

UNCOVERING ASPECTS OF AZERBAIJANI TRADITIONAL MUSIC WITHIN EARLY CAUCASIAN MUSIC DISCOGRAPHY

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Abstract

This article focuses on the early discography of Azerbaijani traditional music, covering the period from the early 1900s to the 1920s. It examines the history of the first audio recordings within the broader cultural processes and socio-cultural realities of Azerbaijan during that time. The study also extends to the discography of Caucasian music from the early 20th century, as numerous examples of Azerbaijani music, particularly *mughams*, songs, and dance melodies were recorded by Armenian and Georgian musicians.

Notably, in the early 20th century, the term “Caucasian music” entered the lexicon of many authors and publishers, uniting the music of Armenians, Georgians and Azerbaijanis into a single, artistically cohesive phenomenon. This term had a valid basis, considering the close professional collaboration among urban Caucasian musicians and socio-political context of this period. On the other hand, music authored by Azerbaijanis was present in the repertoires of all urban Caucasian musicians, which is evidenced by the catalogues of early 20th century from the Sport-Record, Pathé, and Extraphone labels.

Analysis of their contents, particularly that of Extraphone’s 1915 record catalogue, shows that these catalogues are of far greater historical significance than previously recognized, because they serve as valuable documentation of the history of Caucasian music in the early 20th century.

Keywords: Azerbaijani traditional music, discography, mugham, record catalogues, Caucasian music, South Caucasus

Introduction

The topic of preserving the audiovisual heritage of traditional music is relevant for the Azerbaijani music culture. It was included in the agenda of the 6th International Symposium “Space of Mugham,” held in Baku in June 2023 (Tan, 2023). This marked the first comprehensive discussion of the issues of the collection and preservation of *mugham*² audiovisual heritage in Azerbaijan. Although public interest in this heritage began to manifest itself back in the 1990s, it is only since the 2000s that consistent efforts toward the restoration and digitization of early audio recordings of Azerbaijani music have emerged. This work is primarily carried out at the State Sound Recording

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2 *Mugham* is the name of an ancient genre of Azerbaijani traditional music. It represents the classical repertoire of vocal and instrumental Azerbaijani music, usually performed by professional musicians on professional musical instruments.

Archives, but individual Azerbaijani musicians, composers and musicologists are also actively involved in this regard.³

The current attention to the issues of protecting audiovisual heritage is due to several reasons, including the vulnerability of information, part of which is still stored on technologically obsolete media. However, it is clear that behind these concerns lie deeper causes, making this issue particularly relevant today, when the accessibility of information contributes to the blurring of the boundaries of national cultures and gives extraordinary speed to the processes of diffusion of national and supranational cultural traditions. Without a doubt, these processes are most destructive to musical heritage preserved primarily through oral transmission. One example is Azerbaijani mugham, an art of musical improvisation within certain defined parameters, which ensures a significant element of spontaneity in every performance (Baghirova, 2016, pp. 17–24). The diversity of the modern soundscape influences the musical perception of mugham performers by inadvertently introducing into their musical consciousness other, uncharacteristic musical lexical phrases, musical intonations, rhythms and instrumental timbres, which are then reflected in the music they improvise. These new characteristics are more evident in the mugham music of the last two decades than ever before, although, of course, some of them could be observed earlier, albeit not in such an aggressive form (Baghirova, 2007, pp. 6–7).

There is a certain logic in the fact that today, at a point where mugham music is perceptibly distant from its former established traditions, there is an equally pronounced interest among contemporary Azerbaijani audiences in early specimens of this music, primarily in the musical heritage of the first half of the 20th century and, particularly, in audio recordings from the 1900s through the early 1940s.⁴ In the consciousness of the modern Azerbaijani listener, it is this part of the heritage of Azerbaijani traditional music that constitutes its historical layer in the sense that it represents something very distant in time and not currently in active musical circulation. The audiovisual heritage of traditional music of the second half of the 20th century is not yet perceived by Azerbaijanis as a relic of their musical culture since it is heard quite often on television and radio and remains familiar. Moreover, there is still a generation of Azerbaijani listeners whose memory preserves live musical events, impressions, various stories, and the names and faces of musicians of their time, thus retaining not only the music but also the musical atmosphere of that time.

In this article, the focus will be specifically on early audio recordings of Azerbaijani music made from the early 1900s to the 1920s, a period that was perhaps the most vibrant time in the modern history of Azerbaijani music. In the musical life of this era, which was turbulent and rich in significant events and changes, the history of the first audio recordings of Azerbaijani music constitutes only a brief episode. However, this history is so closely interwoven with the overall cultural process in Azerbaijan that it must be considered in the context of the cultural and social realities of that time.

3 For more information, refer to the work of musicologist, Professor of the Baku Music Academy Tariel Mamedov and the renowned Azerbaijani composer Javanshir Guliyev, who have collected and restored hundreds of samples of music recorded in the early 20th century. One of the most significant and socially meaningful projects they undertook, commissioned by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, was the *Karabakh Khanende* series of discs in 2007. These discs became the subject of keen interest and study by contemporary Azerbaijani mugham performers.

4 In the 1940s, Azerbaijani radio stations began to broadcast recorded music in addition to live programmes. A few of these recordings have been preserved in the archives of the Azerbaijan State Radio Company; however, the quality of their sound leaves much to be desired.

At the Threshold of the 20th Century: The First Audio Recordings of Azerbaijani Music

The history of audio recording of traditional music in Azerbaijan spans just over a century, during which it has experienced both peaks and declines in activity. Today, analyzing the overall dynamics of this process, one can notice that the periods of the greatest activity coincided with times when national cultural traditions were under pressure for various reasons. This was the case at the beginning of the 20th century, then during the 1920s and 1930s, as well as in the 1990s and 2000s. In this article, the focus will be on the history of audio recording of Azerbaijani music at the threshold of the last century.

This was a time of drastic change in the economy, culture and social life of Azerbaijanis. To be precise, these changes began in the last third of the 19th century, but their results became evident in the early 20th century when the industrial development of oil in Baku, a construction boom, expansion of trade and growth in service sectors, supply and transportation services transformed the region into a vast labor market. People of various nationalities, religions and professions flocked there. The wide immigration of Russians, Ukrainians, Germans, Poles, Belarusians, Czechs, Greeks, Swedes and other Europeans to Azerbaijan, among other factors, altered the traditional ethnic and religious composition of the population of this region and its cultural life. In the early 20th century, European cultural and musical presence in Azerbaijan became so prevalent that two distinct types of culture—European and national—emerged in the country's musical life. Consequently, a situation of cultural bilingualism arose (Baghirova, 2002, 2017a). Any form of suppression of national identity, whether through cultural or ideological confrontation or overly rapid processes of modernization in society, ultimately results in the strengthening of national sentiments (Baghirova, 2017b). As stated by the Russian author Popov, “with the weakening of the positions of national identifiers, the necessity of their preservation is increasingly realized by bearers of national self-awareness” (Popov, 2013, p. 80). For Azerbaijanis, mugham has always been and remains one of the strongest national identifiers. It is not surprising that the weakening of its position in culture, whether unintentional (in the early 20th century) or forced and ideologized (in the 1930s), each time provoked resistance in Azerbaijani society. The author believes that the vibrant flourishing of Azerbaijani music, particularly mugham art, in the early 20th century can be to some extent attributed to the subconscious desire to affirm cultural autonomy.

From the late 19th century and particularly during the early 20th century, Azerbaijani music witnessed the emergence of a brilliant array of musicians—*khanende*⁵ and *sa-zende* (instrumentalists) who toured cities across the South Caucasus, Central Asia and Iran. In the early 20th century, public concerts and theatrical performances of mugham and other traditional music genres gained popularity in Azerbaijan for the first time. This included first concert performances by traditional musicians, called “Oriental concerts”,⁶ as well as their participation in national opera performances, the musical material of which was mainly composed of mugham melodies (Figure 1).

5 In Azerbaijan, the term *khanende* refers to professional singers performing the classical repertoire of Azerbaijani traditional music, including mugham. This term is also common in Iran, where it is used to describe singers who perform *dastgahs*.

6 The first “Oriental concert” took place in 1897 in Shusha, Karabakh region (Dilbazova, 1985, p. 19).



Figure 1. Poster with program of Jabbar Garyaghiyev's concert in Yerevan on June 23, 1911 (Shushinski, 1985, p. 266).

Such opera performances, called “mugham operas”,⁷ were warmly received by urban audiences both in Azerbaijan and throughout the South Caucasus. Tickets for these performances sold out so quickly that audience members from other cities in the South Caucasus who wished to attend had to order tickets by telegraph long before a performance (Shushinski, 1985, p. 250; also Dilbazova, 1985, p. 77). The popularity of mugham and other genres of traditional music among the Azerbaijani audience of that time also undoubtedly contributed to the commercial success of the first gramophone records featuring recordings of Azerbaijani traditional music.

The history of audio recordings of Azerbaijani traditional music dates to 1902,⁸ when the British company Gramophone sent American recording engineer William Darby to Baku and Tbilisi to record Caucasian music (Ward, 2017). The Gramophone Company, as well as the Polish company Sport-Record,⁹ and the French Pathé, were pioneers of audio recording of Azerbaijani music (Efendiyev, n.d.). Over time, these companies established representative offices in Riga, Warsaw, St. Petersburg, Kyiv, Tbilisi and Baku, and in all these branches, Azerbaijani musicians were extensively recorded. In addition, Extraphone and several Gramophone subsidiaries (Gramophone Concert Record,

7 The first such “mugham opera” was staged on the Azerbaijani stage in 1908; its author was the 23-year-old aspiring composer Uzeyir Hajibeyli (1885–1948), who hailed from the impoverished Azerbaijani nobles of Karabakh. Hajibeyli, the author of the first Azerbaijani operas, musical comedies and many chamber vocal and instrumental works, headed a new type of Azerbaijani composition school in the 1930s—the school of written tradition. The creative credo of this school was to create musical compositions based on the synthesis of the national musical language and European musical forms (Baghirova, 2011); also (*Azerbaijani musiqisinin tarixi*, 2017, pp. 152–161).

8 Some sources claim that the history of sound recording in Azerbaijan started in 1901, from the opening of the Russian Imperial Music Society's local branch in Baku (Efendiyev, n.d., p. 68; Mammedov, n.d.).

9 Sport-Record was a small company that existed from 1908 to 1914 in Warsaw and had a branch in Tiflis (now Tbilisi) (Russian Records, n.d.).

Gramophone Monarch-Record, and Amour Gramophone Record [Pishushchiy amur] also released records featuring Azerbaijani music. The largest number of these records was produced from 1902–1916 (Shushinski, 1985, pp. 36–41). Regarding the Gramophone Company in the Southern Caucasus, British researcher William Prentice writes that its “motives for recording in the region were purely commercial. In recording such a vast catalogue of indigenous music, their first thoughts were of the increased sale of gramophones it would encourage” (Prentice, 2000).

It is hardly possible to regard the early audio recordings of Azerbaijani music as the initial stage in the preservation of its traditional heritage unless one evaluates them from the perspective of their current significance for Azerbaijani culture. For their time, they were merely successful business projects, constituting one segment of the entertainment industry that was flourishing in Azerbaijan. It is worth noting that the early 20th century in Azerbaijan, the era of the first oil boom in Baku among other things, was also a time of vast and rapid wealth accumulation and consequently, the emergence and rapid integration of the entertainment industry in the country. The records released in the first decades of the 20th century perfectly served this purpose, as evidenced by their repertoire. These records featured not only mughams and *tesnifs*,¹⁰ but also popular urban songs of the time, marches, and melodies from the operas and operettas of Uzeyir Hajibeyli, which were widely sung throughout the Caucasus, and sometimes even humorous songs for male audiences.

The commercial success of the first records is also evidenced by the fact that from 1902 to 1916, various European companies and their Russian affiliates released several hundred records featuring Azerbaijani traditional music performed by not only Azerbaijani, but also Georgian and Armenian musicians (Shushinski, 1985, pp. 36–41).¹¹ Among the Azerbaijani singers and musicians who were recorded for these records, the most prolific were the famous Karabakh singers and musicians known throughout the Caucasus, including such prominent figures as Jabbar Garyaghdı oğlu, Meshadi Mammad Farzaliyev, İslam Abdullayev, Gasım Abdullayev, Muhammad Kechachi oğlu Khalilov, Seyid Shushinski, Majid Behbudov, and *tar*¹² players Bala Melikov, and Gurban Pirimov. However, singers and instrumentalists from Baku, Shamakhy, Sheki, Gandja and other major cultural centers of pre-Soviet Azerbaijan were no less renowned during this period. For example, Azerbaijani archives contain numerous recordings of the outstanding singer Alasgar Abdullayev, a native of Sheki, Baku singer Davud Safiyarov, who studied under the renowned Mirza Muhammad Hasan (1851–1917), tar player Shirin Akhundov, a native of Salyan, and other musicians from Northern Azerbaijan.

In collections of early audio recordings of Azerbaijani music, there are the records that today represent genuine rarities. These include four recordings of the khanende Mirza

10 A *tesnif* is a small song genre that occupies an important place in the mugham repertoire. It is normally performed before or after mugham melody and sounds in the same mode with it.

11 Many recordings of Azerbaijani music performed by Armenian performers released by Pathé and Monarch Records are available at: https://www.russian-records.com/search.php?search_keywords=%D1%E5%EC%E5%ED%E2%E8%F7&l=russian ; https://www.russian-records.com/categories.php?cat_id=1003&l=russian

12 The *tar* is a long-necked instrument in the lute family. It is used in Iran, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and in the Central Asia. The 11-string Azerbaijani tar developed by Sadigjan in 1870s is considered the national instrument of Azerbaijan, and was inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2012.

Güller khanyim,¹³ which are preserved in the State Sound Recording Archives (Figure 2) on Monarch Record and Extraphone.



Figure 2. Monarch Record 98559, “Mugham Bayaty Kurd” performed by Mirza Güller (vocals), accompanied by Bala Melikov (tar) and Ruben Qarakhanov (kemanca). Azerbaijan State Sound Recording Archive.

Information about Güller khanyim is sparse and mostly approximate. She was likely born in the late 1870s in a rural area near the city of Shamakhy¹⁴ and reportedly by the age of 15 or 16, she began to amaze everyone with her singing. Her parents were unhappy with her fame as a singer and forbade her from singing because, for an Azerbaijani girl of that time, this activity was considered inappropriate. So, disguised in her brother’s clothes, she ran away from home to Shamakhy. She became the first female singer in the history of Azerbaijani music who dared to perform publicly to a mixed gender audience. However, until the last day of her life, fearing public condemnation, the singer hid her gender, wore men’s clothing and presented herself under the male name Mirza Güller (Mammedov, 1981, pp. 81–88; *Ensiklopediya of Azerbaijanskoqo Mughama*, 2012, p. 162).¹⁵ She managed to do this thanks to a peculiarity of the national musical taste of Azerbaijanis, who preferred high voices in men and warm mezzo-soprano or alto voices in women. Judging by her surviving recordings, Mirza Güller khanyim possessed a voice of dense timbre and a wide range, which sounded equally good in the low alto register and high notes. Since the most famous and beloved singers of the Azerbaijani public had high voices, listeners could easily mistake her singing for male vocals. Her passionate, energetically powerful singing still leaves a strong emotional impression even now, despite all the imperfections of the century-old gramophone recordings.

13 The word *khanyim* means “lady” and is usually added to a woman’s name as a sign of respect to her.

14 Shamakhy is one of the oldest centers of Azerbaijani culture, and from the 8th to the 12th century, it was the capital of the Shirvanshah state.

15 The life story of Mirza Güller served as the plot for the novel *The Tragedy of One Voice* (1997) by the renowned Azerbaijani writer Aziza Jafarzade (1921–2003).

Also, among the sound recordings held in the State Sound Recordings Archives, the 15 single-sided records of the famous Baku singer Seyid Mirbabayev (1867–1953) hold significant value (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Khanende Seyid Mirbabayev. Photo from “EL” magazine, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

The artistic career of Seyid Mirbabayev ended abruptly. Once, after a particularly successful performance at a wedding,¹⁶ a wealthy man, the owner of large oil-bearing land plots in the outskirts of Baku, gifted the singer a small, unexplored piece of his land. Unexpectedly, oil was discovered on the land, which quickly made Seyid Mirbabayev a very wealthy man. Having become a member of the club of Baku millionaires, he abandoned singing and did everything to erase the memory of himself as a musician who once sang at the weddings of wealthy people. For this purpose, he bought up his records everywhere and smashed them. After the establishment of Soviet power in Azerbaijan in 1920, his oil plot was nationalized and he emigrated to Paris. In 1929, he went bankrupt and ended his days in poverty (Kenan, 2017).¹⁷

Some records of Azerbaijani melodies in choral arrangements from the companies Sport-Record and Pathé are quite unusual. Usually, Azerbaijani songs and tesnifs are performed by a soloist accompanied by an instrumental group. However, on these records, tesnifs and popular urban songs of that time, such as “Tello”, “Gülə-gülə”, “Eşqin atəşi” and “Mən bir türkəm”, are performed by Jabbar Garyaghdioğlu, Muhammad Kechachi oğlu Khalilov, Meshadi Mamed Farzaliev and Davud Safiyarov singing in unison.

Problems in the Study of the Early Discography of Azerbaijani Music

The early discography of Azerbaijani traditional music poses significant challenges to researchers. Inaccuracies on printed labels are common, with misspellings of song titles or the performers' names. Attributions are at times entirely missing, and for identified performers, there may be a complete lack of biographical information in reference sources. However, the main difficulty lies in the task of identifying samples of specifi-

16 Performances by singers and musicians at weddings have been, and, to some extent, remain a traditional form of their communication with the Azerbaijani audience.

17 The life story of Seyid Mirbabayev also served as the libretto for the 1978 opera *Xanəndənin taleyi* (*The Fate of the Khanende*) by Azerbaijani composer Jahanqir Jahanqirov (1921–1992).

cally Azerbaijani music, a significant part of which at the turn of the 20th century constituted the general repertoire of urban music in the South Caucasus.

As a rule, on records sold in the cities of the South Caucasus, information about the music recorded on them and its performers was written in two languages: Russian and the national language (Azerbaijani, Armenian or Georgian). However, the transliterations, especially of names from the national language into Russian, were done poorly, and sometimes sounded like nonsense. Occasionally, the titles of melodies sound so bizarre in Russian transliteration that even a connoisseur of Azerbaijani music cannot immediately realize that, for example, the word “Лухларва” in Russian (phonetically, “Lukh larva”) may correspond to the title of mugham “Ruh-ul-arvah” performed by Meshadi Qafar (Gramophone Concert Record, 6-12912), or “Карга нишан” (phonetically, “Karqa Nishan”) to the title of the tesnif “Qarğamışam” performed by Jabbar Qaryaqty oqlu (Sport-Record, 1912, 50074). Unfortunately, such inaccuracies were reproduced in modern catalogues of collections of early Azerbaijani music, including the catalogue of the National Library of France, as well as the Gramophone Company Discography. For example, the mugham melody “Azerbaijan” performed by Aslan Safarov is listed as “Azir Bezhan” (Figure 4) (*Gramophone Company Discography*, n.d.).

Source	Prefix	Matrix #	Take	Suffix	Performer (s)	Title	Recording date	Issue numbers
K		9188	I		G-n ASLAN (MASHABI ABAS OGLI SAPAROV)(akk tari SANDRO)	Azir Bezhan	1909-05-	10-12017
Kelly File: File C - SUF-L					Title(s): Azir Bezhan			
Location: (Tbilisi), Georgia					Issued: 10-12017			
Recording date: 1909-05-					Size: 10-inch			
Other:					Session Performer(s): G-n ASLAN (MASHABI ABAS OGLI SAPAROV)(akk tari SANDRO)			
					Recording Notes:			
Session Id: 45149 Session Group Id: 2125 Location Id: 290								

Figure 4. Screenshot from Gramophone Company Discography showing the title “Azir Bezhan” (*Gramophone Company Discography*, n.d.).

At the beginning of the 20th century, as mentioned above, melodies from the first so-called “mugham operas” and musical comedies were very popular with the public and musicians. They were part of the regular repertoire of many musicians of that time and, therefore, are quite often found in early collections of Azerbaijani music recordings. On records, information about these melodies is most often limited to their incipits, for example, “Durun gedək evimizə”, “Söylə bir görək”, or “Kəbin xoru”. The composer of all three of these melodies is Uzeyir Hajibeyli, but no recordings from that time appear with his name credited.

There are many cases when the names of the members of the instrumental ensemble accompanying the singer were either not credited, or, at best, only their given names were provided, for example, as on the record of Mirza Güller khanym (Figure 1), where it is simply noted that Bala and Ruben are accompanying. For the audience of that time, these names were enough to identify the musicians, but today’s readers may not know

that they were famous Karabakh musicians—tar player Bala Melikov and *kemancha*¹⁸ player Ruben Garakhanov.

One of the challenges in studying early discography is the lack of information about the musicians of that period, compounded by their absence from written sources and historical accounts of music in Azerbaijan and the South Caucasus. Thus, in collections of early audio recordings, there are records of Azerbaijani musicians about whom there is currently no information, such as singers Meshadi Hilal Zeynalov, Aslan Safarov and Abdulgadir Jabbarov. In various archives, including the phonograph archives of the British Library and the National Library of France, a total of 38 audio recordings of Meshadi Hilal Zeynalov and 16 records of Aslan Safarov have been preserved (Kazimli and Ibrahimov, 2023, pp. 10–16, 28–30). If foreign companies considered it financially profitable to record these musicians, then it means they were quite highly rated at the time, not only by Azerbaijani listeners, but also by the urban public throughout the South Caucasus, since these records were eagerly purchased there.

The difficulty in identifying musicians stems largely from the lack of written sources on early 20th-century musical practice, compounded by the oral transmission not only of the music itself, but also of its performance traditions, the identities of musicians, authorship, the origins of melodies, and other key details. This information was widely discussed among musicians and audiences of the time and was mainly disseminated in the form of oral testimonies, remarks, or stories, with only a small part being reflected in the few written sources available today in scientific circulation in the Azerbaijani language. Naturally, such oral information could only be preserved in the memory of one or two generations, but it rarely survived into the third or fourth—and when it did, it was often fragmentary. Perhaps the most challenging aspect of studying early recorded Azerbaijani music, especially for non-native archivists, is their attribution and national identification. Until the 1930s, Azerbaijani music and musicians were presented under different terms and ethnonyms. In catalogs of recording companies, as well as in posters for concerts and performances of that time, they were most often identified as Caucasian, Tatar, or Muslim artists; and Azerbaijani music was identified as Tatar or Persian-Tatar (Figure 5). Sometimes in the same catalog, they could be presented as Caucasian musicians performing the “Persian-Tatar repertoire” in the “Muslim” language. The audience of that time implicitly understood that such terms referred to Azerbaijani music and musicians.

18 The *kemancha*, one of the oldest string bowed instruments used in Azerbaijan and Iran, was inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2017.



Figure 5. Extraphone catalog, title in Russian: “Singing in Tatar”, Azerbaijani title in Arabic script: “Singing in Muslim”. Azerbaijan State Museum of Musical Culture. (Ekstraфон, 1915, p. 31).

Such a confusion of terms and exo-ethnonyms is not the fault of the recording companies of that time. These terms originated after the occupation of Northern Azerbaijan by Tsarist Russia in 1813 when in the Russian and Caucasian Russian-speaking press, and even in official documents, Azerbaijanis began to be referred to either as Tatars or as Transcaucasian Muslims. Before the Russian colonization, Azerbaijanis used to designate themselves as “Türks” and their language as “türki”. In the scientific literature of the 19th and early 20th centuries, the ethnonym “Azerbaijani Turks” was commonly used in the works of Russian and European scholars. For example, the Finnish scholar Ivar Lassy uses this ethnonym in his dissertation “The Muharram Mysteries Among the Azerbaijan Turks of Caucasia” and gives clear explanations concerning the terms Azerbaijan Turks and Tatars: “Both in literature as well as in practice, great confusion prevails as to the name proper of the people inhabiting this country. Usually, they pass for Persian... However, no intelligent native of Apsheron¹⁹ would make use of such misleading designation of his nationality. He calls himself Türki, in contrast to the Osmanli of the Turkish Empire, or, when he attempts a greater exactitude, he uses the name Azerbeijan Türki, or briefly Azerbeijan... I shall, in the following, often speak of this people as the Tartars, as they are also commonly called in Caucasia. I may add, however, that they themselves indignantly refuse to be designated thus, and reserve that name for the Tartar of Kazan” (Lassy 1916, pp. 4–5).²⁰

After 1918 (the year of the declaration of the first independent Azerbaijan Democratic Republic), the ethnonym “Azerbaijani Turks” began to enter the lexicon of Azerbaijani

¹⁹ Baku is located on the Apsheron Peninsula, along the southwestern shore of the Caspian Sea.

²⁰ Sir John Malcolm also makes an interesting observation about the artificiality of the names Tartary and Tartars in his book *The History of Persia from the Most Early Period to the Present Time*: “I have in this place and others used the European names Tartary and Tartars. These terms are unknown to the natives of the East. Tartary was formerly called Turan, and is now called Turkistan” (Malcolm, 1815, p. 24).

press and official documents. However, the terms “Tatars” and “Tatar language” in relation to Azerbaijanis and their language continued to be used for some time. For example, in the documents of the musical-ethnographic expeditions of Leningrad scientists to Armenia and Georgia in 1927–1929, as noted by Alla Bayramova, “the words ‘Azerbaijan’ and ‘Azerbaijani’ as attributes of music do not appear in the expedition inventory”, and “some songs are registered in the expedition documentation as ‘local Tatar song’” (Bayramova, 2023, p. 4). The ethnonym “Azerbaijanis” as an official name began to be widely used in 1936, in the documents of the Soviet Union.²¹

Another problem in studying the early discography of Azerbaijani music is that the national affiliation as a description of the melodies recorded on these records was never indicated, either on the records themselves or in the catalogues of the recording companies. While vocal music can generally be identified by the language in which it is performed, this method is not an option for instrumental music. The only indicators of national affiliation as a description of the melodies are their titles, as well as the language in which they are presented in the catalogues. Alla Bayramova considers titles “a means of identifying the origin of music” and believes that the existence of folklore samples with Azerbaijani titles is “incontestable proof of their Azerbaijani origin” (Bayramova 2023, p. 2).

As a rule, Armenian and Georgian musicians of the time recorded Azerbaijani melodies on records with their original Azerbaijani names. Many of these melodies spread throughout the Caucasus, such as the old Azerbaijani dance melodies “Uzun dərə” and “Tərəkəmə”. The first of these two titles translates as “long valley” and is a toponym for an area in Karabakh near the city of Aghdam, and the second is the title of one of the sub-ethnic groups of the Azerbaijani people. The overwhelming majority of dance melodies in the repertoire of Caucasian musicians had titles the meaning of which can only be explained in the Azerbaijani language. For example, the title of the dance melody “Qazağy” refers to the province of Gazakh (Qazağ) in the northwest of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The title “Laylay” is translated from Azerbaijani as a lullaby. Many dance melodies have Azerbaijani female names or names of flowers, plants, or birds, such as “Lalə” (meaning tulip, also a female name), “Qızıl gül” (rose), “Heyva gülü” (quince flower), and “Turajy” (partridge).

Another indicator that aids in the identification of the national origin of certain melodies is the language in which they are presented on the records. As a rule, the titles of Azerbaijani melodies are indicated in Azerbaijani with Arabic script,²² while Armenian and Georgian titles are written in their own alphabets. Two pages from the Sport-Record record catalogue illustrate this (Figures 6 and 7). On the first of these pages, the titles of Azerbaijani melodies recorded in the performance of Levon Alikoshvili are given in the Azerbaijani language. On a different page of the same catalogue, his name appears again, this time performing a Georgian repertoire, and all the titles of the melodies performed by him are indicated in the Georgian alphabet.

21 It must be acknowledged that the ethnonym “Azerbaijanis” did remove some uncertainty regarding their national identification, but the true purpose of its introduction remained the same: the desire to avoid using the ethnonym “Türks” in relation to the largest ethnic group in the Caucasus. The reason was that on both sides of the border of Tsarist Russia, later the Soviet state, with Iran and Türkiye, large masses of ethnic Turks lived. The Russian, and later Soviet administrations, saw them as a threat to their statehood and made every effort to dampen and blur the ethnic self-awareness of their local Turkic population, which continued until Northern Azerbaijan gained political independence in 1991.

22 Arabic script was in use in Azerbaijan until 1929.

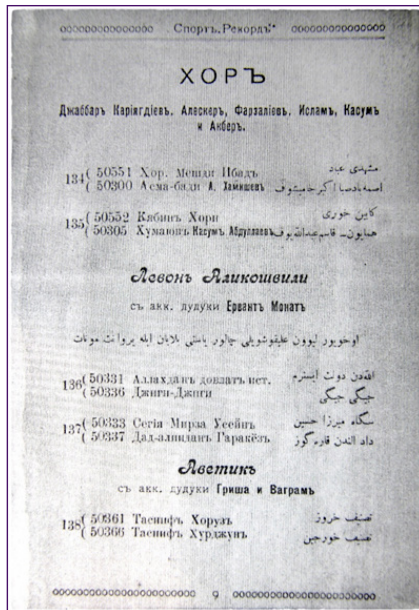


Figure 6. A page from the Sport-Record catalogue with inscription in Azerbaijani language by Arabic script: “Levon Alikoshvili sings, Ervant Munat plays the balaban”.

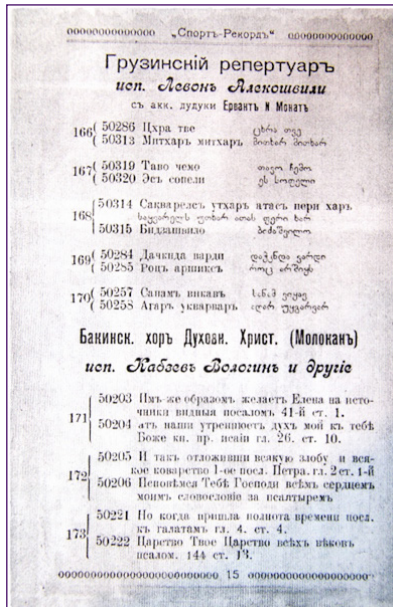


Figure 7. A page from the Sport-Record catalogue with inscription in Russian: “Levon Alikoshvili. Georgian repertoire”.

Another example of this can be seen in the photo from the 1915 catalogue of the Extraphone company (Ekstrafon, 1915). Here, the titles of Armenian melodies are written in Armenian, and the titles of Azerbaijani melodies are written in Azerbaijani (Figure 8).



Figure 8. 1915 Extraphone catalogue, a list of records and a group photo of sazandars from Qars, pp. 10–11.

This peculiar principle of national identification was quite often applied in the catalogues of Caucasian music records released by Russian branches of gramophone companies; it allowed for better navigation of the musical material that was then commonly called “Caucasian music”, especially Caucasian instrumental music.

Azerbaijani Traditional Music in the Urban Soundscape of the South Caucasus

The urban musical culture of the South Caucasus in the second half of the 19th century and the first third of the 20th century represented a unique symbiosis of the musical traditions of its peoples, in which Azerbaijani music played a unifying role. There is historical evidence and statements that show the role of Azerbaijani music in the urban musical practice of the South Caucasus (or Transcaucasia, as it used to be called then). One of them belongs to Sasha (Alexander) Oganezashvili (1889–1932), an outstanding kemancha player (half Georgian, half Armenian by origin) who lived in Baku from 1905 to 1927 and performed in ensembles with the most famous Azerbaijani singers and tar players. In 1927 he left for Yerevan where for the last three years of his lifetime he headed the Yerevan Conservatory. From 1926 to 1930, he had a regular column in the magazine *Dan yıldızı* [Morning Star], published in Tiflis in the Azerbaijani language. In a 1929 article in this magazine he wrote: “Azerbaijani melodies have been heard by all the peoples of Transcaucasia since ancient times. All Transcaucasian musicians, regardless of their nationality and language, played and memorized both these melodies themselves and their poetic texts, and the Azerbaijani language was considered the common language of musicians” (Oganezashvili, 1927, p. 32).

Many statements that directly or indirectly testify to the wide popularity of Azerbaijani music and musicians among the audience in Tiflis and Iravan (now Tbilisi and Yerevan) can also be found in earlier written sources, for example, in the collection *Caucasian Music* by Vasily Korganov (1865–1934), a Russian musicologist of Armenian origin. His comments and statements about Azerbaijani music and individual Azerbaijani musicians, scattered throughout the collection, inadvertently reflect their real place in the musical life of the South Caucasus (Korganov, 1908). In his article “Thoughts on Eastern Music,” he writes that “Every *bicho*²³ and *kinto*²⁴ is able to appreciate the entire repertoire of the best Tiflis sazandar, Abdul-Bagi” (Korganov, 1908, p. 5). Here Korganov is referring to the Azerbaijani khanende Abdulbaghi Zulalov (1841–1927), who lived in Tiflis from 1875 to 1905 and was widely popular with the Tbilisi public of all social strata, from Georgian princesses to small traders at the bazaar.

The British researcher William Prentice, in his previously mentioned article, touches upon the issue of the repertoire of Armenian, Georgian and Azerbaijani musicians, cautiously noting that “Armenian and Georgian musicians were willing and able to play Armenian, Georgian, or Azeri music. Azeri musicians, on the other hand, such as the incredible singer Jabbar Kariagdiev, apparently concentrated on Azeri music” (Prentice, 2000). In reality, Azerbaijani singers often performed songs in Armenian or Georgian when performing for Armenian or Georgian audiences, and sometimes even recorded such songs on records.²⁵ It is known that the great Azerbaijani khanende Mirza Sattar and previously mentioned Abdulbaghi Zulalov often sang songs in these languages when performing at Armenian or Georgian weddings. People want to listen to music they love and understand at their weddings, and the fact that Azerbaijani singers sang Azerbaijani mughams and songs at weddings in Armenian and Georgian homes speaks for itself. Quite a lot of information on this topic can be found in the well-known book *Azerbaijan khalq musiqichileri* [Azerbaijani Folk Musicians] by Firidun Shushinski. For example, Shushinski reports that Jabbar Qaryaqdy oqlu, at his concert in Yerevan in 1911, sang in Armenian the Azerbaijani songs “Mənə nə oldu” [What Happened to Me], “Gülə-gülə” [Laughing], as well as the Armenian songs “Mayrik jan” [Dear Mother], “Sary akhchik” [Mountain Girl] and “Khabaremyes” [I Am Aware] (Shushinski, pp. 143–144).

There are many examples of Azerbaijani singers performing the songs of their Georgian and Armenian neighbours. However, Prentice is nevertheless right in noting that Azerbaijani musicians, wherever they performed, predominantly played Azerbaijani music, as its repertoire appealed to the tastes of the broad urban audiences of the South Caucasus, across all social and ethnic groups. The popularity of Azerbaijani music in the Caucasus was explained not only by its artistic qualities, but also by the cultural and historical conditions of that time—in particular, the ethnic diversity typical of urban populations in the Caucasus, the predominance of the Azerbaijani ethnic element within them, and the role of the Azerbaijani language as a *lingua franca* throughout the entire Caucasus. August von Haxthausen wrote that “the Armenians never poetize in their own, but in the Tatar language, which is the ordinary medium of intercourse and

23 The Georgian word *bicho* (boy, lad) is an affectionate term of address for young males.

24 The Georgian word *kinto* referred to the traders of small shops in the bazaars of old Tiflis or to people without specific occupations.

25 Among the records kept in the Azerbaijan State Sound Recording Archive are recordings of the Georgian song “Kvekhanaze” and the Azerbaijani song “Lachin” [Falcon] in Georgian performed by khanende Alasgar Abdullayev, as well as the widely popular Armenian song “Krunk” [Crane] performed by Jabbar Qaryaqdy oqlu.

conversation among all the nations south of the Caucasus, like the French language in Europe” (Haxthausen, 1854, p. 348).²⁶

Of course, both the presence of Azerbaijanis in all the cities of the South Caucasus, as well as the leading role of the Azerbaijani language in the region, explain the popularity of Azerbaijani music among Caucasian urban musicians. In fact, Azerbaijani mughams, songs and dance melodies made up the bulk of their repertoire, which they performed at weddings, at private or charitable musical gatherings, at public concerts, and were also recorded on records.²⁷ It is clearly evidenced by the catalogues of records of Caucasian musicians of the early 20th century. Accordingly, the study of the early discography of Azerbaijani traditional music cannot be limited to the records of Azerbaijani musicians; it should also extend to the discography of Caucasian music of the early 20th century.

Azerbaijani Music in Early Caucasian Discography

The author possesses several early 20th century record company catalogues from Sport-Record, Pathé, Gramophone, Extraphone, and others. Extraphone’s will be examined in more detail here, since it presents Caucasian music and musicians more widely and diversely than other catalogues. *The List of Records of Caucasian Recordings* (Ekstrafon, 1915) was published in Baku, and it includes four separate catalogues: “Caucasian instrumental music” (47 records), “Singing in the Armenian language” (31 records), “Singing in the Georgian language” (26 records), “Singing in the Tatar language” (139 records).

The catalogue “Caucasian instrumental music” exclusively features recordings of Armenian and Georgian musicians performing in *duduk* trios²⁸ (15 records) and so-called “*sazandar* ensembles”,²⁹ two types of traditional Caucasian musical ensembles. The catalogue also includes several solo recordings on the tar, kemancha and violin. Together with these solos, the section “Caucasian sazandars” includes 32 records.

The *duduk* trio is one of the oldest and most popular types of Caucasian folklore ensembles and includes two woodwind instruments (two *duduk*s or two *zurnas*,³⁰ one of which plays the solo and the other provides a drone and one percussion instrument, the *naghara*³¹). In Azerbaijan, the *duduk* is known as a *balaban*, and this type of instrumental ensemble is called *balabançılar dəstəsi* or *zurnaçılar dəstəsi* and is most in demand in rural areas and small towns in regions such as Shirvan, Sheki and Salyan. Entire schools of outstanding performers on the *balaban* and *zurna* with their traditions and repertoire developed there. At the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, the school of Shirvan performers on folk wind instruments was headed by the musician and folk composer Ali Kerimov (1874–1962), and along with his students and followers

26 See also Sanubar Baghirova, “‘The One Who Knows the Value of Words’: The Aşıq of Azerbaijan,” *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 47 (2015), pp. 116–140. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5921/yeartradmusi.47.2015.0116>.

27 Such widespread distribution of Azerbaijani music throughout the South Caucasus gradually erased its national identity in people’s minds and turned it into the common property of the Caucasus, which, in fact, is still the case today. This entire repertoire is still performed throughout the South Caucasus today, and generations of people who have been familiar with these melodies for more than two centuries naturally consider them their own original national musical heritage.

28 The word *duduk* comes from the Turkic word *tütək*. The name *duduk* or *duduki* is used mainly in Georgia and Armenia, while in Azerbaijan this instrument is known as *balaban*. The *duduk* or *balaban* is a double reed wind instrument and since the mid-19th century it has also been a part of mugham ensembles.

29 The word *sazandar* or *sazandari* is a Georgianized form of the Persian word *sazandā* for the performers on string musical instruments.

30 *Zurna* is a woodwind double-reed musical instrument used to play folk music, most often outdoors.

31 *Naghara* is a traditional kettle-shaped drum.

enjoyed great fame (Kerimova, 2020). Considering that the main buyers of records were city dwellers, the companies that recorded and released records of Caucasian musicians most likely invited performers who were well known to the urban audience to make recordings. Perhaps for this reason, the catalogue does not contain a single record of prominent Azerbaijani balaban and zurna players of that time.

Music for wind instruments in the catalogue is represented by records of the Georgian trio Zubiev, Mikhako and Vano,³² the Armenian trio consisting of Setrak, Karapet, and Akop; and another Armenian trio consisting of the musicians Setrak, Tatevos, and Akop. Of the 30 melodies recorded in their performance, 14 are mughams and 16 are dance melodies, 9 of which are old Azerbaijani folk dances. Table 1 lists details compiled from this catalog for reference.

№	Performer	Record no.	Title	
			Mugham	Dance/song
1	Zubiyev, Mikhako, Vano (duduki)	Б 15827	“Rahab”; “Hijaz”	
2	Zubiyev, Mikhako, Vano (duduki)	Б 15828	“Chahargah”; “Bayaty Kürd”	
3	Zubiyev, Mikhako, Vano (duduki)	Б 15829	“Rast”; “Kürd Shahnaz”	
4	Zubiyev, Mikhako, Vano (zurna)	Б 15830		“Səhəri”; ³³ “Aravot luso” ³⁴
5	Zubiyev, Mikhako, Vano (zurna)	Б 15831		“Bağdadur”; “Sakorzilo” ³⁵
6	Setrak, Tatevos, Akop (duduki)	A 15823		“Kars”; “Fason” ³⁶
7	Setrak, Tatevos, Akop (zurna)	A 15824	“Yetim Segah”	“Sabahi” ³⁷
8	Setrak, Karapet, Akop (duduki)	A 15801	“Bayaty Shiraz”; “Shoor”	
9	Setrak, Karapet, Akop (duduki)	A 15802	“Mirza Husein Segah”; “Afshary”	
10	Setrak, Karapet, Akop (duduki)	A 15804	“Qatar”	“Karqanov’s lezqinka” ³⁸
11	Setrak, Karapet, Akop (duduki)	A 15806		“Maqazin”; “Meshadi Ibad” ³⁹
12	Setrak, Karapet, Akop (duduki)	A 15809		“Duy-duy”; “Qəshənqi”
13	Setrak, Karapet, Akop (duduki)	A 15811		“Qazağy”; “Təzə irani”
14	Setrak, Karapet, Akop (zurna)	A 15813	“Shahnaz”	“Bağdagüli”
15	Setrak, Karapet, Akop (zurna)	A 15815	“Mukhalif”	“Ortachala” ⁴⁰

Table 1. List of melodies from the repertory of duduk and zurna, compiled from catalogue “Caucasian instrumental music” (Ekstraphon, 1915).

32 Their full names are Data Zubiashvili, Mikhako and Vano Shakhkulashvili.

33 “Səhəri” (in Azerbaijani: “Morning”) is a melody performed the morning after a wedding; it is also very popular in Georgia.

34 “Aravot luso” is an Armenian dance melody.

35 “Sakorzilo” is a Georgian title related to wedding melodies.

36 The dance melody “Fason” is also known in Azerbaijan under the title “Alyshdym-yandym” [I am on fire] (Bəhmənli, 2021, p. 38).

37 *Sabahi* (in Azerbaijani *sabah*) means “tomorrow morning”.

38 *Lezqinka* is an Azerbaijani word *ləzqi-hənqi*. It is a Caucasian male dance genre. “Karqanov” probably refers to the last name of this dance melody’s author or its best known performer.

39 “Meshadi Ibad” is the name of the main character of the Hajibeyli’s operetta *If Not This One, Then That One*. This is the dance from this operetta.

40 *Ortachala* is the name of one of the districts of old Tiflis; *orta chala* in Azerbaijani means “hole in the middle”.

The repertoire of these records is notable not only for the general predominance of Azerbaijani melodies but also for the prominent place that mugham music occupies, which is quite unusual. The duduk (balaban) and zurna traditionally belong to the class of folk musical instruments, the repertoire of which mainly includes folk dance music. The fact that in early 20th century records of Armenian and Georgian musicians, Azerbaijani mughams were performed on the duduk and even on the zurna, with its piercing sound more suited to open-air performances, attests to their wide popularity across the Caucasus during that period. In essence, it was precisely the popularity of mugham music, initially vocal and vocal-instrumental,⁴¹ that gave rise to a new form of the genre: instrumental mugham, which at the beginning of the 20th century was most widespread among Armenian and Georgian musicians. From the posters of the “Oriental concerts” it can be seen that instrumental mughams were also performed by Azerbaijani instrumentalists. For example, from the poster of a concert in Tiflis (Tbilisi) in 1918 (Figure 9) it follows that the concert program included four instrumental solos: two on the tar, one on the *chianuri*,⁴² and one on the kemancha. The performers on the tar were a certain N. Ibrahimov and a famous tar player Mirza Faraj Rzayev, on *chianuri* Ruben Qarakhanov and on kemancha Qulu Aliyev. However, at the beginning of the 20th century, instrumental performance of mughams was more characteristic of the Armenian and Georgian traditions.

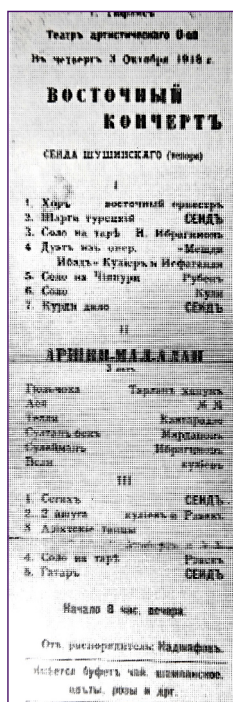


Figure 9. Poster of “Oriental concert”, Tiflis, 1918 (Shushinski, 1985, p. 345).

41 Vocal mughams are performed without any instrumental accompaniment and are included in the repertoire of cult singers, while vocal-instrumental mughams performed by khanende represent the realm of Azerbaijani secular music.

42 *Chianuri*, a traditional string bowed musical instrument, is a Georgian variety of kemancha.

In the catalogue “Caucasian instrumental music”, many recordings listed are of sazandars, and they are also highlighted in a separate list entitled “Caucasian sazandars”.

The sazandar ensemble (*sazəndə dəstəsi*) was an enormously popular and influential part of Caucasian urban music of the second half of the 19th century and the first third of the 20th century. It is interesting to note the testimony of the Georgian poet and musician Prince Machabeli (1814–1873), who mentions that with the spread of sazandar music, the women’s song accompanied by harp, a once-popular genre in Georgian urban musical life, disappeared. Professor Dmitri Arakishvili in his work *Kartuli Musika* [Georgian Music] quotes from Machabeli’s article in the journal *Tsiskari* for 1864: “After the [18]50s... women’s songs were supplanted by the songs of the sazandars and completely disappeared” (Arakishvili 1925, p. 7).

The sazandar ensemble was formed only in the middle of the 19th century, when the tar, a former palace musical instrument, began to become more and more widespread in urban musical life and became part of the instrumental ensemble, taking a leading role in it.⁴³ Sazandar ensembles usually consisted of two string instruments (tar and kemancha) and one or two percussion instruments (naghara and/or *qosha-naghara*⁴⁴). In the musical practice of Azerbaijan, this ensemble necessarily included a singer (khanende), who played the main role in it, which is why the sazandar ensemble in Azerbaijan is called *khanəndə dəstəsi*, that is, a group of musicians headed by khanende.⁴⁵ Accordingly, the main place in the repertoire of Azerbaijani sazandar ensembles consisted of mughams and tesnifs, though less frequently of urban songs and dance melodies. At the same time, dance melodies could be performed in the form of dance songs with folk lyrics.

In the Armenian and Georgian sazandar ensembles, the singers were most often Azerbaijani khanendes. This is explained by the fact that mughams are sung to verses created in the poetic meters of *aruz*, a system of versification, which is not used in poetry in the Armenian and Georgian languages. Therefore, Armenian and Georgian singers either did not sing mughams or sang them in the Azerbaijani language, such as the khanende of Armenian origin, Davud Safiyarov and Asri Ovanes,⁴⁶ the Georgian singer Levon Alikoshvili,⁴⁷ and the Armenian musician and khanende from Tiflis Bagrat Bagramov.⁴⁸ In cases when Armenian and Georgian sazandars performed without the participation of a khanende, they performed mughams in an instrumental version, and also quite actively included dance melodies in their repertoire.

43 Based on a number of sources and written evidence, it can be stated that until the mid-19th century, the tar was not included in the composition of urban instrumental ensembles.

44 *Qosha-naghara* (lit. double drums) is a traditional percussion instrument, two connected small drums played with two wooden sticks.

45 In the ensemble of sazandars, the khanende also plays the role of a percussionist, accompanying on the *qaval* (framed drum) during the performance of tesnifs and *rəngs* (melodies with a regular metric). The ability to play the qaval was considered mandatory for Azerbaijani khanendes; and today, students of the mugham singing program at the conservatory must attend a qaval classes as a compulsory subject.

46 In the “List of Records of Caucasian Recordings” of the Extraphone company, in the “Singing in the Tatar Language” catalogue, there are 19 records by Asri Ovanes, which contain exclusively Azerbaijani mugham repertoire.

47 The Sport-Record company catalogue contains 2 records by Levon Alikoshvili (No. 136-50331, 50336; No. 137 -50333, 50337), where he performs the Azerbaijani repertoire, including such a popular Azerbaijani mugham as Mirza-Huseyn Segah.

48 The Azerbaijan State Archive of Sound Recordings contains Bagrat’s records, where he performs the mughams Shoor, Bayaty Kürd (60-4-12426 No. 398), Choban bayaty, (60-4-12423, No. 400), Shushtar (60-2-12537, No. 401) in the purest Azerbaijani language.

Six groups of Armenian musicians are mentioned in the “Caucasian sazandars” list, one of which was from Kars, Türkiye; while the other five groups represent the Azerbaijani performing school. These Armenian musicians—Arsen Yaramyshev (tar), Arshak Sogomonov (tar), Grigor Bala oğlu (tar), Karapet Martirosov (kemanca), Sevi Avanesov (kemanca) and Levon Qaraxanov (kemanca)—were born and lived in Caucasian Azerbaijan, performed in ensembles with Azerbaijani musicians, learned the canons of performing mughams from them and mastered the repertoire of Azerbaijani music. Therefore, it is not surprising that in the “Caucasian sazandars” section, as in the entire “Caucasian instrumental music” catalogue, the overwhelming majority of the repertoire consisted of Azerbaijani music. Of the 64 melodies recorded by the Armenian sazandars, 12 are Armenian titles, one is a Turkish urban song (“Üsküdar”) and one melody, judging by its Persian title (“Eshqu-pənjoh”) is possibly Persian. Some records are listed twice in the catalogue, so they were subtracted from the total number of records shown below in Table 2.

№	Performer	Record no.	Title	
			Mugham	Dance melody
1	Duet Arsen Yaramishev (tar), Karapet Martirosov (kemanca)	A 15501	Kabuli”; “Mirza Husein Segah”	
2	Duet Arsen Yaramishev, Karapet Martirosov	A 15503	“Shushtar”	“Üsküdar”
3	Duet Arsen Yaramishev, Karapet Martirosov	A 15504	“Rast-Araq” ⁴⁹	“Eshqi-pənjoh” ⁵⁰
4	Side 1: Arsen Yaramishev (tar) Side 2: Arshak Soqomonov (tar)	A 15505	“Bayaty Isfahan”; “Mahoor”	
5	Side 1: Arsen Yaramishev (tar) Side 2: Karapet Martirosov (kemanca)	A 15506	“Hajiyuni” and “Qatar”; “Rahab”	
6	Side 1: Arsen Yaramishev (tar) Side 2: Karapet Martirosov (kemanca)	A 15507	“Mahoor Hindi”; “Chahargah”	
7	Side 1: Arsen Yaramishev (tar) Side 2: Karapet Martirosov (kemanca)	A 15508	“Shikeste-Fars” “Shushtar”	
8	No name indicated	A 15509	“Chahargah-Mukhalif; “Hasar” ⁵¹	
9	Side 1: Qriqor (tar) ⁵² Side 2: Sevi (kemanca) ⁵³	A 15517	“Shushtar”; “Bayaty Shiraz”	
10	Arshak Soqomonov (tar), Karapet Martirosov (kemanca)	A 15701		“Innaby”; “Bəribakh”
11	Arshak Soqomonov (tar), Karapet Martirosov (kemanca)	A 15703		“Shushanik”; [unreadable title in Azerbaijani]
12	Arshak Soqomonov (tar), Karapet Martirosov (kemanca)	A 15704		“Vağzaly”; ⁵⁴ “Lala”
13	Arshak Soqomonov (tar), Karapet Martirosov (kemanca)	A 15705		“Jiki-jiki”; “Rose”

49 The title “Rast-Araq” indicates that the musicians perform the part “Araq” from mugham “Rast”.

50 The title “Eshqi-pənjoh” sounds as a Persian one. This melody is not identified.

51 “Mukhalif” and “Hasar” are parts of mugham Chahargah.

52 Bala oğlu Qriqor, a noted Azerbaijani tar player of Armenian origin.

53 Sevi Avanesov, an Azerbaijani performer of Armenian origin.

54 “Vagzali” is an ancient Azerbaijani slow dance melody, which is performed during the rite of seeing off the bride from her father’s house to the groom’s one. Its older name was “Gəlin atlandı” (The bride was put on a horse).

№	Performer	Record no.	Title	
			Mugham	Dance melody
14	Arshak Soqomonov (tar), Karapet Martirosov (kemanca)	A 15708		“Raği”; ⁵⁵ “Laylay”
15	Arshak Soqomonov (tar), Karapet Martirosov (kemanca)	A 15710		“Uzun dəre”; [unreadable title in Azerbaijani]
16	Arshak Soqomonov (tar), Karapet Martirosov (kemanca)	A 15711		“Tərəkəmə”; “Turaji”
17	Arshak Soqomonov (tar), Karapet Martirosov (kemanca)	A 15713		“Express”; “Bədəli”
18	Arshak Soqomonov (tar), Karapet Martirosov (kemanca)	A 15715		“Ashkhabady”; “Soltany”
19	Arshak Soqomonov (tar), Karapet Martirosov (kemanca)	A 15716		“Alyosha”; ⁵⁶ “Mirzəyi” ⁵⁷
20	Arshak Soqomonov (tar), Karapet Martirosov (kemanca)	A 15717		“Shalakho”; “Kintauri”
21	Arshak Soqomonov (tar), Karapet Martirosov (kemanca)	A 15719		“Gül nəzənim”; “Jeyranym”
22	Arshak Soqomonov (tar), Karapet Martirosov (kemanca)	A 15720		“Bala bali”; “Bəhtəvəri”
23	Arshak Soqomonov (tar), Karapet Martirosov (kemanca)	A 15728		“Tiflis Lezqinka”; “Shusha Lezqinka”
24	Sazandar orchestra conducted by Levon Qarakhanov	A 15730		Two Armenian melodies
25	Sazandar orchestra conducted by Levon Qarakhanov	A 15732		“Kars”; “Aeroplan” ⁵⁸
26	Sazandar orchestra conducted by Levon Qarakhanov	A 15733		“Rose”; “Nunufar” (Armenian dances)
27	Sazandar orchestra conducted by Arsen Yaramishev	A 15734		“Rəq”; ⁵⁹ “Laylay”
28	Sazandar orchestra conducted by Arsen Yaramishev	A 15735		“Tərəkəmə”; “Koroqlu” ⁶⁰
29	Qriqor (tar), Sevi (kemanca)	A 15736		“Al linem”; “Orom” (Armenian dances)
30	Sazandars from Kars	A 15825		Jazayir march; Arabic march
31	Sazandars from Kars	A 15826		Zeytoon march; Andranik march
32	Boyadjian (violin)	A 18501		“Krunk”; “Tzitzernak” (Armenian songs)

Table 2. List of Azerbaijani melodies in the repertory of Caucasian sazandars, compiled from Caucasian sazandars (Ekstraphon, 1915).

A few titles are unreadable or cannot be identified, while the rest appear to be Azerbaijani. Most of the Azerbaijani dances recorded by the sazandar ensembles, as well as by the duduk trios, remain in the active repertory of Azerbaijani musicians today.⁶¹

⁵⁵ This title is not identified.

⁵⁶ The dance melody “Alyosha” could not be identified.

⁵⁷ “Mirzəyi” is a traditional Azerbaijani wedding dance melody.

⁵⁸ The Azerbaijani dance melody “Aeroplan” (Airplane) could not be identified.

⁵⁹ “Rəq” is an instrumental piece, but next to the title is written ‘dance’.

⁶⁰ Koroqlu is normally an ashig melody, presented here as a dance.

⁶¹ The author recorded a number of these Azerbaijani dance melodies for the CD *Rhythms of Azerbaijani Dances* (Baghirova 2013).

Some of these melodies, for example, “Shalakho”, “Kintauri”⁶² and “Lezginka”,⁶³ occupy an equally strong place in Azerbaijani, as well as in Georgian or Armenian music.

As explained above, in the catalogue of “Caucasian instrumental music” records, “Caucasian” music is presented exclusively as performed by Georgian and Armenian musicians; however, only a small part of the repertoire performed by them originated from Georgian or Armenian authors. In the other two lists in the Extraphone catalogue—“Singing in Armenian” (31 records), “Singing in Georgian” (26 records)—the percentage of Armenian and Georgian melodies is naturally much higher. However, even here, Azerbaijani music also finds its place in the repertoire. For example, in the catalogue “Singing in Armenian”, seven melodies (“Tello”, “Khurjun”, “Divani”, Mukhambazi,⁶⁴ “Tarlan”, “Araz” and “Koroqli”) are Azerbaijani urban and *ashiq*⁶⁵ songs. In the catalogue “Singing in Georgian”, out of 52 melodies, 14 are Azerbaijani mughams and two are Azerbaijani songs. Interestingly, this catalogue includes three records by Georgian Princess Olga Bagrationi-Davidova, who performed the mughams “Mahoor”, “Bayaty-Qajar”, “Shushtar” and “Shikəstə”, plus two Georgian songs. In the catalogue “Singing in the Tatar language” (114 double-sided records)⁶⁶ unlike the two previous catalogues, the entire repertoire consists of Azerbaijani melodies, but the recordings feature performances by both Azerbaijani and non-Azerbaijani khanendes and instrumentalists accompanying the singers.

An analysis of the content of Extraphone’s 1915 record catalogue reveals how closely the urban musical traditions of Georgians, Azerbaijanis, and Armenians were intertwined during that period. It was common practice for Caucasian urban musicians to perform together and play each other’s music. However, Azerbaijani music dominated their repertoire and was perceived as a shared heritage, as something that belonged to all of them.

Conclusion

The period from the 1900s to the 1920s constituted the earliest stage in the history of audio recordings of Azerbaijani music. The first decades of the 20th century, the time of the oil boom and economic growth in Azerbaijan, were also the time of the flourishing of Azerbaijani musical culture and its wide dissemination throughout the South Caucasus.

Azerbaijani mughams, tesnifs, popular urban songs, dance melodies, and melodies from the first national operas and operettas defined the urban musical landscape of the South Caucasus of that time: they constituted a significant part of the repertoire of Caucasian urban musicians, which is confirmed in catalogues of Caucasian recordings. A large quantity of Azerbaijani music, especially instrumental music, was recorded by Armenian and Georgian performers, including sazandars, duduk and zurna players,

62 The title “Kintouri” is pronounced in Azerbaijani as *kintovari*, which means “in the style of kinto”. In old Tbilisi *kinto* were lower class traders, entertainers or often marginalized people known as cunning and crafty folk.

63 “Lezginka” is an Azerbaijani title “Ləzqihənqi”.

64 *Mukhambazi* is the Georgianized pronunciation of “mukhammas”, a form of Azerbaijani *ashiq* poetry.

65 *Ashiqs* are folk poets, storytellers, composers and music performers. The syncretic art of *ashiqs* is one of the oldest and most important forms of Azerbaijani cultural expression. In 2009 it was inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. In the catalogue “Singing in Armenian” three songs—“Divani”, “Mukhambazi” and “Koroqli”—are Azerbaijani *ashiq* melodies.

66 The catalogue “Singing in the Tatar language” actually contains 149 records, but only 114 of them contain recordings of Azerbaijani music, while the remaining records contain various stories told in the Azerbaijani language, as well as three one-sided records with a recording of readings from the Quran.

which substantiates the inclusion of early Caucasian discography in the research material on this topic.

As it can be concluded from analyzed sources, the widespread use of Azerbaijani music in the urban musical life of the South Caucasus gradually blurred its national boundaries in the minds of the Caucasian public and its musicians, turning it into a kind of common source of so-called “Caucasian music”. In this regard, record catalogues of the early 20th century acquire greater significance than was originally ascribed to them: from simple lists of gramophone records, they turn into historical documents, more or less allowing the identification of Azerbaijani, Armenian and Georgian contributions in it.

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