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SOME NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF THE MUSICAL DYNASTIES OF SHUSHA

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Contemplating in an article about the musical heritage of Shusha, a unique town dubbed by such descriptions as “small Paris”, “conservatory of the Caucasus”, “the homeland of talents”, “a city of longevity”, etc., is the same as saying nothing at all or summing up everything that pertains to each of its residents. In this town, nearly everyone is involved in singing. Even if some people do not sing, they definitely play musical instruments and compose various pieces and this is done by their entire families and generations.

The musical dynasties of Shusha represent history consisting of multiple volumes that links two branches of musical professionalism, which are commonly called ‘classical music’, creating a close bond between the East and West. In other words, it is referred to as music that bears the benchmark features of the musical and artistic language. This story is told by the tar strings of Sadykhjan (1846-1902) and those of Mashadi Jamil Amirov (1875-1928), inspired theatrical images of Badalbay Badalbayli (1875-1932) and the ‘Illustrated History of Music’ by Aghalar Aliverdibayov (1880-1953), bright stage pieces by Uzeyir Hajibayov (1886-1948) and Afrasiyab Badalbayli (1907-1976), the unique voices of Jabbar Garyagdioglu (1861-1944), Seyid Shushinsky (1889-1965), Bulbul (1897-1961), Zulfugar Adigozalov (1898-1963) and Khan Shushinsky (1901-1979). There are also dozens of other prominent musicians and cultural figures and just a few of them are referenced in this article. In fact, we have merely made several notes on the pages of this story, taking as a basis the significant premise of regard-



Mirza Sadikhjan

ing Shusha as a major cultural center. Over the past century, Shusha has undergone millennium-long development of the world musical culture, covering a path from samples of traditional music to symphonic pieces that have enriched musical art with new forms and genres.

'Voices of Shusha' is a musical reality of world scenes, conquering the hearts of a wide variety of listeners. At the same time it is also a metaphor to the same extent that is associated with the unique acoustic code of a musicking person for whom there are no barriers in mastering sound and sonority. In the past century, Shusha and its residents have covered the road of creativity extending from lullabies and *mugham-dastgah* multi-part compositions to the first opera and ballet, from dancing tunes to intricate jazz improvisations and from lyrics to symphonic pieces. Shusha residents' rapidly embracing the world musical heritage in the realm of both performing and composing art should be considered from the viewpoint of mutual enrichment of traditions that have been connected by trade and cultural routes from time immemorial.

The treatise on music by Shusha resident Mir Mohsun Navvab Aghamirzade Karabakhi (1833-1918) includes the titles of compositions passed on from one generation to another and from teachers to their



students with the use of the well-known method of repeated memorizing. These include such pieces as *Rast*, *Makhur*, *Shahnaz*, *Chahargah* and *Nava*.



Bulbuljan and Sadikhjan

Majid Behbudov



The portraits of Shusha musicians born in the 19th century were described in the books by music historian Firudin Shushinski. They describe musicians who preserved *mugham-dastgah*, an ancient vocal and instrumental musical form. Dozens or even hundreds of musicians who come from the old Shusha glorified one of the influential schools of performing musical art. They managed to pass on through their descendants the most valuable asset of this city, which is dedication to everything related to music, i.e. the one-of-the-kind music-making talent of a person committed to good thoughts, words and deeds.

Mirza Sadykh Asad oglu or Sadykhjan (1846-1902), a reformer of the modern Azerbaijani tar, adapted the instrument's structure to the classical traditions of Azerbaijani music. Sadykhjan was the first author of the musical scene titled *Majnun near Leyli's grave*, which was staged in Shusha by Abdurrahim bey Hagverdiyev with the participation of Jabbar Garyagdy oglu, a great singer, in 1897, long before the emergence of Uzeyir Hajibayov's 'Leyli and Majnun' *mugham*-opera.

Sadykhjan went down in history as an outstanding virtuoso (his teacher was Mirza Alasgar Karabakhi). His reshaping of the tar enhanced the musical instrument, opened up a large space for its sound and linked it to the auditory experience associated with the native musical

Mashadi Jamil Amirov



tradition. Sadykhjan's experiments improved the style of playing the tar, gained recognition from students and contemporaries on the scale of the professional musical traditions of the Central Asian performing school. The crucial role of this instrument is undeniable in playing *mugham-dastgah* and compositions of other genres of musical art, including *makam* (*nuba*, *makom*, etc.), given that the singer tunes in to the main tone in accordance with the tar sound and further follows the tar player in repeating the transitions from one tonality to another.

Currently, it is a little known fact that Vagif Sadykhov (born in 1946), an outstanding and charismatic Moscow-based musician, who has conquered the world of jazz with his skill and virtuosity during his tours throughout Europe, the United States and Australia, is a descendant of the legendary Sadykhjan.

The last name of the Sadykhovs, who were Shusha residents (the old published transliteration of the last

Uzeyir Hajibayov's first teacher Aghalar Aliverdibayov



name is Sadikovs), is also attributed to other branches of the generations of musicians. These include Durdana Sadykhova (1913-1989), one of the first singers in Azerbaijan to master the European vocal school. She was the founder of the music department of the Azerbaijan National Library named after M. F. Akhundov. Her nephew was pianist Chingiz Sadykhov (1929-2018), who turned the piano into an 'Azerbaijani folk instrument', exquisitely harmonizing folk melodies, extracting a touch of a sounding voice from an equal-tempered scale of the musical instrument. His children are Nargiz Sadykhova and Lala Sadykhova, teachers of violin and piano art in San Jose (USA, state of California). Musicologist Rena Fahradova (b. 1997), who is a great-granddaughter of the singer, is the youngest-ever award winner at the All-Russia Contest of junior scientists in the fields of Art and Culture (in the Musical Art nomination), which marked her research on the 20th century spectral music.

Khanende singer Majid Behbudali oğlu Behbudov (1873-1945) was a well-known representative of the Karabakh mugham school, who hailed from Shusha and recorded several Azerbaijani mughams, tesnifs (national classical music) and folk songs featuring tar player Ma-

shadi Jamil Amirov in 1910 in Riga (Latvia) at the invitation of the Gramophone company. He was survived by his son, Rashid Behbudov (1915-1989), a pop and opera singer, who had a velvety voice with a particular soft tone quality, incredible stage charm and a special gift of performing Azerbaijani classical songs, as well as Rashida Rashid, his granddaughter (b. 1965).

Mashadi Jamil Amiraslan oğlu Amirov (1875-1928), a prominent cultural figure, renowned tar player and musician known for performing traditional music, recorded bright samples of musical art in the Riga-based Gramophone studio in 1910. For the first time, he transcribed the Azerbaijani *Eyrati* mugham into European musical notation. His son, outstanding composer Fikret Mashadi Jamil oğlu Amirov (1922-1984), created a new genre of the symphonic mugham (*Shur, Kurd-Ovshary*, 1948, *Gulistan - Bayati Shiraz*, 1968) and authored brilliant musical stage compositions; his grandson Jamil Amirov (b. 1957) is a well-known jazz musician who created the *Savab* band. Amirov's musical talent was passed on to Sevil Amirova, his daughter, as well as Aida Amirova and Nazrin Efendiyeva, his granddaughters.



Uzeyir Abdul-Huseyn oğlu Hajibayov

Old Shusha. The palace of Khurshid Banu Natavan is in the background







The Hajibayov brothers

Democratic Republic, the shape-up of a new communist world and finally, long-awaited independence, at the end of the 20th century. Afrasiyab Badalbayli's first national ballet titled *The Maiden's Tower* became the basis for a rapid development of this genre, while his 'Explanatory-Monographic Music Dictionary' remains a unique study of relevant terms published in several editions in Cyrillic and Latin Azerbaijani script. His son, Farhad Shamsi oglu Badalbayli (b. 1947), became the first Azerbaijani prize winner at the Smetana International Piano Competition in Hradec Kralove, Czech Republic, in 1967 and Vienna da Motta International Music Competition in Lisbon, Portugal in 1968.

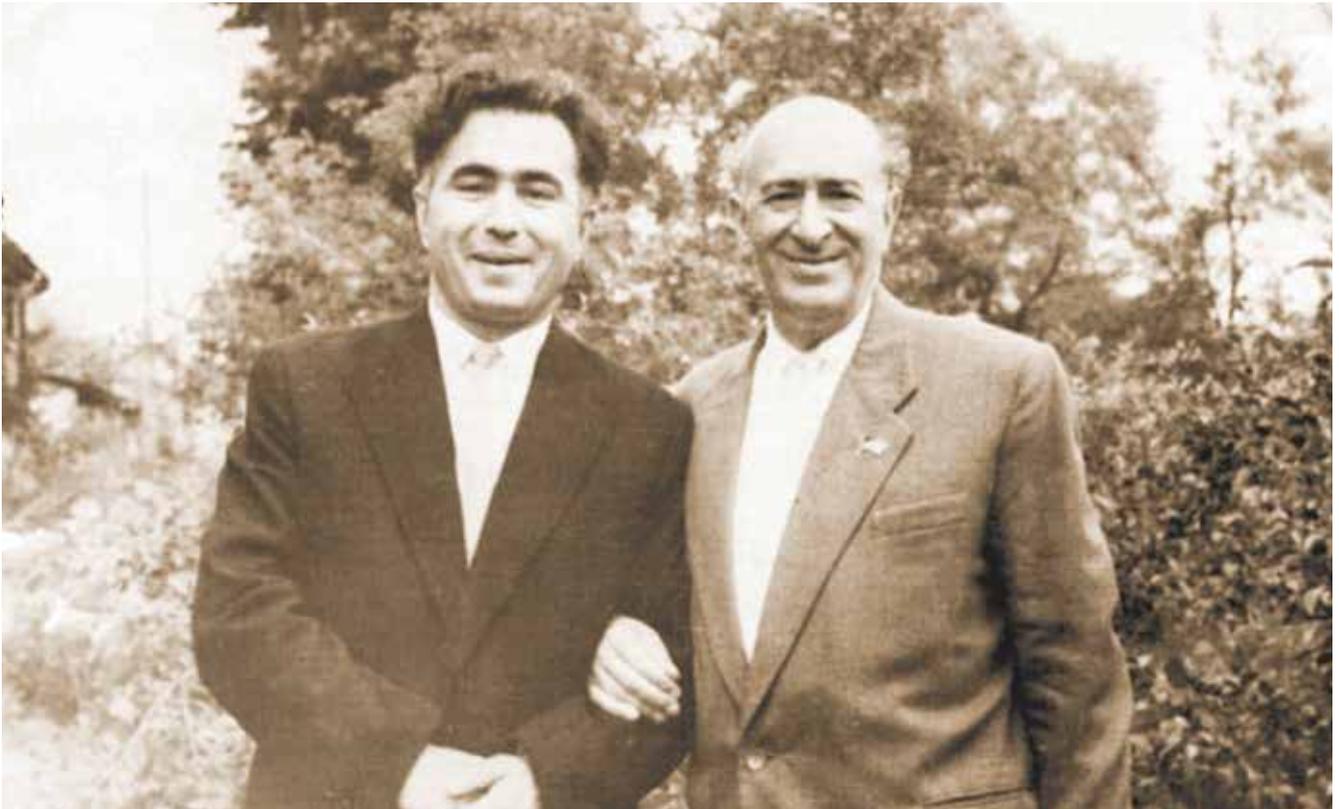
Afrasiyab Badalbayli and Shamsi Badalbayli, who were descendants of public and cultural figure Badalbay Bashir Bay oglu Badalbayli (1875-1932), Uzeyir Hajibayov's cousin, stayed the course on musical and theatrical-stage modernization. The latter originated in Shusha and spread intensely throughout Azerbaijan, which experienced the collapse of the Russian empire in the early 20th century, the short-lived fate of the Azerbaijan

al Piano Competition in Hradec Kralove, Czech Republic, in 1967 and Vienna da Motta International Music Competition in Lisbon, Portugal in 1968.

The generation of musicians which originated from Aghalar Kerbalayi Alakpar oglu Aliverdibayov (1880-1953) and was continued by his sons, composer Nazim Aghalar oglu, conductor Kazim Aghalar oglu and his grandson, Samir Nazim oglu Aliverdibayov, pertains to



Kh. Shushinski, B. Mansurov and T. Bakikhanov

Suleyman Alasgarov and Bulbul

Shusha residents who received European education. Aghalar Bay was embedded in history as a public figure, a collector of folk art and the author of the first illustrated History of Music that was similar to a piece of work with the same title written by Emil Naumann (1827-1888), a German composer and musician. He naturally inscribed the chapter titled 'Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani Music' in world music history spanning from the ancient times to the beginning of the 20th century, while the referenced 66 names of Azerbaijani musicians were provided with background information that still requires more extensive research.

The long process of intercultural and regional interaction in Shusha, which is located at the crossroads of civilizations, was naturally embodied in the creative work of Uzeyir Hajibayov (1886-1948), an outstanding composer, publicist and public figure, as well as his brothers, cousins and nephews. Hajibayov laid a firm theoretical and actual foundation for the creation of the Azerbaijani school of European-type composers and wrote the theoretical "Fundamentals of Azerbaijani Folk Music" to adapt the national mode system to the structures of the European musical language and mindset. He also created a new musical genre, the mugham opera, as well as musical comedies and *Koroglu* (The Blind

Man's Son, a heroic legend), the first such opera in the Near East.

Uzeyir Hajibayov's cousin, Soltan Hajibayov (1919-1974), introduced the concert genre for a symphony orchestra, while his son, Ismayil Hajibayov (1949-2006), authored striking samples of neoclassicism at the turn of the 1970s.

The conducting, composing and public activities of U. Hajibayov's nephew, Niyazi Zulfugar oglu Taghizade-Hajibayov (1912-1984), left an indelible trace in Azerbaijan's musical culture.

Isfandiyar Aslan oglu Javanshirov or Khan Shushinsky (1901-1979), one of the shining examples of the Karabakh mugham school whose lineage comes from Panah Ali Khan, the founder of the Karabakh Javanshir dynasty, was awarded the first prize at the Art Olympiad of the Peoples of Transcaucasia in Tiflis in 1934. The singer's brother, tar player Allahyar Javanshirov, was a soloist of the Azerbaijan State Philharmonic Hall after Muslim Magomayev, while his daughters, Begimkhanim Javanshir-Verdiyeva, Zumurud Pashayeva and Saadat Javanshirova, and granddaughter, Maryamkhanim Verdiyeva-Huseynova, as well as his great-grandchildren, have made a contribution to music and preserving the singer's heritage.

Zulfi Adigozalov



Murtuza Mashadi Rza oglu Mammadov (1897-1961), who was named Bulbul ('The Nightingale') for his unique voice, is still the only musician in history who could equally apply the techniques of a *khanende* singer and the Italian *bel canto* operatic singing. This allowed taking the Oriental and Western branches of professional singing to a new level, making him the founder of a unique vocal school in Azerbaijan. This synthesis was manifested in its entirety in the voice of the maestro's son, Polad Bulbuloglu (b. 1945), a famous Azerbaijani singer, composer and actor, who served as Minister of Culture for 18 years and has held the position of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Russian Federation since 2006. The exceptional talent was inherited by Bulbul's grandchildren, Teymur Polad oglu Bulbul (b. 1975) and Murtuza Polad oglu Bulbul (b. 2001).

Zulfugar (Zulfi) Samad oglu Adigozalov (1898-1963), an outstanding Azerbaijani singer, passed on his talent to his children, violinist Rauf Adigozalov, as well as composer Vasif Adigozalov (1935-2006), whose compositions include the distinguished oratorio *Karabakh Shikestesı*. His grandson, conductor Yalchin Adigozalov

(b. 1959), created a ground-breaking revised version of the symphonic mugham *Rast* by Maestro Niyazi, introducing traditional musical instruments into the symphonic score. In 2021, he released an album of Azerbaijani classical music under the Sony Music label for the first time in the history of national music.

The Shusha dynasty of Zakir Javad oglu Baghirov (1916-1996), a composer and theorist who was a World War II veteran, includes his son, conductor Elshad Baghirov (b. 1948), who studied in the Leningrad (St. Petersburg) Conservatory department of opera and symphony conducting, taking Arvid Janson's class. This generation also includes his grandson, Zulfugar Baghirov (b. 1973), who is a successor of the Baghirovs and the Garayevs, two well-known musical dynasties. He is a clarinet class graduate of the Istanbul University State Conservatory, as well as the Berklee College of Music (Boston, Massachusetts, USA) and New York University (a master's degree). Baghirov has released several CDs, including the well-known *QaraBagh: ZulfiqaRenatuS* album.

Ashraf Jalal oglu Abbasov, a well-known composer and teacher from Shusha, experienced the hardship of



Zakir Bagirov

Ashraf Abbas with his son, composer Jalal Abbasov



World War II when he served as an ordinary musician of the military brass band of the 345th Rifle Regiment stationed in Belarus. Abbasov was severely wounded near the Russian city of Yelnya. Having returned to Shusha, he worked as the head of the teaching department and principal of the Shusha Music School and later presided the Azerbaijan National Conservatory. The composer's son, Jalal Ashraf oglu Abbasov (b. 1957), is the author of the *Karabakh Trilogy*, which was nominated this year for an Azerbaijani national award. Descendants of his younger brother, conductor and teacher Kamal Jalal oglu Abbasov (1929-1978), namely, his daughter, Irada Kamal gyzy Abbasova (b. 1974), as well as his niece and nephew, Tamara Abbas gyzy Abbasova and Agil Muzafar oglu Gafulov, have devoted themselves to music.

Suleyman Eyub oglu Alasgarov (1924-2000), a remarkable Azerbaijani composer, conductor and teacher, is eternally embedded in history as well. His sons, Arzu Alasgarov and Eyyub Alasgarov, have won awards

at a Transcaucasian musical contest. The composer's hospitable house in Shusha brought together numerous intellectuals and foreign visitors for many decades until the city's invasion by Armenian armed forces on May 8, 1992.

People always talk about Shusha in the present tense, despite the challenging history of the city, which has experienced a multitude of tragic developments over three centuries, including military campaigns, devastating fires, looting and ominous silence that was unbearable for every Shusha resident. Shusha, formerly Panahabad, a city founded by Panah Ali Khan in the mid-18th century at the foothill of the Karabakh mountain range, has always been abound in singing, which continues to sound outside its own fortress and its unique voices are heard throughout the world. 🌸

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