

Music History and Cosmopolitanism / abstract & bio
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Musical cosmopolitanism and the urban songs of Korça (Albania)

During the second half of the twentieth century, Albania was ruled by a communist dictatorship. On a musical level, a rigid state institutionalized system has been instigated, following soviet models. Any musical expression had to be in line with the intentions and strategies of a totalitarian state that put a particular emphasis on its national “purity” and “authenticity”. All this in a country that from the 1970s and on was almost totally isolated to the outside world.

There was however a particular urban expression that resisted to this rigid framework. An urban song genre developed in the city of Korça (southeast of Albania) provided a very interesting case-study. Experiencing a latent condition until the regime’s fall, this genre has “creolized” patterns, in opposite with that “purity” and “authenticity” that was propagated by the official ideology.

In this paper, I am going to discuss about a particular form of musical cosmopolitanism that distinguishes this song genre and that I was able to trace through a singular project. It involved a 78 years old female singer as protagonist and a small group of local musicians that performed together a number of songs from that period, thanks to a specific association between present and past musical experiences.

Mikaela Minga works as research scholar in the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Arts Studies.

Areas of interest and research: Musicology; Aesthetics; Anthropology; Place; Music in Albania and Albanian Studies; Memory Studies; Popular music and Film Studies.