, post-War, and modern, which starts from the latter half of the 1950s. During the first stage extending from 1917-19, songs were composed based either on melodies of old heroic epics, or on similar tunes, to make them catchier. Nevertheless, some songs were composed using new melodies. Among songs of this era were 'Unleavened-Bread Song', 'Sergo Ordzhonikidze', 'Ch'esh Hemashe', and many others.

During the second phase of 'social building', songs were written to reflect the joy of the people. They were similar to dance songs, but with novel rhythms and tempos. In the 1920s and 30s, Circassian songs were influenced by traditional Russian songs, those of Soviet Russian composers and of neighbouring peoples, as the drive for cultural unity began to take effect, helped by the spread of radio. New forms were adapted not only for the melodies but also for the lyrics. The changes were more pronounced in patriotic and lyrical songs. Previously, most songs used three strophes, but then songs in four strophes started to appear.

During World War II, two song genres dominated the scene, namely patriotic-heroic and dirges. 'Temaze Terqan' represents the first, and 'Black' the latter. After the war, works on themes of peace and creativity abounded, and many lyrical songs were composed. In the modern period, the main themes were the Party, Lenin and the Soviet

State. Early songs were concerned with local issues, but then Internationalism and friendship of the peoples of the world became the principal themes. Songs mainly assumed march-like and waltz-like characters.

In the two years leading to the 400th celebration of Kabarda's 'Union' with Russia in 1957, all the Circassian cultural institutions were put into high gear to produce high-quality works fit for show on the prestigious stages of Moscow. In this task, these institutions were helped by a group of Russian cultural workers sent to Nalchik for this purpose. Putting aside the objections to the validity of the basis of the celebrations, this period witnessed an efflorescence of Circassian music and other aspects of culture and folklore. In addition, many seminal publications were timed to see the light in 1957.

Song genres

Circassian musicologists have divided ancient and traditional songs and melodies into a number of categories: sacred, Nart, heroic/historical, elegiac, plaintive, agrarian/pastoral, nuptial, cradle, etc. Already some of these genres have been mentioned in the text.

Sacred hymns went back to the pre-Christian era, when they were used in pagan ceremonies. Prayer chants were hymned in single voice and chorus. In the Christian and Muslim eras, the ancient chants maintained their form but the themes were changed to suit the new faiths. According to Nogmov, there was some diminution in music output during the Muslim period, due to prohibition, and he claimed that in his time minstrels had totally disappeared. However, musical tradition survived the period with almost a whole skin, and bards kept playing their lyres for almost a century thenceforth.

The Circassians still preserve a number of very ancient Pantheonic/Christian chants and prayers that have been documented and recorded for posterity. A number of these have already been mentioned in the text of the book. Specimens are available in the accompanying CD.

The songs of the Nart Epos have already been discussed. There is still a broad repertoire of these epic songs and chants extant in Circassia. A selection of the age-old chants is included in the accompanying CD.

Circassian bards composed many kinds of songs. Heroic and epic songs were sung in honour of champions who accomplished great feats. Every nation needs its ample share of heroes and conquerors, and this genre provided young warriors with ideals to aspire to. After each famous battle, a descriptive song was composed. 'The Song of

Andeimirqan’*, the hero who championed the cause of the poor, a Circassian Robin Hood, stands out as a classic. His exploits inspired Sheibler to compose a cantata ‘Andeimirqan’ in his honour in 1939. Heroic songs were based on wonderful poetry and beautiful tunes, and their structure was very close to song-poems and ballads.

Heroic songs were closely associated with songs of praise, usually composed to immortalize feats of war. Heirs, kinsmen or friends of great warriors who fell in battle commissioned bards to expound their heroism. When a minstrel finished composing a ballad, he sang it first in the presence of connoisseurs who acted as censors and editors. It was only when the panel of experts pronounced its judgement in favour that the song was promulgated. The following poem is an account of the heroism of Prince Yelgheroqwe Qanoqwe, potentate of all the Beslanay, in one of the myriad wars between the Circassians and their mortal enemies, the Crimean Tatars and Kalmyks:

An arrow bolted from the Hero’s bow,
Shimmering across the sky,
Presaging certain death to the Khan,
And his inimical black swarms.
His dutiful steed Yemish,
Crushed the skulls of the Kalmyks
With his mighty hooves,
Laying myriad corpses all around.
The Tatar vanguard,
Witnessing such a carnage,
Took to its heels,
Consumed with fear.

After his demise, he was survived by
His one true friend: his Sabre.

Historical songs are of special interest, being the only native accounts of history until the 19th century. Examples of this genre include ‘Bziyiqwe War’ and ‘War of Princes and Nobles’, which recount episodes in the wars between princes and serfs. ‘Kabardian Night Raid’ tells an episode in Kabardian history that goes back to the 17th century.

Laments and dirges (*ghibze*) were composed in commemoration of the dead or catastrophic events. They were also a reflection of the national character of the people and their outlook on the world. The most memorable elegies are those composed during the Caucasian War and

subsequent expulsion. Extracts from the emotionally-charged ‘Yistambilak’we’*—‘Exodus’ (literally: ‘Going to Istanbul’, referring to the great 19th century forced migration of the Circassians by the Russians)— is presented:

ИстамбылакIуэ*

Exodus

Ой, Истамбыл гъуэгу гуцэри,

Our path to Istanbul, our *Via Dolorosa*,

Ой, уи нашэкъашэщи,

Oh, how thou twist and turn!

Си къэшэну дахэри

My fair fiancée

БжэIупэм кыIутщи,

Is standing by the threshold,

Ой, Истамбылым дашэ мыгъуэри, дэ!

Woe unto us, for exile is our lot!

...

...

Адыгэжь бэракъ гуцэри,

Old Adiga Banner,

Ой, жьыбгъэм зэрехъэри,

Ruffled by the wind,

Ди деж я хъыбархэри

The account of our lives

Хэт фэ кыфхуихъыну?

Who shall carry to thee?

Ой, Истамбылым дашэ мыгъуэри, дэ!

Alas, they are herding us to Istanbul!

In the old chant ‘Adige Paschtihxem ya Ghibze’* (‘The Elegy of the Circassian Sultans’), the fate of the Circassian Mamluks is lamented.⁶ The death knell of the 135-year old Circassian Mamluk dynasty pealed in 1516, following the defeat of Qansuh al-Ghawri by the Ottoman Sultan Selim I in the battle of Marj Dabiq, which took place north of Aleppo in Syria. In January 1517, Selim overthrew the last Mamluk Dynast, Tuman Bey, and took Cairo.

Songs sung by the bed of the sick and injured, and women in childbirth had many varieties. These differed from others in that the singers were divided into two parties, each endeavouring to outmatch the other. In one variation, it was necessary to have a chorus leader, not required in the rest. In general, these songs were chanted in loud voices, in a drawling manner and with distinctive melodies. Apart from amusing the patient, these songs ensured that he stayed awake all the time. It was believed that evil spirits lurked nearby, ready to take possession of the patient’s soul once he fell asleep. A number of songs of vigil over the sick have already been presented in another part of this book.

Love songs were usually composed by maidens, and were sung only within the confines of the family. The romantic vision of a lovelorn bard serenading under the window of a fair damsel had no place in the stern settings of the Caucasus. Some of the more famous ballads include ‘The Song that Made the Princess Cry’, ‘Adiyixw’*, and the song of Cyrace.

Wedding songs were divided into ceremonial songs like ‘Weriydade’, chanted during bridal homecoming, and lighter ones sung at dance festivals. ‘Weriydade’ was a generic song that was performed at many occasions, including at harvests. It is perhaps the last vestige of the cult of Dade the clan hero, the head of the household, whose immortal soul transmigrated to *hedrix*e upon death. Beyond doubt this cult was engendered in the yonder days of patriarchy. Later Dade was used for ‘grandfather’, the esoteric denotations being lost in the maze of history, but still the term invoking veneration and respect for the traditional head of the family. Other wedding songs included ‘Song of the Bride’s Homecoming’ and ‘Song of the Woman’s Homecoming’.

⁶ The song is also categorized as a plaintive song ‘Adige Paschtihxem ya Thewsixe’ (‘The Plaintive Song of Circassian Sultans’). For words (in Kabardian with Russian translation) and sheet music of the chant, see V. H. Bereghwn and Z. P’. Qardenghwsch’, 1990, pp 212-16. The words of the song (in Kabardian) are also available in Z. Qardenghwsch’, 1979, pp 29-30. In addition, the words (with the sheet music) are found in Z. Qardenghwsch’, 1969, pp 15-16.

Bards or *jegwak'we*

Speaking about Circassian song and poetry, it is impossible not to mention their versifiers and balladeers. In the old days, musical traditions were upheld by a professional class of roving minstrels whose members were collectively and singly known as *jegwak'we*, or players. Some of the more accomplished of these were lured by, and became attached to the aristocratic classes. In origin, the bards were usually commoners, and they did not receive any special education or training, relying on their inborn talents. They engaged exclusively in the art of poetry and song. These bards singly or in bands roamed the land; their instruments affording them not only safe conduct, but also rapturous welcome. They performed songs and recited heroic poems at festivals and for the pleasure of the upper classes, which received them in their exclusive guesthouses.

The members of this class composed songs commemorating sanguinary events, national and glorious deeds and feats of distinction in battle, composed biographies of celebrated men and sang ancient songs. They also took part in military campaigns, singing war chants that instilled courage and fortitude in the warriors. In describing the battle to take the Khazar City of Sarkala (Sarkel) on the Don, a poet recounted:

The singer kept chanting atop his white steed,
And the horn blowers filled the air with blood-curdling screeches.
Our heroes, animated, performed feats of glory,
And the flames of war engulfed the lands beyond the Azov.

They were in many respects not very unlike the bards and minstrels of the Franks and Celts. In this manner, these singers preserved the exploits of the ancestors, by transmitting them to their progeny. They also kept in memory much of the national lore, history, and literature.

These minstrels found in this occupation not only subsistence but also wealth. Every prince retained a few of these singers in his court, bestowing opulent gifts upon them. Apart from their high status as entertainers, they composed songs in praise of their patron. A potentate had high stakes riding on keeping his bards happy to escape their virulent tongues, which could perpetuate airs of malediction for ages—a sound case of the tongue being sharper than the sword. When a folk poet composed a song and it was approved for release, singers from neighbouring regions were summoned to listen to the song for as many times as it took for all the audience to learn it by heart. Then these went

back to their villages and sang it, thus spreading it by word of mouth (A. Keshokov, 1981, p15). In the nearer past, these musicians included violin-players, poets and singers. According to Askerbi Shorten (Shortanov; b. 1916), these ‘players’ were the voices of the masses, singing for freedom and the downfall of tyranny—a repetitive Soviet theme that was taken to the realm of the ridiculous and beyond.

The Qilishbiy Village (now Nartan) minstrel, Bechmirze Pasch’e (1859-1936), apart from being the founder of modern Kabardian poetry, was a very versatile songwriter, in the best tradition of the bards. He immortalized the Kabardian revolt of 1913 against Tsarist rule in the famous song ‘Dzeliqwe War’. He made use of the traditional heroic song genre to convey his ideas, as in ‘Wezi Murat yi Wered’* (‘The Song of Murat Wezi’). A collection of his poems and compositions (*Wisaghxer*) was published in 1963. The ‘ancient bards’ survived well into the 20th century, roaming the land and delivering their wares to enchanted listeners. Among them were Lashe Aghnoqwe (1851-1918) from the village of Doqwschiqwey in Kabarda; As-hed Schojen, a Kabardian player of the harp (*pshinediqwaqwe*); Sehiyd Mizhey (1850-1949); Muse Mizhey (1894-?); As-hed Hex’wpassch’e from the village of Qex’wn in Kabarda; Mirzebech Werdoqwe (1884-?) from the village of Hebez in present-day Karachai-Cherkessia, a famous singer of Nart songs in his time; and Yelmirze Schawezch (1882-1979) from Anzorey in Kabarda, who played ancient Nart anthems on his *shich’epshine*.

Modern bards

The tradition of the bards was continued by Amirx’an Hex’wpassch’e (Khavpachev) (1882-1972; son of above-mentioned As-hed Hex’wpassch’e), who composed a song entitled ‘A Song for Lenin’ on his death in 1924:

Lenin, our Great Sun!
The lore you have bequeathed
Is a magnificent memorial for
The masses of the world
That they do not forget.

In the 1930s, at the height of collectivization, he wrote two topical ditties eulogizing the new era ‘Be as good as your word’ and ‘Kolkhoz Song’. He published a number of books, some of which were translated to Russian. In 1957, Hex’wpassch’e was decorated with the highest Soviet accolade, the Lenin Order. His son Hesen took up the torch and became

an accomplished bard in his own right. He joined the Philharmonic Symphony Ensemble (the forerunner of the Kabardino-Balkarian State Philharmonic) and worked with such illustrious musicians as Hezhdal Qwnizch, Muhezhir Pschihesch'e, Qanschobiy Qwschhe, and others. One of his dance pieces, 'Yelmirze yi Qafe'* ('The Dance of Yelmirze'), played on the *shich'epshine*, is available on the accompanying CD.

Women musicians played some role in propagating and developing traditional songs. Chief among them was K'wratse Qashirghe who was born in 1901. She was a remarkable musician and wrote many songs like 'Dance of Love' and 'Partisan Dance'. In 1950, she composed a song 'Ali' in honour of the great writer Ali Schojents'ik'w. Recordings of some of the melodies from her repertoire are available in the accompanying CD. Roughly contemporaneous with Qashirghe, and equally famous in the Diaspora, was the Jordanian musician Abeeda Wimar, who kept alive many of the ancient tunes and composed new ones. Her repertoire included the 300-year old 'Gwanepsch'iy'. One of her music pieces is available on the accompanying CD.

Around 1930, Yindris Qezher composed his famous (some say infamous) song 'Marzhe, Marzhe, Qerehelhq!' (Let's go, all ye masses!). This anthem encapsulated the Communist creed and depicted the struggle of the masses to create the new system, with Beit'al Qalmiq (Kalmikov) as a national (Soviet) hero. Zalimx'an Dischech' was best known for the song 'Glory Road' celebrating 400 years of the 'voluntary' joining of Kabarda to Russia in 1557. He was duly awarded the Medal for Heroic Labour by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. His song 'Nexwsch Wij'* ('The Dawn *Wij*') has kept its popularity to this day:

Нэхуш уджыр ирагъажьэ,

The dawn *wij* has begun,

ЗэIэпэхьухэри йоуджэI.

The dancers are moving round.

Уэзым синэр птедыями,

I only have eyes for you,

НэгъуэщI щIалэхэмкIэ усфIоплэжI!

Yet, you keep glancing at other lads.

Other songwriters of the time included Ziramikw Qardenghwsch', still going strong in the new millennium, Muhemed Schheghepso, Beit'al Pshinoqwe.

Among recent traditional musicians, a special place is reserved for Wimar Thebisim (Umar Tkhabisimov; 1919-1998), whose fame has spread outside the Caucasus to all the diaspora communities. Among his best known songs are 'We Winiytw!'^{*} ('Thine Eyes!'), co-written with Qirimiz Zhene, 'Wiyts'er Madiyne heme Mariyne?' ('Is your name Madina or Marina?'), written by Liywan Ghwbzhoqwe in 1962, and the tender ballad 'Gwm yi Wered' ('Song of the Heart'), co-written with Qirimiz Zhene.

One of the best singers of the 1970s and 80s was the late Vladimir Bereghwn (1939-1998), Honoured Cultural Worker of the Russian Federation and People's Artist of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic, whose powerful operatic voice was best suited for ancient anthems. He recorded a number of Pantheonic chants, including 'Mezgwäsche'^{*} ('Forest-Lady'). His wide Nart repertoire included an emotive rendering of 'Nartizch Wered' ('Song of the ancient Narts'), which causes tingling sensations in the back of one's head, 'Ashemez yi Pshinalhe'^{*} ('Ashemez's Melody'), 'Bedinoqwe yi Pshinalhe' ('Bedinoqwe's Melody'), 'Sosriqwe Maf'e Qeih' ('Sosriqwe Fetches Fire'), and many others. His heroic/historical repertory included 'Senjeley yi Wered'^{*} ('The Song of Prince Sanjalay'), in which he evokes the heroism of the medieval prince-warrior. His version of the (Plains Shapsugh) comic wedding song 'Siy Paq!'^{*} ('My Pug-Nosed One!') is one of the high points of Circassian music. His work merits international recognition.

Folk singers of note include Hezhdal Qwnizch (b. 1930), Honoured Artist of the Kabardino-Balkarian ASSR and soloist of the Choir of the Television and Radio Broadcasting of the Kabardino-Balkarian ASSR, who recorded many songs and chants, including the emotionally-charged 'Zhambotre Yeqwbre ya Thewsixe'^{*} ('The Plaintive Song of Zhambot and Yeqwb'). Husein Mereimiqwe (b. 1948) is the Circassian Caruso, singing in the best tradition of belle-canto. He also sings traditional songs, such as 'Adige Jegw'^{*} ('Circassian Dance Party'), and 'Anedelhxwbze'^{*} ('Mother Tongue'). Anatoly Weter (Otarov) possesses a powerful, yet lyrical voice suitable for such energetic songs as 'Xekw Wered' ('Song for the Fatherland'), and 'Gwm yi wered' ('Song of the Heart'), both written by Wimar Thebisim and Qirimiz Zhene. Recordings of the anthem-like 'Diy nex'izhxem qitxwefsch'am winafe'^{*} ('The Decree of Our Elders') and two Nart songs, namely 'Baterez'^{*} ('Baterez') and 'Nisrenzchach'e'^{*} ('Nisrenzchach'e'), are

available on the accompanying CD. Zhiraslhen Ghwch'el' has distinguished himself as a singer of heroic/Historical ballads, including emotionally charged performances of the two *abrek* chants 'Chertiy Yismeil'* ('Devilish Yismeil') and 'Wezi Murat'* ('Murat Wezi').

The baritone Zawir Tut (Tutov) (b. 1951), Honoured Artist of the Russian Federation and Minister of Culture in the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic, has a rich repertoire, including opera, traditional, Russian and international songs. A number of his songs, such as the Nart anthem 'Bedinoqwe yi Pshinalhe'* ('Bedinoqwe's Melody') and the elegiac 'Yistambilak'we'* ('Exodus'), are available on the accompanying CD. Valentina Sosmaq (Sosmakova) has recorded many traditional songs. Her cover of 'Zhaghwel'im Yiratam yi Ghibze'* ('The Elegy of the Lass Given in Marriage to the Obnoxious Man') is both deeply emotive and superb. Cheslav Anzarokov's operatic voice transports traditional songs to uncharted heights, as in his rendition of 'Mix'wr'alhin'* ('Seal-Ring'), written by Yis-heq Meshbash, the music by J. Natx'we. 'Eweis Zeiwische, Honoured Artist of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic, is both a distinguished song writer and singer.

Tamara Nexay possesses a powerful, yet lyrical soprano voice, suitable for operatic, traditional and modern songs. Cheriym Nexwsch (Nakhushev) has gained a solid reputation as a singer of traditional and modern songs. Amongst his popular songs are 'Daxezhan'* ('Daxezhan'=name of a girl) and 'Adige lhepqir qofe!'* ('The Circassian people are dancing!'). Olga Soqwr (Sokurova), Honoured Artist of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic and People's Artist of the Karachai-Cherkess Republic, is a singer of both traditional and modern songs. Sulht'an X'izchroqwe and Satanay Qezan (who sings with the group Fabrika) are popular singers across Russia.

The musician Vladimir K. Kodzokov (Qwedzoqwe) published a book on Circassian singers in 1992.

Bands of bards

The Adigean State Folk Song Ensemble 'Yislhamiy'— 'Yislhamiy' is one of a number of folk song groups that keep the old bard traditions alive. It boasts of a varied and rich repertoire of ancient and traditional songs. It celebrated its 15th anniversary in January 2006. Its founder and artistic director is Aslhengeriy Nexay, People's Artist of the Russian Federation. The choreography of the Ensemble is designed by Viktoria Yedij. The Ensemble boasts of a number of world-class singers, including Susanna X'wak'we, Shemsudin Qwmiqw, and Rim Schawe.

Bzchamiy—Bzchamiy (literally: Circassian *Zurna*) is a Kabardian group with an impressive range of songs and dance music. It was established and is directed by Leonid Beiqwl (Bekulov), Honoured Cultural Worker of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic.

Zchiw Song Ensemble—Zchiw (literally: Chorus) is a newly established Adigean group that utilizes ancient musical instruments (no accordion or baraban), and plays authentic songs of the bards as they would have been heard prior to the 19th century. Its directors and principal personnel are Zamudin Ghwch'e and Zawir Neghwey, both singers of considerable talent. Neghwey also plays the *shich'epshine* (Circassian violin). Other singers of note include Artur Abida.

Mamlyuki Ensemble—Mamlyuki (literally: The Mamluks) was established by Amirx'an Hex'wpasch'e (Jr.) (b. 1980), a singer of traditional and ancient songs who is the great grandchild of the great bard Amirx'an As-hed Hex'wpasch'e. A number of ancient songs sung by him are included in the accompanying CD. The Mamlyuki Ensemble has recently issued a CD entitled 'Qeberdey' ('Kabarda'), comprehending a number of traditional songs, including 'Wezi Murat yi Wered' ('The Song of Murat Wezi'), 'Leine Daxechey!'^{*} ('Beautiful Lena!'), and 'Daxežhan'^{*} ('Daxežhan'=name of a girl). Amirx'an's rendering of the highly emotive 'Qireiplhe diy adexer!'^{*} ('Look, our forefathers!') makes one well up with tears.

Vaghwebe Ensemble—The Vaghwebe (literally: Constellation) Ensemble is a modern group with a repertoire of songs in both Circassian and Russian.

(Exemplars of these band's repertoires are found in the accompanying CD)

Western classical music

The Circassians were first exposed to the world of classical music during the Soviet period. Musical, opera and ballet theatres were built and chamber music groups, philharmonic societies, orchestras, and musical drama companies were set up. There was a lively music-scene in Nalchik, where the famous Russian bass Fyodor Chaliapin sang in his time. Many native classical composers appeared in this period, products of the efficient music education system.

In 1943, the Kabardino-Balkarian State Philharmonic started out as the Philharmonic Symphony Ensemble, transforming to a fully-fledged Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra four years later. In 1946, the Soviet Government decreed that a Kabardian opera school be set apart at the

Leningrad Conservatoire. Singers, choirmasters, pianists, musicians, conductors, producers, and composers, studied at the school, and after graduation returned to Kabarda to partake in the budding music-scene. In 1950-51 some new graduates toured the main towns of Kabarda giving, among others, performances of Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* and Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Tsar's Bride*.

In 1956, a music college was inaugurated in Nalchik. It had choral-conducting, vocal music, piano and folk instruments departments. In 1960, the Kabardino-Balkarian Cultural-Instructive College was opened with choral, traditional instruments, and theatrical departments.

The first music school for children in Kabardino-Balkaria was opened in Nalchik in 1937. Subsequently, music schools mushroomed in many of the towns and villages of Kabardino-Balkaria. The efficient Soviet system of musical education was geared to spot young talent. After an audition, six-year-old students were admitted to these seven-year elementary schools. Upon graduation, students had the option of attending secondary music schools. Prodigious children could join one of the ten-year boarding schools at the conservatories, and then study at the latter after graduation. Musical education was one of the few success stories of the system.

In 1959, the Kabardino-Balkarian Branch of the Union of Composers of the USSR was established. In the late 1960s, the Union of Composers of Kabardino-Balkaria was set up to look after the interests of the increasing number of composers. At the fourth plenum session of the Union held in 1973, the President, Hezhbechir Hex'wpassch'e, talked about the compositions that came out in the preceding three years, thus taking up the account he left off in 1963. In two days, works composed in the three-year period by Hesen Qarden (Kardanov), Muhediyn Bale (Balov), Vladimir Mole (Molov), Zhebre'iy (Jebrail) He'wpe (Khaupa) and Aslhen Dawir (Daurov), were performed. The present head of the Union is the composer Vladimir Mole.

The Union of Composers of the Republic of Adigea was established in 1992 under the leadership of Qaplhén Tiqwe. Member composers include Cheslav Anzeroqwe (Anzarokov), Aslhencheriy Nexay, Alla Sokolova, Bayzet Qeghezezh (Kagazezhev), Aslhen Gwt'e (Gotov), Tatyana Sukhova, and Murat X'wpe (Khupov). Their compositions and publications are detailed (in Russian) on the website of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Adigea.

Symphonic music

Initially, the nucleus of symphonic music on Circassian themes was made up of works of Russian musicians writing on traditional themes. The first ever symphonic work was Y. K. Shaposhnikov's 'Kabardian Dance for Symphony Orchestra'. In 1936, Arseni R. Abraamov wrote two melodies 'Qafe' and 'Yislhemey' for symphony orchestra and the popular 'Kabardian March'. These works were of primitive nature, the orchestration not being fully developed. The composers were aware that if the music was to be accepted by the ordinary people, it had to correspond closely to the original themes.

A major development occurred in Abraamov's symphonic suite *Aul Batir*, written in 1940 for Askerbi Shorten's play 'Batir's Village'. In 1946, on the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Republic, Ryawzov composed a symphonic suite based on three dances 'Qafe', 'Yislhemey' and 'Wij', which adhered closely to the original themes. On the 30th anniversary of establishment of the republic, Nikolai Peiko wrote 'Overture to Joy' on Kabardian themes. It was debuted in Nalchik, with A. S. Apkarian as conductor.

Thus far, all symphonic works were written and conducted by either Russians or Armenians, who boasted of long classical music traditions. In the early 1950s, a new generation of Circassian composers began to make their presence felt on the music-scene. In 1952, Hesen Qarden composed his first work, a symphonic scene 'My Native Country'. In 1959, Muhediyn F'. Bale wrote a symphonic suite *Qizbrun* based on the play of the same name performed by the Kabardian Theatre Group. One of the first native conductors was Kh. B. Afaunov (Af'ewine).

Vocal & choral

The first ever cantata on a Circassian theme was Sheibler's 'Andeimirqan'. In 1946, Ryawzov wrote *Cantata to Joy* for chorus and orchestra. The Soviet Georgian composer Vano Muradeli (1908-1970) composed the choral work *Kabardinka* in the mid-1950s. Qarden wrote one of the best vocal works *Light of Friendship*, a cantata for soloist, chorus and orchestra, which was premiered in Moscow on June 20th 1957, on the 400th anniversary of 'incorporation' of Kabarda into Russia. In 1961, he composed another cantata *My Country*. In the early 1970s, he wrote an oratorio *Timeless* in memory of Lenin and a symphonic poem *My Republic*. Around the same time, Vladimir composed the cantata *The Might of the Narts*, and Bale the symphonic poem *The Intrepid Red Horsemen*.

The Choir of the Television and Radio Broadcasting of the Kabardino-Balkarian ASSR was organized in 1965. Choirmasters (and choirmistresses) of note include the Honoured Artists of the Russian Federation B. Zh. Blenaova (Blenawe) and M. M. Kunizhev (Qwnizch).

Stage works: opera & ballet

The Kabardino-Balkarian State Musical Theatre was inaugurated in Nalchik on 27 January 1968. The works of many famous musicians were staged at the Theatre, including Leoncavallo's opera *The Clowns*, which was staged in 1974. It was produced by Beiqaldi and most of the personnel were Circassians, including Muhamediyh Zhilqwe (Zhilokov), H. Siybech (Sibekov), and Qanschobiy Kwet (Kotov).

The first full-blooded Circassian operas were *Daxenaghwe* and *Madiyne*, the first being composed by Vladimir Mole in 1969, and the other a joint project by Qarden and Bale in 1970 (premiered in Nalchik). The libretto of *Madiyne* was written by Hezhbechir Hex'wpassch'e based on the tragic play of the same name written by the great literary figure Ali Schojents'ik'w (1900-1942) in 1928. *Daxenaghwe* is based on Zalimx'an Aqsire's play of the same name. Mole also composed *Qambotre Latsere* (Qambot and Latse) in 1976 based on Ali Schojents'ik'w's novel in verse of the same name (written in 1934-6).

Opera singers of note included the late bass Ahmed Pasch'e (Akhmed Pachev; b. 1938), grandchild of Bechmirze Pasch'e and Honoured Artist of the Russian Federation, whose repertoire covered the role of Qambot in Mole's opera *Qambot and Latse*, and he also sang in the opera *Madiyne*. He was a soloist with the Kabardino-Balkarian State Philharmonic. Muhamediyh Zhilqwe (Zhilkov), People's Artist of the Kabardino-Balkarian ASSR, worked with the State Musical Theatre in the period 1969-1988. He played the role of the archer in Truvor K. Sheible's opera-ballet *The Narts* in 1957 in Moscow. One of the more accomplished opera artists is the Kabardian singer Natalia (Natasha) Gastasheva (Ghestashe) (b. 1940), People's Artist of the RSFSR. The lyric-dramatic soprano also recorded many Circassian and Russian traditional songs, transforming them into classical gems. Her rendition of 'Adige Maqame'* (Circassian Melody) is very emotive indeed. Melodiya issued a number of records of her songs, including 'Nataliya Gastasheva Sings'. She is currently a professor at the North Caucasus State Institute of Fine Arts in Nalchik (established in 1992; it has a music faculty).

Other illustrious names in the world of Circassian opera singing include the pioneers Qanschobiy Kwet (Kotov), Hechiym Siybech (Sibekov), Svetlana Beghwetizh, Vladimir Bereghwn (Baragunov), Valentina Sosmaq (Sosmakova), (the lyrical baritone) X'wsiyn Ghwet (soloist with the Karachai-Cherkess State Philharmonic Society and People's Artist of the Russian Federation), and the current generation of singers Albech X'wepsirjen (Albert Khupsergenov), Honoured Artist of the Russian Federation; Hesen Debaghwe (Dabagov), Honoured Artist of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic; Aslhenbiy Shejehesch'e (Shekikhachev); Muhediyn Batir (Batirov), Honoured Artist of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic and soloist in the Kabardino-Balkarian State Musical Theatre; Asiyat Sherjes (Cherkesova), Honoured Artist of the Kabardino-Balkarian and Karachai-Cherkess republics and soloist in the Kabardino-Balkarian State Musical Theatre; Mariana Daw (Daova), Honoured Artist of the Russian Federation; Maya Beischoqwe (Beschokova), People's Artist of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic; Ali Tashlo, Honoured Artsit of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic; Liywan Yemqwzh (Emkuzhev); and the tenor Timur Gwaze (Guazov), a soloist with the Kabardino-Balkarian State Philharmonic. The new crop of talented artists include Juletta Mez (Mezov) and Madiyne Mambet (Mambetov), both singers with the Kabardino-Balkarian State Musical Theatre.

The tenor Aslan Namitok was born in Krasnodar and studied in the Vocal Department of the St. Petersburg Conservatoire. He is a soloist with the St. Petersburg Chamber Philharmonic Society, and is considered one of the best tenors in opera today. The soprano Marina Shagwch (Shaguch) (b. 1964), Honoured Artist of the Russian Federation, was also born in Krasnodar. She has been working as a soloist with the Mariinsky Opera and Ballet Theatre in St. Petersburg since 1990. She has achieved international renown.

Vladimir Mole (Molov) composed the ballet *The Legend of the Mountains* in 1971.

Influential composers

Arseni M. Abraamov—Abraamov (1886-1944) was born in Novocherkessk. He studied music in Moscow and in 1922 he went to Kabarda and was immediately interested in local folk songs, collecting about 300 airs during his lifetime. He wrote the cantata 'The People's Good Fortune' and *Kabardian Symphonic Dances*, both in 1936. He worked for many years on a book on Kabardian folk music, but it never saw the light.

Muhediyn F'. Bale—Bale (Balov) (1923-1984) was born in the village of Kenzha in Kabarda. A native Kabardian, he was sent with a group of young Kabardian men and women to the Leningrad Conservatoire in 1946. He studied composition under Yuri Kochyurov for about 4 years. Bale wrote about 200 songs, romances and instrumental pieces, including *Qenemet and Qesbolet*, a symphonic suite (1960), *Five Symphonic Dances*, based on Kabardian, Adigean, Cherkess, Balkarian and Karachai melodies (1961), *Kabardino-Balkaria*, a symphonic poem (1961), probably his finest work, *Madiyne*, music to the play by the same name (1961), and *The Plains of Argudan*, a symphonic scene (1961).

Hesen Y. Qarden—Qarden (Kardanov) was born in Shejem I in Kabarda in 1923. In 1947, he was admitted to the Leningrad Conservatoire, where he studied vocal art under K. S. Yisachenko, and composition. He graduated in 1954. Qarden was a prolific composer and he delved into most classical music genres, including opera. Among his best works are *In the Homeland*, pieces for symphony orchestra, *Sharjes*, a cantata, 1957, *Overture to Joy*, on Kabardian and Balkarian themes, 1960, *Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra*, 1960, *Three Symphonic Dances*, 1960, *My Republic*, a cantata, 1961, *Symphonic Poem*, 1961, and *The Evening in the Village*, a symphonic fantasia, 1961.

Truvor K. Sheibler—Sheibler (1900-1960) was born in Riga. In 1939, he went to Kabarda and spent the next twenty years there, working diligently on development of Circassian classical music. He composed a symphonic scene *Adiyixw* in 1948, and *Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra on Kabardian Themes* in 1951. In 1956-1957, he wrote an opera-ballet *The Narts*, the libretto written by Beit'al Kwesh. This work was composed of 15 musical numbers and it featured as its principal heroes Sosriqwe, Baterez, Ashemez, and Satanay. It was staged at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow on 1 July 1957, with Bilal Qashirghe singing and dancing the role of Sosriqwe and Valentina Sosmaq (Sosmakova) that of Satanay. Sheibler (1948) wrote an account of the development of Kabardian music in the Soviet years.

Boris H. Teimirqan—Teimirqan (Temirkanov), elder brother of Yuri Temirkanov, was born in the village of Zereghizh in Kabarda in 1937. He is an accomplished conductor and composer of classical music. His major compositions include 'Kabardian Melody' for soprano and symphony orchestra (1970), *Suite for Symphony Orchestra* (1983), *Variations for Symphony Orchestra* (1984). In 1989 he issued *Pieces for Symphony Orchestra and National Accordion on Themes of the Music of the Peoples of the Caucasus**.

Vladimir Mole—Mole (Molov) (b. 1940), Honoured Art Worker of the Kabardino-Balkarian ASSR, composed the opera *Daxenaghwe** in 1969.⁷ Other operatic works of his composition include *Qambotre Latsere* (Qambot and Latse). He composed a concert for flute and chamber orchestra in 1974 for the third conference of the Union of Composers of the Russian Federation, and a ballet *The Legend of the Mountains*. He wrote a number of symphonic compositions and wrote music for the theatre and cinema. He was Artistic Director of the Kabardino-Balkarian State Philharmonic in the period 1967-1978. He is President of the Board of Directors of the Union of Composers of Kabardino-Balkaria.

Zhebre'iył He'wpe—He'wpe (Khaupa), People's Artist of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic, was born in the town of Nartan in 1942. He wrote his first song 'Siy Ghatxe' ('My Spring') in 1962 to the verses of the poet Zubeir Thegheziyt (Tkhagazitov; b. 1934). Other collaborations with Thegheziyt include 'Siy Lhaghwnighem yi Dame'* ('My Sweetheart's Wings'). He wrote his *Symphony No. 1* in 1969. In 1974 he composed the choral suite 'Frescoes' to the verses of Bechmirze Pasch'e. His *Nart Overture for Symphony Orchestra* was written in 1983. Among his best known works is *Symphony No. 3 'Psixeghe'* – ritual lamentation/incantation over the body of water where a man had drowned to recover the body – composed in 1990. He is Vice President of the Board of Directors of the Union of Composers of Kabardino-Balkaria.

Aslhen Dawir—Cherkess composer Aslhen Dawir (Aslan Daurov) (1940-1999) was born in the village of Hebez in Karachai-Cherkessia. He wrote *Sonata for Flute and Piano* (on Circassian themes) (1966), the choral cycle *Five Mountain Songs for Chorus* (1968), *Three Circassian Songs for String Quartet* (1970), the song cycle *Mountain Torrent* (for the Union's Third Conference), *Circassian Rhapsody in A Minor for Violin and Orchestra* (1980), the symphony *The Circassians, Mountain Symphonic Dances* (1983), and the symphonic scene *Mountains and People* (1996). Dawir wrote a number of traditional songs, including the famous 'Adige Nemis' ('Circassian Decorum'), and he composed the music to the National Anthem of the Karachai-Cherkess Republic and the hymn of the International Circassian Association. He published a number of books and articles on Circassian music.

⁷ An aria from the opera can be heard on the accompanying CD in the section 'Classical Music & Arrangements'.

Zawirbech Zhiriy—Zhiriy (Zaur Zhirikov) (b. 1947), a composer-poet of note, is credited with founding the Kabardian classical stage. He wrote music to Keshokov's poem 'Palm for Birds', which was performed by Zawir Tut. He is head of the Literature Department of the the Kabardino-Balkarian State Musical Theatre.

Aslhencheriy Nexay—Nexay, People's Artist of the Russian Federation, graduated in composition from the Tbilisi Conservatoire in 1983. He composed the first Adigean opera 'The Sound of Distant Thunder' and wrote a number of songs and symphonies. He founded the Adigean State Folk Song Ensemble 'Yislhamiy' in 1991.

Literature & music

Collaboration between Circassian poets and Soviet composers resulted in some memorable classical pieces. The song 'Horseman' was written by Fowset Balhqer (b. 1926), the famous Kabardian poetess, and was set to music by Èsfir M. Dimentman-Barkova (b. 1908) in 1955. In the same year, the same composer wrote a cycle of songs ('Song of the Kolkhoz Horse-herd'; 'Song of the Mother'; 'How Come?!'; and the comic 'The Star of the Street') to words by the famous Circassian poet and writer Alim Keshokov (Ch'ischoqwe). Three of the poems of the great Circassian writer Ali Schojents'ik'w were set to music by Abraamov in 1936-39.

Some Circassian plays inspired Soviet composers to set them to music. In 1940 Abraamov composed *Aul Batir (Batir's Village)*, an overture for symphony orchestra based on Shorten's famous play.

World War II

Despite the untold hardships borne by the people during World War II, it proved to be a great boon for the development of Circassian classical music. In the summer of 1942, the Soviet Government decided to transfer some of its best musicians, actors, artists and professors from Moscow to the relative safety of Kabarda. The musicians included S. Prokofiev, N. Myaskovsky, V. V. Nechaev and A. N. Aleksandrov.

It was there that Prokofiev got in touch with, and became enamoured with the folk music of the Circassians. According to him, 'Kabardian dances and songs are a goldmine of musical material.' Prokofiev's sojourn in Kabarda proved very productive, composing his *String Quartet No. 2 in F Major Op. 92 (On Kabardian Themes)*, in Nalchik in about five weeks in 1942. His aim was to achieve 'a combination of virtually untouched folk material and the most classical of classical forms, the string quartet.' The three movements were based

on actual folk songs and dances, with the original harmonies and rhythms, and without musical adornments. In spite of running foul of the official critics, the work proved an immediate success when it was premiered by the famous Beethoven Quartet in Moscow on 5 September 1942.

The first movement ('Allegro sostenuto') was based on the ancient dance, Udzh Starikov, or Wijizch, heard at the beginning and on the song 'Sosriqwe', in which three players create an accordion-like accompaniment to the song, sung by the violin. The second movement ('Adagio') was based on a Kabardian love song, 'Synilyaklik Zhir', sung by the cello in a high voice. The middle section, based on the folk dance 'Yislhemej' is in imitation of the sound of the Circassian fiddle. The movement ends with a brief return of the opening song. The third movement ('Allegro') was based on a traditional mountain melody known as 'Getegezhev Ogurbi' (*Jeteghezchxe 'Eghwrbiy*), alternating with two lyrical themes and a reminiscence of the first movement.⁸

At the time, the president of the Art Directorate in Kabarda was Hetu Teimirqan (Temirkanov), a visionary who considered the sojourn of Russian composers in his country as the spur needed to set Circassian music on the road to glory. He commissioned a work from Prokofiev, who was sceptical about the ability of the locals to appreciate his work. Hetu replied: 'Write what you feel. If we do not understand it at present, we will learn to cherish it in future.' His son Yuri met Prokofiev during the great composer's numerous visits to his father's house. These encounters must have left an indelible mark on the young child, who went on to become one of the greatest conductors of the latter part of the 20th century.

In 1942, Prokofiev also wrote a song 'The Son of Kabarda', and Nechaev composed a septet based on Circassian themes. Professor A. B. Goldenveyzer, the famous Soviet pianist, wrote six song and dance pieces based on Kabardian and Balkarian melodies.

Modern classical music

The period from the end of the 1950s to the early 1980s has come to be considered the golden era of Circassian classical music. However, exciting developments did take place after that. In the early 1990s a

⁸ 'Jeteghezchxe 'Eghwrbiy yi Ghibze' ('The Elegy of 'Eghwrbiy Jeteghezch') is a well-known Kabardian lament. Three versions of the dirge (words and music sheets) are found in V. H. Bereghwn and Z. P'. Qardenghwsch', 1990, pp 114-20, 120-5, 425-8. Vladimir Bereghwn's rendition of the first version (pp 114-20) is included in the accompanying CD.

symphonic orchestra, a chamber musical theatre and a professional orchestra of folk musical instruments were set up in Adigea. In November 1994, the Chamber Musical Theatre marked its debut by staging Jacques Offenbach's operetta *Jeanne Cries, Jean Laughs*. This was the first time ever that an operetta was staged in Adigea. The season ended with the ballet *The Young Terpsichore* performed to music by Tchaikovsky, Minkus, Saint-Saens, Bellini and Chopin. The curtain drawer of the following season was Mozart's opera *Theatre's Director*, the first professional opera to be staged by local talent. The musicians and performers were graduates of the State Theatre School, Maikop Art School, and St. Petersburg, Rostov and Tbilisi conservatoires.

The most famous classical conductor is Yuri H. Temirkanov (Teimirqan), former Director of Baltimore Symphony Orchestra (his tenure, which started in 2000, ended in 2006). A native Kabardian, Temirkanov was born in 1938 in Nalchik, where he studied the violin. He was then admitted to the Leningrad Conservatory School, where he studied the violin and conducting. After graduation, he began to conduct at the Leningrad Opera. In 1968, he won the second National Conductor's Competition and a year later he was appointed music director of the Leningrad Symphony. For his substantive contribution to the art of music, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Kabardino-Balkarian Autonomous Republic bestowed upon him the title of People's Artist of the Republic in 1973.

In 1977 Temirkanov became artistic director and chief conductor of the Kirov Opera. In 1980, he was made Principal Guest Conductor of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in London, and in 1992 he was appointed Principal Director, succeeding André Previn. In 1988 he was named music director and principal conductor of the St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad) Philharmonic Orchestra. He recorded many works with the international BMG/RCA record label and has also conducted many orchestras the world over. Currently, he is Conductor Laureate of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

M. I. Quandour, a Jordanian Circassian, has composed and released a three-act operatic musical *The Resurrection of Satanay* that was premiered at the Kabardino-Balkarian State Musical Theatre in the summer of 2000. It is based on the poem 'Satanay' written by his wife Lyuba Balagova (Belaghi), a Circassian. The music score was recorded on CD (set of 2) by the Kabardino-Balkarian Philharmonic Orchestra, with Boris Temirkanov (Teimirqan) as conductor, and published by The Cherkess Fund in 1999.

‘Belaghi’s poem tells the story of the Circassian nation from mythical times to the present in a soul searching rendition, raising more questions than answers as to why the Circassian nation suffered migration and disintegration during the past two hundred. Belaghi weaves mythological characters, such as those of Satanay, the mother of all Circassians, and ’Waschhemaxwe, the original God of the Narts, mixing metaphor and mythology to tell the tragedy of a nation.

‘The music, with the exception of the “Overture” and the introductions to the three acts, was written specifically to conform to the operatic nature of the poem/play. It is therefore lyrical and melodic with some development of themes and variations.’ (From the accompanying CD booklet.) This is a vivid example of the interaction of diaspora and native cultures.

Famous pianists include the Honoured Artist of the Kabardino-Balkarian ASSR E. Kh. Barsokova (Bersoqwe). Contemporary pianists of note include Murat Qebardoqwe (Kabardokov), who took part in the festival ‘Three Centuries of Classical Romance Music’ in St. Petersburg in June 2007 with the Kabardian tenor Timur Gwaze (Guazov).

Traditional musical instruments

Traditional instruments remained popular until the latter half of the 19th century, when they began to be supplanted by other instruments adapted from other peoples, such as the accordion, Russian Balalaika, seven-stringed guitar and mandolin. Many of the dances and melodies associated with the old instruments disappeared. Schools for folk music and traditional instruments have been established to cater for the resurgent interest in traditional instruments and music since the end of the 1980s.

Pshine—The Circassian violin, a synonym of national music, had been the main instrument of the bards until the middle years of the 19th century. It was played in the guest-houses of the princes and the nobility by members of their own. Violinists of the lower classes played it at common festivals and dances. It was usually made in oblong form, with simple arrangement of two strings made from horse-hair. Some holes were pierced in the upper sounding board to produce distinct and bright sounds. The violin was usually played with a long bow (*shabze*). Well-known recent violinists include Aslanbech Chich and A. Meretukov (Meretiqwe). In the latter half of the 19th century, the *pshine* was identified with the accordion, which has come to be considered as the principal musical instrument. An obsolete custom associated with the

accordion is that when a girl had mastered playing it, an evening party, *pshineyefe*, was held in her honour at which she was presented with an instrument by her peers. Ibragim Jamirze (Dzhamirze) (b. 1884) from the village of Afipsip was an accomplished accordionist and singer. Famous accordion players of more recent years include Muhezhir Pschihesch'e (Pshikhachev), who recorded many traditional dances including '*wij pixw*' and '*wij xesh*'; Kerim Tletseruk (Lhets'ერიყვე), who recorded many Adigean national melodies and published music-books; 'Ebubechir Qwedz, who wrote the music for 'Awshijer Qafe' (words by the poet Anatoly Biytsu); Zalim Zemanbiy, who plays with the Adigean State Dance Ensemble 'Nalmes'; Aslhen Dudar (Aslan Dudarov), whose albums include 'Gwxelh' ('Tender Feelings') and 'Kavkaz: Instrumental Hits', which came out in 2007; Sefarbiy Amschiqwe (Amshokov); and Asker Ghwenezchiqw (Gonezhuk). Women accordionists of note include Zareime Winezhoqwe, who plays with the Daxenaghwe Ensemble, which was formed by the late Cherkess musician Aslhen Dawir (Daurov), and the Caucasus State Folk Dance Company, which she joined in 1995. Demonstrations of the virtuosity of these accordionists are available in the accompanying CD. *Pshine* also refers to the concertina and the bayan (kind of Russian accordion).⁹ [*Pshinawe*=*pshine* player; violinist; accordionist, accordion player]



Circassian accordion (*pshine*).

Nowadays, this is the main musical instrument played at dance parties.

⁹ According to Mahmoud Jaimoukha, the accordion was further qualified by the term *pxenzh*=irregular (when contrasted with the more regular and older concertina), to obtain *pshine pxenzh*, and the concertina was rendered as '*pshine ts'ik'w*' (*ts'ik'w*=small).

Shich'epshine—A kind of two-stringed instrument; literally: horse-tail violin. It was held vertically, with the spike resting on the player's knee and bowed.



Shich'epshine, traditionally the main musical instrument,
and *'epepshine*.

'Epepshine, px'epshine—Literally 'finger-violin', this two-stringed instrument was played exclusively by the upper classes.

Pshinediqwaqwe—A harp-like instrument with twenty-four strings made from intertwined fine horse-hair. This was used only by the upper classes.

Qamil—A flute-like instrument made from reed or iron with three to four holes. It was usually decorated with silver, niello and gilding. Musicians played it in the guest-houses of princes and noblemen, and at festivals and dances. [*Qamilapsche*=flautist, *qamil* player]

Naqire* and *bzchamiy—Kinds of *zurnas*, the latter used mainly by herdsmen.

Ch'efiy—Another kind of *zurna*. [Literally: whistle]

Siriyne—A wind instrument. ***Siriynapsche*** was a collective term for singers and musicians. [Called '*sirin*' in Adigean]

Bzchaqwe—Circassian horn.

Fendpshine—Circassian bagpipes.

Qants'u—Reed(-pipe).

Shushu—Similar to *qants'u*, but with a thicker girth and softer sound.

Fendirech'e—Drum. [Called 'schwendirib' in Adigean]

Bereban—Baraban, drum of foreign origin.

Doul—Hand-held drum, also of foreign origin.

Px'ets'ich—An indispensable percussion instrument used in accompaniment to music and song. It consisted of four to six small wooden planks tied together at one end with a piece of string. The breadth of the planks was roughly one and a half times the length of about 18cm. The instrument was decorated with silver, niello and gilding. It was used to produce recapitulatory taps in time by the singer himself or by someone else who sang second fiddle in harmony with the instrument.

Q'wzane—Circassian tambourine. [Literally: sieve]

Px'ebghw—Percussion instrument consisting of a wooden board, 2-3 m long, played by six-seven drummers using drumsticks, 20-30 cm long. At the same time, the players sang the songs to which those present danced. [Literally: wooden board]

Kinds of dances

*Wij** is an ancient (ritual) dance that has gone through the significance transformations. It has many varieties including *wij xesh**, *wij pixw**, *wij x'wrey**. It is nowadays performed by couples who go through the ancient ritual motions. *Zigelhet** is a lively (Adigean) dance also performed by couples. *Qafe** (*zefak'w*, in Adigean) is a stately slow dance, performed with pride touching on aloofness and with a great measure of self-control. It is verily the dance of the princes. There have been hundreds of tunes devised for this dance throughout the ages. Neighbouring peoples, like the Balkars and the Ossetes, adopted and adapted this dance form. The Ossetic version is called '*Kashkon Kaft**' ('Kabardian Dance'). Most old dances had a measure of 6/8. Recent melodies are lighter and more brisk, having a 2/4 measure.

*Yislhemey** (*Islamey*) is an energetic dance that was either introduced recently or adapted from an ancient dance form. It may be performed by a soloist, a group of dancers, or by a couple. Its meter is similar to that of *qafe*, 6/8 for old versions and 2/4 for new. On its catchy melody and old meter, the Russian composer Mily Alexeyevich Balakirev (1837-1910) based his 'Islamey–Oriental Fantasy for piano', which he finished in five weeks on September 13th 1869. Balakirev's fascination with North Caucasian music goes back to 1863 when he

visited the Caucasus. He fell in love with Circassian music and he wrote a number of musical pieces based on Kabardian folk songs.

Balakirev built this ‘oriental gem’, which is still performed today, around three themes: the first, ‘allegro agitato’, uses a fast repetitive dance rhythm in the Caucasian style, the middle part, ‘andantino espressivo’—the central theme of the piece—was built up climactically, when a switch is made to ‘allegro vivo’. This work was revised in 1902, when a new passage was included between the first and second parts. It was quite fitting that a great pianist, Shura Cherkassky, a descendant of the Russified Kabardian Cherkassky clan, performed on a recording of this work.¹⁰

Lezghinka, as the name indicates, is an energetic dance of the Lezghin people in Daghestan. It was borrowed in the Soviet period, but due to its vivaciousness and popularity has been retained in the repertoire of most dance troupes in the Caucasus.

Dance *en pointe**—*lhapepts'iywe*, or *lhaperiysew*—is one of the alluring features of Caucasian dance in general. This technique, only performed by male dancers, requires rigorous training and a perfect sense of balance. The Adigean version of the dance is *lheberischw**.

Dance troupes

In the Soviet period, national dance academies were established. Traditional dance was modernized and professional choreography introduced. At first, the main institute specializing in Caucasian dance and choreography was the Tbilisi State Dancing College in Georgia. Circassian graduates went on to establish national troupes in their republics. Later, institutes were set up in Kabardino-Balkaria and Adigea, like the Professional Art College in Nalchik, which spawned a number of dance troupes.

The Kabardian Dance Ensemble, one of the first national troupes, was established in 1934. It started out as an amateur group, and attracted the best local dancers and musicians. The debut of the troupe was performed in the village of Zeyiqwe in the same year. The troupe was re-named the Kabardino-Balkarian State Song and Dance Ensemble. Abraamov developed part of its repertoire. In 1938, a choral group was added to the Ensemble, for which the cream of the republican musicians and poets, Abraamov, Sheibler, Ryawzov, Keshokov and Ali Schojents'ik'w, combined to write new songs. The troupe was again re-

¹⁰ Islamey-Oriental Fantasy. Concert. Shura Cherkassky. Academy Sound & Vision. November 1968; re-issued: February 1985 (ALH9654ZCALH965).

named the National Folk Dance Ensemble 'Kabardinka'. The current official name of the troupe is 'Kabardinka Academic Dance Ensemble'. It is considered one of the finest dance troupes in the Caucasus, and has performed in the Russian Federation and abroad. Its repertoire includes many traditional dances with developed choreographs. These convey reserved inner temperament, majestic beauty and elegance—literally enchanting the spectators.

The debut of the State Dance Ensemble of Adigea took place on 1 May 1972 on the stage of the Pushkin Drama Theatre. Mahmud Beshkok, Honoured Artist of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic, was one of the more influential choreographers. He published a book on Adigean folkloric dance in 1990. Another troupe of note is the Adigean State Dance Ensemble 'Nalmes', a folk song and dance group which was set up in the early 1970s, although it was first established in the 1930s, but was later dissolved. The 'vocalic' component of Nalmes separated in 1991 to form the Adigean State Folk Song Ensemble 'Yislhamiy'. Both troupes went on tours in Russia, the Caucasus, Turkey, Syria and Jordan. The Adiga troupes introduced the world to the ancient and exotic national dances.

The Caucasus State Folk Dance Company was set up by Igor Atabiev ('Etebiy) in 1992. Atabiev represents the new generation of choreographers who combine academic excellence with folkloric flare. The troupe continues the Soviet era tradition of presenting dances from many regions of the Caucasus.

Other troupes include Nalchanka, which, as the name suggests, is based in Nalchik. There are also provincial and amateur groups, like the Folk Dance Ensemble.

The repertoires of all troupes consisted of a melange of folkloric dances from various North Caucasian nationalities to reflect the multi-cultural traditions of the Soviet peoples, as was dictated by Party dogma. Graceful steps erupted into dizzying wild movements. Battle scenes were preceded by delicate dance of the warrior and his fiancée.

In the diaspora, dance is the main, and often the only, manifestation of national folklore. In many societies it is the activity most identified with Adiga culture and is readily associated with it by non-Circassians, perhaps to the detriment of other folkloric genres.