

Eleonora Serafimovska, Ph.D.

Institute for Sociological Political and Juridical Research
University “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” – Skopje
eleonora@isppi.ukim.edu.mk

Marijana Markovikj, Ph.D.

Institute for Sociological Political and Juridical Research
University “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” – Skopje
marijana@isppi.ukim.edu.mk

PERSONAL EXPERIENCING OF THE MACEDONIAN EPIC FOLKSONG

Abstract

In the course of the past centuries, the Macedonian folk song embraced all significant moments of the lives of the Macedonian people. These songs pay tribute to the years of servitude, resistance, military feats, whether individual or group, spontaneous or organized.

Throughout the conducted research, the question we focused on was whether these Macedonian songs created in the course of the 19th century -period of active struggle for liberation and independence of the Macedonian nation; evoke feelings of patriotism among the young in contemporary time when the Republic of Macedonia has acquired its sovereignty and independence.

For the purpose of determining the influence of music on the emotions, and identifying the emotions, thoughts, ideas and behavior ‘touched upon’ and evoked by the Macedonian epic folk song, experimental research was conducted. The experiment was realized in a time period of 2 hours with a group of 18 students that participated on a voluntary basis.

The findings from the analysis of the emotions experienced by the respondents in the experiment indicate that the respondents can identify the different emotions, thoughts and ideas embodied in two popular Macedonian epic folk songs. Hence, these epic songs (especially when listened with lyrics) not only evoke negative emotions but cause negative thoughts and ideas as well. In this sense, the main conclusion is that the Macedonian epic folk songs created in 19th century still “touch upon” the present generations.

Keywords: Macedonian epic folk song, emotions, cognition

INTRODUCTION

Music evokes a wide variety of responses among every human being. These responses range from thoughts and emotions inside the mind, to behavior – executed actions outside the realm of the mind. Sometimes, these responses are similar but sometimes they can be very different. Regardless of nationality, age, or environment, music is omnipresent and affects every individual. While there is a myriad of musical styles and genres, some are more prone to evoke certain responses than others (Fischer 2006).

Folk music is a type of traditional and generally authentic music that was, and still is, originally passed down from generation to generation through families, communities and other smaller social groups. Typically, folk music, like folk literature, lives in oral tradition; it is learned through hearing rather than reading. It is functional in the sense that it is associated with many cultural and traditional beliefs and main human social activities (Nettl 2007).

Music in Macedonia is a kind of record of all social, cultural and historical events within the lives of Macedonian and the other ethnic groups living in the country from its existence. With the scarcity of adequately archived data, the folk songs, dances and instrumental melodies provide an insight into the life of the people of this region.

The Macedonian folklore particularly abounds in songs from the period when the territory of Macedonia, including the Macedonian people, were part of the Ottoman Empire. By affirming the Macedonian name, through Macedonian folklore, the Macedonian people have identified themselves with it, experienced it as a part of their selves, built a kind of religious attitude towards it, incorporating in it both its past and its future. All this speaks about a clearly defined aim of the struggle, liberation of Macedonia from the five-century-bondage by means of an armed battle and creation of a state of the Macedonian people (Kitevski, 2014). Thus, while history describes and interprets events, folk songs witness the spiritual history of the Macedonian nation, its moods, sufferings, its desires, aspirations and its spiritual attitude to historical events (Kitevski, 2014).

HISTORY

At the beginning of the 19th century (when the songs “Listen patriots” and “With torments I was born” were created), Macedonia (as a geographical territory) was a province within the Ottoman Empire. In the year 1913, Macedonia was geographically divided among the three Balkan monarchies, namely Greece, Serbia

and Bulgaria. The First World War followed without solving the Macedonian issue. A large number of the Macedonians were subject to repressions and divisions, and staged rebellions and uprisings (Vlahov, 1983). In the period between the two world wars, with the aid of the Communist parties and the socialist revolution, Macedonians managed to realize their rights and constitute their own country (Kirjazovski, 1985). This historical data pointed that the overall history of the Macedonian nation represents a continual struggle for preservation of one's liberty and dignity.

The Republic of Macedonia, gained its independence in the so-called 'third wave of democracy', i.e. in the year 1991 following the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In view of constitutional system, it is defined as a parliamentary democracy (Atanasov and Cvetanova, 2013). But still, the Macedonian society is regarded as a society in democratic transition process⁹ (Flere et al., 2015). There are still interethnic tensions, long lasting political crisis and many open issues with neighboring countries (difference over the name issue with Greece, Macedonian Orthodox Church and dispute etc.).

MUSIC, EMOTION, COGNITION

Music is an emotion, thought and motion captured in their development. Music appeals to people using the language of feelings, emotions, representations, thoughts and incites certain forms of behavior. Scientists have been trying to explain and quantify the way music affects psychic phenomena and processes. By studying the relation between music and the mind, it may be inferred that the listening to and playing of music may change the functioning of the brain and the body in full (Juslin, 2001).

Simultaneously, music represents a phenomenon with properties that are both deeply rooted and temporal. As a form of art, it spreads out in time, but is also deeply rooted in both the individual and collective memory. The properties of music may be permanent and stable, as well as heralds of changes. Music, with its own peculiarities, serves as an excellent instrument that conducts personal, local, regional, ethnic, religious, linguistic and national identities.

⁹ Transition process is a process that presupposes radical systematic changes in the political, economic, cultural and any other social spheres, as well as establishing a new system of values.

RESEARCH

The general research question was: *Do the Macedonian folk songs created in the 19th century, as period marked by active struggle for liberation and independence, evoke patriotic emotions among the young in a period of established independence of the Republic of Macedonia?*

The respondents were postgraduate students at the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research in Skopje aged 24 to 30. They participated in the research on a voluntary basis. The research was conducted in May 2014.

For the purpose of determining the influence of music on the emotions, and more specifically to identify the emotions, thoughts, ideas and behavior that have been ‘touched upon’ and evoked by the Macedonian epic folk song, experimental research was conducted. The experiment was realized in a time period of 2 hours involving a group of 18 respondents that participated on a voluntary basis.

Table 1. *Representation of the emotions identified in the two cases – when the respondents listen only to instrumental version of the song Listen Patriots, and when the song is accompanied by the corresponding lyrics/words*

The first Macedonian song “Listen Patriots” /”Listen Patriots”-in English/					
Instrumental version of the song			The song with lyrics		
Valence	Emotion	F	f	Emotion	Valence
Positive emotions	Happiness	10			Positive emotions
	Satisfaction	3			
	Love	2	3	Love	
	Admiration	1	1	Admiration	
			1	Calmness	
Total	16	5	Total		
Negative emotions	Sorrow	5	11	Sorrow	Negative emotions
	Rage	3	4	Rage	
	Anger	2	3	Anger	
			1	Hatred	
	Total	10	19	Total	
Neutral/ undefined/ mixed emotions	Excitement	6	2	Excitement	Neutral /undefined/ mixed emotions
	Nostalgia	2	3	Nostalgia	
	Total	=8	=5	Total	
Sum	9 different emotions	34	29	9 different emotions	Sum

Experiment Flow

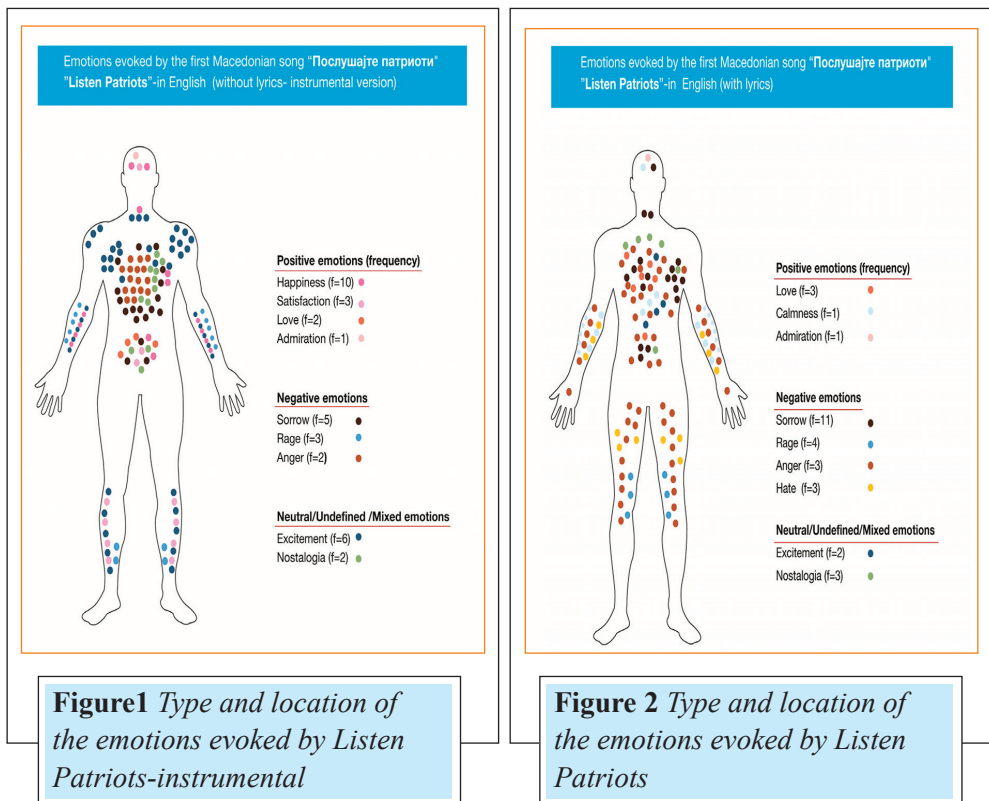
The experiment was comprised of two segments:

- the respondents listen only to the instrumental version of the songs first and produce emotions and thoughts;
- the respondents listen to the songs accompanied by the lyrics/words and again they produce emotions and thoughts;

Results

The listening to the first epic folk song entitled 'Listen Patriots' as an instrumental version (without lyrics) first, and subsequently with the accompanying lyrics/words, caused 11 different types of emotions among the respondents in the experiment: happiness, satisfaction, love, admiration, calmness, nostalgia, excitement, as well as sorrow, anger, rage and hatred.

A presentation of the places where the emotions were evoked is given hereunder. The images juxtaposed refer to what is known as 'location' of emotions in certain body parts.



The following may be inferred from the enclosed Table 1 and from the two illustrations:

1. Positive emotions (particularly happiness) prevail when listening to the instrumental version of the song. Negative emotions (particularly sorrow) prevail when listening to the song accompanied by the corresponding lyrics/ words. More specifically, the information indicated in the table shows that more negative emotions occur when the lyrics/words are present.
2. Happiness, joy and satisfaction are no longer present, and only calmness remains from the positive emotions;
3. Hatred arises as a negative emotion;
4. Neutral feelings are also present;
5. Positive emotions disappear from the area of the head and negative emotions, such as sorrow and anger, emerge;
6. Emotions are no longer concentrated in the area of the neck, heart and plexus, but are spread throughout the body.

The analysis of the thoughts associated with the song 'Listen Patriots' indicates that negative emotions prevail when the song is accompanied by the corresponding lyrics/words, and that positive feelings prevail when listening only to the instrumental version of the song.

Table 2. Representation of the thoughts evoked when the respondents listen only to the instrumental version of the song Listen Patriots, and when the song is accompanied by the corresponding lyrics/words

The first Macedonian song 'Listen Patriots' /'Listen Patriots'-in English/	
Instrumental version of the song	<i>The song with lyrics</i>
Thoughts, Images	<i>Thoughts, Images</i>
Celebration, feast, inn/tavern, food, happy occasions, joy, unity, socializing, anger towards the traitors, sorrow and pity for the Macedonian nation	<i>Taking pride in the Macedonian struggle</i> <i>Anger and rage towards the traitors</i> <i>Grim and dreary destiny</i> <i>Awakening of nationalistic feelings</i> <i>Common sorrow</i> <i>Sorrow</i> <i>Readiness, vindication</i> <i>Unification</i> <i>Pain</i>

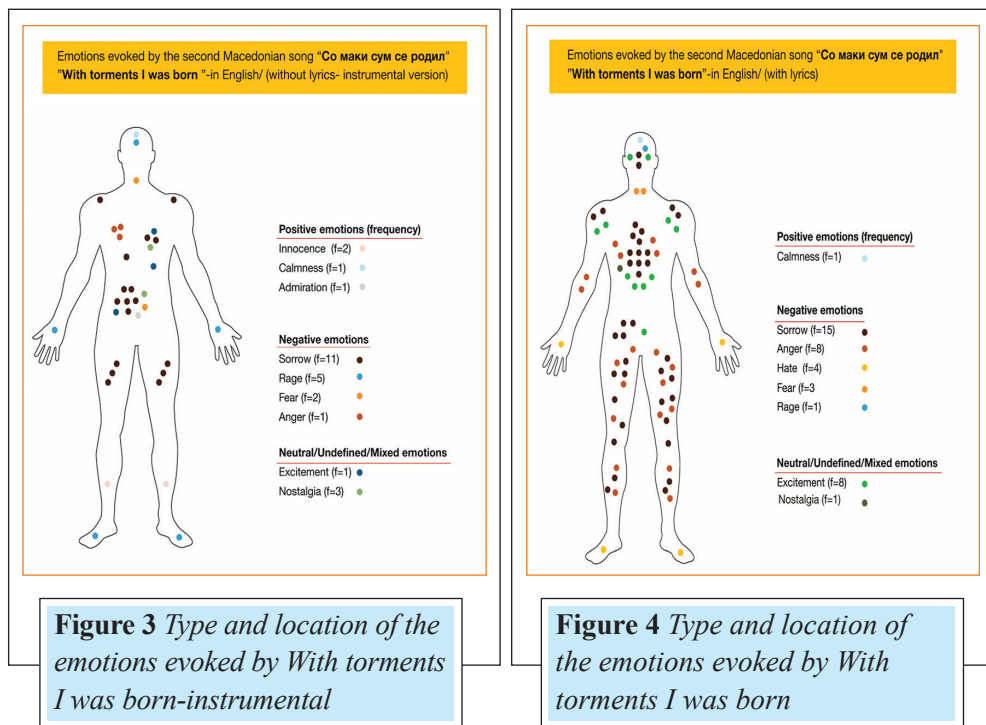
The information presented in the table indicates that negative emotions are evoked once the song is accompanied by the respective lyrics/words. The listening to the instrumental version of the song (without the lyrics/words) is mainly associated with celebration, socializing, joy and unity. Once the song is accompanied by the respective lyrics/words there are associations of the perennial struggle for liberation and creation of national identity for the Macedonian nation.

The listening to the second epic song entitled “*With torments I was born*” as an instrumental version (without lyrics/words) first, and subsequently with the accompanying lyrics/words, caused 10 different types of emotions among the respondents in the experiment: 5 negative emotions (such as sorrow, anger, rage, fear and hatred), 2 neutral/undefined/mixed emotions (such as nostalgia and excitement), as well as 3 positive emotions (such as innocence, admiration and calmness).

Table 3. Representation of the emotions identified in the two cases – when the respondents listen only to instrumental version of the song *With torments I was born*, and when the song is accompanied by the corresponding lyrics/words

The second Macedonian epic song “ <i>With torments I was born</i> ” / “ <i>With torments I was born</i> ”-in English/					
Instrumental version of the song			<i>The song with lyrics</i>		
Valence	Emotion	F	<i>f</i>	<i>Emotion</i>	<i>Valence</i>
Negative emotions	Sorrow	11	15	Sorrow	Negative emotions
	Rage	5	1	Rage	
	Fear	2	3	Fear	
	Anger	1	8	Anger	
			4	Hate	
	Total	19	31	Total	
Positive emotions	Innocence	2			Positive emotions
	Calmness	1	1	Calmness	
	Admiration	1			
	Total	4	1	Total	
Neutral/undefined/mixed emotions	Nostalgia	3	8	Excitement	Neutral/undefined/mixed emotions
	Excitement	1	1	Nostalgia	
	Total	4	9	Total	
Sum	10 different emotions	27	41	10 different emotions	Sum

An illustration of the different emotions and where they occur when listening to the instrumental version of the song “*With torments I was born*” (the first illustration) and when listening to the song accompanied by the corresponding lyrics/words (the second illustration) is given hereunder.



The following may be inferred from the enclosed Table 3 and from the two illustrations:

1. Negative emotions (particularly sorrow) prevail when listening to the song as an instrumental version and when accompanied by the corresponding lyrics/ words. The lyrics/words additionally boost the number of negative emotions;
2. When listening to the song accompanied by the corresponding lyrics/words, positive emotions are almost non-existent;
3. Hatred, and more intensified anger and excitement, occur as negative emotions. They are more pronounced when the lyrics/words are present.
4. When listening to the instrumental version of the song, the emotions are mainly concentrated in the middle part of the body. Once the lyrics/words are present, these emotions start ‘spreading’ throughout the body, but are mainly concentrated in the head.

The analysis of the thoughts and images associated with the song ‘*With torments I was born*’ indicates that negative emotions prevail both in the case of the instrumental version of the song and when it is accompanied by the corresponding lyrics/words.

Table 4. Representation of the thoughts evoked when the respondents listen only to instrumental version of the song *With torments I was born*, and when the song is accompanied by the corresponding lyrics/words

The second Macedonian song “<i>With torments I was born</i>”/“With torments I was born”-in English	
Instrumental version of the song	<i>The song with lyrics/words</i>
Thoughts, Images	<i>Thoughts, Images</i>
Longing when something is distant, Nostalgia for something that we don’t have, anxiety and tremor, insecurity and fear, misery, suffering, difficult life, insecurity, poverty, hunger, death <i>PredDozhdot (Before the Rain)</i> , <i>Teshkotowith zurlas</i> (oboe-like woodwind instruments) and drums Tradition, patriotism, Macedonian roots, folklore	<i>Sorrow, resignation, powerlessness, anxiety, longing, anguish</i> <i>Misery, hardship, suffering, great pain, insecurity, death</i> <i>Awakening of patriotism</i> <i>Making a pledge to the future generations so that they know what the previous generations have gone through</i>

The listening to the song “*With torments I was born*” evoked predominantly gloomy and grim thoughts and images dominated by misery, hardship and pain experienced by the Macedonian nation, as well as longing for one’s tradition, roots, folklore, and awakening of patriotism and insecurity.

CONCLUSIONS

This research focuses how certain Macedonian epic folk songs, are experienced today, some 150 years since they were originally created. In this respect, the focus was on how two very popular epic folk songs, created in the 19th century, entitled “Listen Patriots” and “With torments I was born” are personally experienced (evoked emotions and thoughts).

The findings from the research have unambiguously indicated that the experiencing of the epic song is different when listening only to the instrumental

version of the song (without the lyrics and the words) and when listening to the song with lyrics. When listening to the instrumental version of the song, emotions of happiness are evoked among the respondents. These emotions appear primarily in the body. When listening to the song with lyrics, patriotic emotions prevail. These emotions belong to the range of negative emotions (sorrow, hatred, rage) and they spread throughout the body. These epic songs evoke generally negative emotions, in addition to negative thoughts and images.

The existence of differences highlighted when listening only to the instrumental version of the song and when listening to the song with lyrics indicates that the lyrics may be recognized on a cognitive level and may evoke certain reactions, emotions and behavior tendencies. These tendencies remain the same as the time they were created. Undoubtedly, this is due to the tradition, folklore and cultural-historical traits and characteristics of the nation that were passed from one generation to the other. In addition, it may be due to the present social and economic circumstances, seen as specific events that happened on the territory of Macedonia. This is particularly pronounced having in mind the armed Macedonian-Albanian conflict that happened in the year 2001, and other events that were omens of ethnic conflicts.

The research showed that emotions of happiness are evoked when listening only to the instrumental version of the song and these emotions are mainly present in the body. When listening to the song with lyrics, negative emotions prevail and they spread throughout the body. If the head is seen as the center of reasoning, thoughts, attitudes and memory, and the body is seen as a place that does not allow much space for rationalization, and where emotions prevail.

In general, folk songs evoke past myths, fights, victims, symbols, leaders and are accompanied by elements of national pride. However, once the security and peace in any country is called into question, common people resort to the community for support believing that it is the only way to survive (Ilić 2012). The bond between the memory and collective identity presupposes that the individuals and groups assume responsibility over the past heritage and pass it on the present and future generations (Ilić 2012). On the other hand, the community stimulates the feeling of belonging through music. Therefore, the messages that the respondents believe are conveyed through the Macedonian epic folk song are the same as the messages they would like to convey to the future generations.

In view of the fact that the findings from the conducted research indicated that the respondents can identify and recognize the emotions, thoughts and images embodied in the two very popular Macedonian epic folk songs, the main conclusion would be affirmative with respect to the main research question and acknowledge the finding that the Macedonian epic folk songs 'touch upon' the present generations as well, as some 150 years after their original creation.

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