

MUSIC AS A MEDICINE FOR ADYGHS

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ABSTRACT

Background. Adyghs (Circassians) are autochthons (natives) of the North Caucasus. They speak language, inhering to the Iberian-Caucasian language group. Adyghs have peculiar culture which is displayed in preservation of many most ancient rites and rituals, as well as views about magic force of music. During historical times these views practically have not varied.

Aims. The Adygh musical culture is practically unknown in European ethnic musicology. Therefore the purpose of this paper is to present information about application of music as a therapeutic agent for Adyghs throughout their history and to analyse the causes of preservation of ethnic views about magic force of music.

Method. The literary sources of the 13th through 19th centuries describing how Adyghs used music as a medicine were studied and compared with own data obtained nowadays in folklore expeditions to the Adygh settlements (North Caucasus). The system-phonetic method of studying the Adygh musical culture was used.

Results. Geographical landscape (mountains, mountain rivers), specific flora and fauna of the Caucasus and climatic features have formed certain belief about beauty of sounds and melodies and their capacity for medical treatment. Songs with heroic texts help a sick man to carry the pain, identify himself with the images of heroes. Merry dancing tunes allow a man to be distracted from pain, stake out enjoying youth. Medical characteristics are comprised not so much in tunes themselves, intonations, their rhythms, as in people who regard them as curative. Music as a strictly adjusted system could retrieve some destruction of a psychophysical system of a person. The higher the above executive quality of sounding music and the more coordinated an overall system of musical whole, the greater its therapeutic properties are.

Conclusions. The medical properties are not so much in tunes, intonations, rhythms, as in the attitude of the people to them as salutary. Ethnic music could effectively encourage convalescence from some diseases and be a potent preventive agent in concrete areas, ethnic-cultural zones, and natural – climatic conditions.

1. BACKGROUND

Adyghs (Circassians) are autochthons (natives) of the North Caucasus. They speak a tongue, inhering to the Iberian-Caucasian language group. Adyghs have peculiar culture which is displayed in preservation of many most ancient rites and rituals, and views about magic force of music. During historical time these views practically have not varied.

The Adygh musical culture is practically unknown in European ethnic musicology. Therefore the purpose of this paper is to present information about application of music as a therapeutic agent for Adyghs throughout their history and to analyse the reason of preserving ethnic views about magic force of music.

2. MEDICAL PROPERTIES OF MUSIC AND THE UNIVERSE

We consider that almost all peoples at early stages of development regarded music as the special divine agent allotted by supernatural force, including therapeutic. Directly or indirectly music in all traditional cultures is used as a medicine, and it occurs for several reasons. First, the illness in the archaic and traditional societies is accepted as disequilibrium, mismatch of harmony with the nature. The regeneration of this equilibrium is possible only through the nature and Space. Music is a part of the nature and Space, therefore it is capable to fulfil medical functions. Secondly, like potion or decoctions accepted by sick people inside, music deeply penetrates an organism of the person, impacts on his somatic and consequently substitutes for any other medicine.

3. CORRELATION BETWEEN CAUCASIAN NATURE AND MUSIC

As is known, items of music are pitch, rhythm, timbre, tune, harmony, pace, dynamics, etc. Any of the enumerated agents of musical expressiveness itself does not carry the special divine load. And as a whole the system of agents of expressiveness of this or that culture correlates with geographical landscape and ethno-social conditions, rather than with certain divine ideas. Thus, for example, most pronounced is correspondence between pitch, rhythm and timbre of ethnic music and climatic conditions of residence of the given ethnos. For example, Russian ethnos living on broad plains, has also broad tuneful development of a musical tissue, broad melodic respiration. Adyghs are, vice-versa, mountain ethnos, therefore short melodic respiration and special performance combining two components, namely a high man's voice (leading, directing singer) and low attending voices (background, support, establishment songs, vocal supporting voice) are characteristic of Adygh ethnic music. The high voice carries on a sense part, and the low man's voices sing nonsensical syllables – e – rai - da, o - ri, o – ri – ra, etc. (Gippius, 1980). The timbre colouring of a high voice is bright, ringing, while vocal supporting voices sing muffledly, dummy, as a mountain echo (musical example 1). Such type of singing songs affords highest aesthetic pleasure to Adyghs. Adyghs have the special form of polyphonic choral singing, solo-burden. The scheme of Adygh traditional songs resembles a mountain topography, where the basement of mountains is a sustained burden vocal supporting voice, and the pitch phrases of a directing singer resemble pointed peaks of mountains of different altitudes (Figure 1). Conditions of

a mountain landscape and sound environment (mountain rivers, stones rolling down the hill, screams of birds and animals) seem to have an effect on the Adygh tongue which contains 2 or 3 times as many sounds as in Roman languages, the majority of which are consonants. The verbal language has found expression in musical language. Thus the original sound and structural model of Adygh conventional music has formed.

4. MEDICAL IMPACT OF ETHNIC MUSIC

Many-years' observations have shown that a given ethnic music exert medical influence on the given ethnoses. It means that Adygh music can and should render favourable action on Adyghs, Russian music, on Russians, Gipsy music, on Gipsies, etc. Why is it so? The ethnoses, as is known, has a many-centuries-old history of forming ethical characteristics. Any ethnoses is shaped in its own acoustical medium. Step-by-step external acoustical medium comes in correspondence with psychophysical data of the given ethnoses. Acoustical medium generates ethnic phonetics and language, shapes value views about an aesthetics of musical sounds. Prime for ethnic music is the method of modulation, articulation, and timbre colouring of a sound. Music possessing a specific timbre and articulation is nationally coloured. It is capable to impact on Adyghs and to beneficently influence them.

However, the above-said does not mean, that Russian ethnic music can treat only Russians, and Adygh ethnic music, exclusively Adyghs. Any ethnic music can act favorably on those ethnoses or ethnic groups of the people, which have similar sound ideals and sound images. Those can be the ethnoses living in similar climatic conditions and having similar types of economic and domestic activity. For example, the solo-burden type of polyphony is characteristic of Basques, living in the north of Spain, Macedonians and Chorvates in the Balkans, Adyghs and Abchazes in the North Caucasus, Svans in the Transcaucasia.

5. MEDICAL PROPERTIES OF MUSIC IN ITS PERCEPTION

Ethno-musicologists investigating ceremonial tunes of the conforming "medical" rituals, do not see in them anything "supernatural" and on this basis speak of perception of these tunes in ethno-cultural context rather than of their "salutary properties" (Zemtsovsky, 1986). Nevertheless, the immanent properties of music allow us "to see" in them something that distinguishes it from other kinds of art. Music is a distinctly organized system of rhythm, pitch, composition, structure, and coherence of the verbal and musical text. In perceiving music by the person a coherence arises between his subsystems, namely circulatory, nervous, digestive, physiological, mental etc and the system of musical whole. Music as a strictly adjusted system could retrieve some destruction of a psychophysical system of a person. The higher the above executive quality of sounding music and the more coordinated an overall system of musical whole, the greater its therapeutic properties are.

For the same reasons, probably, music influences not only the people, but also animals, insects, birds, and plants. Still since the old days Adyghs remarked that the rams grazing under a horn, became more healthy, fatter, and more obedient (Chashba, 1998).

6. ADYGH RITES AND RITUALS IN WHICH MUSIC IS USED FOR THERAPEUTIC PURPOSES

Adyghs did not know opium and its drugs, the mandragoras did know alcohol and drugs widely used in ethno-medicine of other peoples. In traditional medical culture of the Adygh ethnoses, in all appearance, another method of facilitation of travails of a sick man was worked out.

6.1. Rites at the Bed of Injured or Traumatized People

From most ancient times to the middle of the 20th century Adyghs settled a rite, called "Chapsh" for the people which have obtained a bullet wound, were bitten with the snake or obtained a bone trauma (Tkhangapsova, 1996). Photo.

Hum, cry, and loud singing accompanying the rite created a new stronger dominant in a cortex of major hemispheres, which was capable to call inhibition of the pathological functional locuses. The sense of this rite is that a sick person was not left alone in night or dark time of day and participants of this rite did not allow him to fall asleep, entertaining him with games, songs, jokes, and humorous performances. The girls and boys are invited, who dance and sing under accompaniment of Adygh violin. The executive on violin is always a man who knows well a content of the ritual. The cheerful games are replaced by dances, then there occurs sequential queue of songs. The songs with the heroic texts helped a sick person to tolerate a pain, identifying himself with images of the heroes. The cheerful dancing tunes allowed a sick person to distract from a pain, while observing youth having a good time. Obligatory was the fulfilment of a ceremonial tune on convalescence. The legend assigns this tune to the musician who was invited to this rite by the hero of the Caucasian war Kodgeberduko. According to the legend, a doctor has dragged a bullet from Kodgeberduko's leg under musical folk-tune. The operation drove alive, without an anaesthesia, only under sounds of an optimistic tune, which has played a role of an anesthetizing agent. Since then it has been accepted to execute the given tune at this rite as the obligatory ceremonial musical text (musical example 2).

Music performed at this rite had a magic property to beneficently influence the sick person. One songs had a severe - heroic nature, other tunes wore a quiet - narrative tint, third were sustained in a playful - dancing fashion. Almost all tunes (except for a tune special for this rite only) could be performed also outside the rite. In this case they were allotted only by that function which flowed out from a content of the musical text of tunes. Tunes became multifunctional in a context of salutary rite. Not losing their primary function, they also started to fulfil the function of magic impact on a sick person, and therefore raised above simply domestic songs or folk-tunes. There was a sublimation of a genre in a context of the rite. Simply a song turned to a ceremonial song. A common dancing melody turned in magic dancing melody. The separate tunes accepted the function of a musical sign and became acoustical symbols of the rite. Thus, the medical force was also that the specific tunes were performed during special rites. These tunes became salutary because of the attitude of the people to them as to salutary.

6.2. Impact on State of Mind and Treatment of Somatic Diseases

Adyghs considered that music could treat not only a body, but also a soul. It has the special influence on a person before the beginning of a battle, adding him bravery. In Abchaz-Adygh fairy tales there are scenes that the musician could heal wounds of the warriors by the tunes, and they were again ready to combat. Even in the 20th century, wishing to praise a good player on harmonica, the people said that he played so well that the paralysed people rose from their bed and began to dance.

Examples of the attitude to music as to a medical agent are numerous and various. Adyghs and Abchazes are known to have the songs intended for treatment of a smallpox. According to a national legend, each disease had the special god, whose anger invoked the disease. A woman – inquirer was invited to a sick person for clearing up the cause of a disease. At her instigation a special rite was held, namely spending night at the bed of a sick person, which was accompanied by singing songs in honour of the god who visited him. A song dedicated to the god of a smallpox, Achi Zoschan - Golden Zoschan, was performed during this disease. Sometimes Achi Zoschan's marital partner, Chaniya White, was also glorified in a song (Chashba, 1998, p. 33).

Chashba (1998) points to the high significance of music at treatment of burns. According to a national legend, a song about a burn caused the wounds to be faster skinned over.

When children fall ill with contagious diseases Abchazes sing lullabies, in which they express a wish of mortality to the child. Probably, the magic by contradiction is laid in them (Chashba, 1998, p.34). Lullabies were performed at a difficult birth in the parturient woman's room. In this case, vice-versa, the magic of forecast of successful birth affirmed (Chashba, 1998, p.34).

Most of all music influences an emotional state of the person, allows the people to co-empathise pleasure or pain together. Already in the 20th century we recorded many testimonies, how sick people listening native music recovered faster after operation, the desire was reset to live and to work, to care about relatives.

7. RESULTS

Interpretation of psychotherapeutic functions of music in traditional culture of Adyghs shows four "subjects" of a research as the minimum. The magic-salutary force is equally characteristic of traditional music, definite text, musical instruments and dance as the kinetic act. Each of enumerated "subjects" is worthy of a special analysis, because a sphere of its action and outcome can be different. Thus, the contagious diseases are traditionally "treated" by songs, in which the verbal part plays a predominant role. The musical text in this case remains in quality of a "support".

Both songs, and instrumental folk-tunes are of importance for upheaval of spirit and for creation of a militant heroic state. Mechanisms of the impact of a song on a person through the text are forecasted and the more understandable. The musical instrument and the music performed retain the elements of ordinance coming from both a "secret" of the musical instrument and a magic of masterly performance. Ordinance of instrumental music gives

rise to faith in healing (Sokolova, 1999, p. 177). Aerophones, by virtue of their own morphological characteristics, are capable to connect an earth and unearthly world through respiration. Hence they are used in rites of searching for a drowned man and perished under snow or rock falls (Kharaeva-Gvasheva, 1999, p. 43). The properties of public praying were assigned to ceremonial dances (the dance "Sandrak" was performed in the name of sending of the child) (Sokolova, 1998). The dance was the mean of driving away malicious spirit guilty of the person's illness.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Thus, historic and ethnographic data presented in this paper show how wide music was used for medical purposes in the Adygh and Abchaz traditional cultures. The medical properties are not so much in tunes, intonations, rhythms, as in the attitude of the people to them as salutary.

In contemporary Adygh culture music, as previously, carries out the public-sanitary function, preserving mental equilibrium and society harmonization, and dominates in family rites (at weddings and rituals on the occasion of child birth, its first step, entering school etc).

A special study on the impact of ethnic music on the specific ethnos conducted in integration by physicians, ethnologists, culture investigators and ethnic musicologists could effectively encourage convalescence and be a potent preventive agent.

9. REFERENCES

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