Musical and Ontological Possibilities of Mugham Creativity in pre-Soviet, Soviet, and post-Soviet Azerbaijan

by

Polina Dessiatnitchenko

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Department of Music
University of Toronto

© Copyright by Polina Dessiatnitchenko 2017
Musical and Ontological Possibilities of Mugham Creativity in pre-Soviet, Soviet, and post-Soviet Azerbaijan

Polina Dessiatnitchenko

Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnomusicology

Graduate Department of Music, University of Toronto

2017

Abstract

The different angles from which the phenomenon of mugham creativity can be approached all point to the significance of sung ghazal poetry. Even in instrumental renditions of mugham, the overriding presence of sung texts manifests itself through the musical structure, pace, technique and, most importantly, an imaginative and interpretive engagement with meanings that musicians undergo. In this dissertation, the link between music and poetry and its role in mugham creativity are investigated from both diachronic and synchronic perspectives. First, pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet contexts are examined to reveal how changes in musical and textual parameters influenced creativity and shaped its historical trajectory in Azerbaijan. Second, native terminology, musical examples, characteristics and experiences of creativity are explored using hermeneutic phenomenology in order to shed light on the creative process in the moment of performance. It is my contention that interpretation based on meanings in ghazal
poetry that are rooted in Islamic sciences opens up both musical and ontological possibilities for musicians embarked on the *mugham* journey. This creates a state that is often difficult to express discursively as musicians themselves resort to phrases such as “revelation”, “explosion of thinking”, and “the self is taken from the self” that show only the limits of language to explain what goes on. The dissertation concludes with questions about how scholarship can further our understanding of the enigmatic flashes of musical discovery that are essential to Azerbaijani *mugham* and to musical traditions across cultures.
Acknowledgments

I am immensely grateful and indebted to all who have made it possible for me to pursue this study of Azerbaijani mugham. It was a wonderful coincidence that the first moments of my fascination with mugham occurred as I started to develop a strong interest in ethnomusicology, and I was truly fortunate to combine two of my greatest passions. My deepest gratitude goes out to Dr. James Kippen, my mentor from the start whose unwavering support and guidance have made all the difference. He sparked my interest in ethnomusicology from the very first class I took with him in my undergraduate years and he is the one who endorsed my dream to study Azerbaijani mugham and set me on the path, the product of which is this dissertation. Special thanks to Professors Farzaneh Hemmasi, Stephen Blum, Jeff Packman, Joshua Pilzer, and Nasim Niknafs for reading drafts of my work and offering their invaluable feedback.

My two and a half years of fieldwork in Azerbaijan were made possible by grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the W. Garfield Weston Foundation. This financial support allowed me to immerse myself in the culture of Azerbaijan for an extended period of time, taking lessons in tar playing, mugham singing, Azerbaijani language, and ghazal poetry.

The biggest contribution to this project rests with my teachers in Azerbaijan who have generously and tirelessly imparted their knowledge, leading me on my journey through the infinite world of mugham. The time, expertise, patience, encouragement, and inspiration were the most precious gifts that my teachers readily gave me, continuously expanding the horizons of my understanding of musical experience. In addition to the masters I learned from, numerous other musicians and scholars have been very helpful informants whose views and ideas have

Many individuals at institutions in Baku were of tremendous help with my fieldwork research and projects. I wish to thank Hafiz Pashayev, Fariz Ismailzade and Anar Valiyev at ADA University, Yagub Madatov at the State Sound Recording Archives of the Azerbaijan Republic, Marif Teymurov and Gizilgul Babayeva at the State Archive of Literature and Art of the Azerbaijan Republic, Sardar Farajov and Aytan Heydarova at the Uzeyir Hajibeyov Museum, Alla Bayramova at the State Museum of Musical Culture of Azerbaijan, Siyavush Karimi and Yagut Seyidova at the Azerbaijan State National Conservatory, Farhad Badalbeyli, Yegana Akhudova, Fattah Khaligzade, Jamila Gasanova, Ariz Abdulaliyev at the Hajibeyov Baku Academy of Music, Nazim Kazimov at the Asaf Zeynalli Music College, and Teymur Goychayev at the Secondary Music School named after Bulbul for their kind assistance in my endeavour. The unmatched hospitality and geniality of the Azerbaijani people often made me forget that I was a foreigner, instead making me feel most welcomed and at ease during my entire stay in Azerbaijan.

Finally, I wish to offer a genuine thank you to my family. Unable to contribute to this project with their engineering skills, my parents Lioudmila and Iouri and brother Val nevertheless provided me with what has been most important along the way by being a constant
source of confidence and drive, reminding me to follow my aspirations. My biggest ally, whose presence can be found in and between the lines of every page in this dissertation, is my husband Khagani. In addition to helping me with translations and editing, he has taught me much about patience and perseverance, which have become the backbone of this work.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. ii
Acknowledgments .................................................................................................................. iv
Table of Contents ................................................................................................................... vii
Terminology, transliteration, and translation ........................................................................ x
List of Tables ........................................................................................................................ xiii
List of Figures ........................................................................................................................ xiv

**Introduction** ....................................................................................................................... 1

**Chapter 1** **Music and Poetry of Azerbaijani Mugham:**

the Two Wings of Creativity ................................................................................................. 13
1.1 Defining mugham ......................................................................................................... 14
1.2 The mugham trio ....................................................................................................... 17
1.3 The Azerbaijani tar .................................................................................................... 21
1.4 Dəstgah .................................................................................................................... 24
1.5 Ghazal poetry ............................................................................................................ 31
1.6 Əruz ......................................................................................................................... 36
1.7 Guşə, cümə, and avaz ............................................................................................ 42
1.8 Case Study: Şur ...................................................................................................... 46

**Chapter 2** **Pre-Soviet Shusha and Baku:**

the Burgeoning of Mugham Creativity ................................................................................. 67
2.1 Nationalism and cultural enlightenment in pre-Soviet Azerbaijan .............................. 67
2.2 Shusha’s Sadigjan .................................................................................................... 74
2.3 Shusha’s xanəndə traditions ................................................................................... 84
2.4 Baku məclis tradition ............................................................................................. 89
2.5 The tarzəns of pre-Soviet Baku .............................................................................. 96
2.6 Şur dəstgah in Pre-Soviet Azerbaijan ...................................................................... 100

Conclusions .......................................................................................................................... 107
Chapter 3  National in Form, Socialist in Content:

the Sovietization of *Mugham* Creativity ................................................................. 108

3.1 Uzeyir Hajibeyov and the aesthetics of socialist realism ........................................... 109
3.2 Institutionalization of *mugham* ................................................................................. 115
3.3 The battle for *mugham* and *tar* ............................................................................... 119
3.4 Sovietizing *mugham* repertoire: standardization, Westernization, temperament ....... 122
   3.4.1 Standardization ........................................................................................................ 124
   3.4.2 Westernization ......................................................................................................... 137
   3.4.3 Temperament ........................................................................................................... 140
3.5 Soviet *tar* lineages: Bahram Mansurov, Ahmad Bakikhanov, and Haji Mammadov .... 144
   3.5.1 Bahram Mansurov (1911-85) ................................................................................. 145
   3.5.2 Ahmad Bakikhanov (1892-1973) .......................................................................... 148
   3.5.3 Haji Mammadov (1920-81) ................................................................................... 151
3.6 Sovietizing *mugham* singing: language reforms and secularization ...................... 152
   3.6.1 Language reforms .................................................................................................... 153
   3.6.2 Secularization ......................................................................................................... 157
3.7 Hajibaba Huseynov (1919-93) .................................................................................... 160
3.8 The underground conservatory: the role of Absheron towns ..................................... 162
3.9 Khrushchev’s Thaw ...................................................................................................... 167
Conclusions ....................................................................................................................... 168

Chapter 4  Post-Soviet Nativism and Nationalism:

Rediscovering *Mugham* Creativity ................................................................. 170

4.1 Post-Soviet nativism and nationalism: Azerbaijan’s identity in flux ......................... 172
4.2 Nativism and *mugham*: Islamic revival ................................................................. 175
4.3 *Mugham* *məclisi* project ......................................................................................... 178
4.4 Weddings and *məclises* in the Absheron region ....................................................... 181
4.5 “Eastern” and “Azerbaijani” *mugham* on the *tar* .................................................. 184
4.6 *Mugham* as national art ............................................................................................. 197
4.7 The Karabakh crisis ..................................................................................................... 199
4.8 Westernization and the Soviet legacy ......................................................................... 203
4.9 Decolonial creativity .................................................................................................... 207
Conclusions ....................................................................................................................... 210
Chapter 5  Articulating Creativity:

Native Terminology for *Mugham* Creativity ....................................................... 212

5.1 Creativity versus improvisation ........................................................................ 213
5.2 *Mugham* *tafkūrū* and *vəhy* ......................................................................... 217
5.3 Musical structures of creativity ........................................................................ 220
5.4 Characteristics of creativity ............................................................................. 225
5.5 Terminology in the post-Soviet context ............................................................. 228
Conclusions ............................................................................................................. 229

Chapter 6  Performing Creativity:

Musical Possibilities Within and Beyond the *Mugham* Model ............................ 230

6.1 The model versus beyond the model ................................................................. 231
6.2 Variation ............................................................................................................ 234
6.3 Idiosyncratic style ............................................................................................ 244
6.4 Creation of unique *cümlə* and *güşə* ............................................................... 255
6.5 Modulation ....................................................................................................... 263
6.6 Incorporation of non-*mugham* genres and styles .......................................... 269
Conclusions ............................................................................................................. 270

Chapter 7  Experiencing Creativity:

Ontological Possibilities of *Mugham* Within and Beyond Discourses ............ 272

7.1 Characteristics of creativity ............................................................................. 273
7.2 Meanings take centre stage ............................................................................ 279
7.3 The *mugham* journey: interpretation and imagination .................................. 282
7.4 The ontological shift ....................................................................................... 288
Conclusions ............................................................................................................. 299

Chapter 8  Conclusions:

Discourses versus Experiences of Creativity ......................................................... 300

Bibliography ........................................................................................................... 305
Terminology, transliteration and translation

All indigenous terminology is italicised and presented in the current Azerbaijani alphabet adopted in 1992. Exceptions to this are (a) 
*mugham* (*muğam*) and *ghazal* (*qəzəl*) because of a previously-established English transliteration for these words with wide currency, and (b) names of individuals for which a conventional English transliteration already exists. Azerbaijani word *rədif* and Iranian word *radif* are both used depending on which musical tradition is being discussed. The pronunciation of Azerbaijani letters is shown with the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) on a diagram below, taken from Omniglot, the online encyclopedia of writing systems and languages. The present Azerbaijani alphabet does not represent long vowels that are prevalent in the language due to the remaining Persian and Arabic words. Depending on the circumstances of their upbringing, some Azerbaijanis know the correct pronunciation that they picked up by rote.

Russian words found in quotations of my informants and in bibliographic entries, are transcribed using the BGN/PCGN system of Romanization established by the United States Board on Geographic Names (BGN) and by the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names for British Official Use (PCGN), and recognized as the British Standard. A table showing this system is found below, copied from the Omniglot database online. Throughout the text of the dissertation, terminology in Russian is designated with “Rus.” in brackets next to it while Azerbaijani terminology is left without a designation.

All translations from Azerbaijani and Russian (including excerpts from lessons, interviews, events, and sources) are mine. Primary sources written in an outdated Azerbaijani
dialect using a Persian script would have been very difficult to translate without the help of Dr. Ilhama Hasan Mammadova from the Faculty of Eastern Studies at the Baku State University. I also wish to acknowledge Valeh Rahimov and Haji Agil Melikov from the National Conservatory, Tarlan Guliyev from the Hajibeyov Baku Academy of Music, and my husband Khagani whose insight into complex terminology in poetry and interviews greatly helped to shape my translations.

Latin alphabet for Azerbaijani (Azərbaycan əlifbası) – 1992 version (omniglot encyclopedia)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A a</th>
<th>B b</th>
<th>C c</th>
<th>Ç ç</th>
<th>D d</th>
<th>E e</th>
<th>Õ œ</th>
<th>F f</th>
<th>G g</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>be</td>
<td>ce</td>
<td>çe</td>
<td>de</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>œ</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>ge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[a]</td>
<td>[b]</td>
<td>[c]</td>
<td>[ç]</td>
<td>[d]</td>
<td>[e]</td>
<td>[œ]</td>
<td>[f]</td>
<td>[g]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ğ ğ</td>
<td>H h</td>
<td>X x</td>
<td>İ i</td>
<td>Í i</td>
<td>J j</td>
<td>K k</td>
<td>Q q</td>
<td>L l</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ğe</td>
<td>he</td>
<td>xe</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>je</td>
<td>ke/ka</td>
<td>qe</td>
<td>el</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ğ]</td>
<td>[h]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[i]</td>
<td>[i]</td>
<td>[je]</td>
<td>[ke/ka]</td>
<td>[q]</td>
<td>[el]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M m</td>
<td>N n</td>
<td>O o</td>
<td>Ö ö</td>
<td>P p</td>
<td>R r</td>
<td>S s</td>
<td>Ş ş</td>
<td>T t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>em</td>
<td>en</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>ö</td>
<td>pe</td>
<td>er</td>
<td>se</td>
<td>şe</td>
<td>te</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[m]</td>
<td>[n]</td>
<td>[o]</td>
<td>[ö]</td>
<td>[p]</td>
<td>[r]</td>
<td>[s]</td>
<td>[ş]</td>
<td>[t]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U u</td>
<td>Ü ü</td>
<td>V v</td>
<td>Y y</td>
<td>Z z</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>ü</td>
<td>ve</td>
<td>ye</td>
<td>ze</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[u]</td>
<td>[ü]</td>
<td>[v]</td>
<td>[y]</td>
<td>[z]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Russian transliteration table (omniglot encyclopedia)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Russian</th>
<th>Transliteration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>А а</td>
<td>a/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Б б</td>
<td>b/b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>В в</td>
<td>v/v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Г г</td>
<td>g/i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Д д</td>
<td>d/d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Е е</td>
<td>e/ye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ё ё</td>
<td>e/ye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ж ж</td>
<td>zh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>З з</td>
<td>z/z</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>И и</td>
<td>i/i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Й й</td>
<td>[j/j]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>К к</td>
<td>k/k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Л л</td>
<td>l/l</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>М м</td>
<td>m/m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Н н</td>
<td>n/n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>О о</td>
<td>o/o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>П п</td>
<td>p/p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Р р</td>
<td>r/r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>С с</td>
<td>s/s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Т т</td>
<td>t/t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>У у</td>
<td>u/u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ф ф</td>
<td>f/f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Х х</td>
<td>k/k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ц ц</td>
<td>[ts]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ч ч</td>
<td>[tʃ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ш ш</td>
<td>[ʃ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Щ щ</td>
<td>[ɕ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ъ ъ</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ь ь</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Э э</td>
<td>[ε]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ю ю</td>
<td>[ju/ju]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Я я</td>
<td>[ja/ja]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

Table 1.1 Notes about the main components of standardized şur dəstgah 47-51
Table 3.1 Parts of Hajibeyov’s şur mode versus main şöbə of şur dəstgah 133-34
Table 4.1 şur dəstgah components in the canonized version and as performed by representatives of the Bakikhanov and Mansurov lineages today 191-93
## List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Diagram of the <em>tar</em></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Diagram of the <em>tar</em>’s strings</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Tones and main <em>şöö</em> of <em>şur</em> <strong>mugham</strong> <em>dostgah</em></td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td><em>Romël tafılə</em></td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>First <em>cümlə</em> of <em>şur</em> <strong>mayə</strong></td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6</td>
<td><em>Guşə</em> <strong>gövhər</strong> of <em>şur</em> <strong>mayə</strong> in Mansurov school</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>Alim Qasimov <em>şur</em> <strong>dostgah</strong> <strong>misra</strong> 1 notation</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>Alim Qasimov <em>şur</em> <strong>dostgah</strong> <strong>misra</strong> 2 notation</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>Alim Qasimov <em>şur</em> <strong>dostgah</strong> gezişmə in <em>şur-şəhnəz</em></td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>Alim Qasimov <em>şur</em> <strong>dostgah</strong> instrumentalist’s accompaniment</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td><em>Şur</em> <strong>dostgahs</strong> from Meshedi Melik Mansurov’s <em>məclis</em> in 1888</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td><em>Şur</em> <strong>dostgah</strong> from Mansurov’s <em>məclis</em> in the 1920s</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td><em>Şur</em> <strong>dostgah</strong> from Mansurov’s <em>məclis</em> in 1925</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td><em>Şur</em> <strong>dostgah</strong> by Mirza Faraj</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Hajibeyov’s <em>şur</em> <strong>mode</strong></td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Hajibeyov’s “composition based on <em>şur</em> **mode””</td>
<td>127-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td><em>Şur</em> <strong>mugham</strong> <strong>dostgah</strong> at Mansurov’s <em>məclis</em> in 1888</td>
<td>130-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td><em>Şur</em> <strong>mugham</strong> <strong>dostgah</strong> as determined by Hajibeyov and his committee of <strong>performers</strong> in 1925</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td><em>Şur</em> <strong>dostgah</strong> as devised by Mirza Mansur for the curriculum in 1937</td>
<td>131-32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td><em>Şur</em> <strong>mugham</strong> <strong>dostgah</strong> as taught at the National Conservatory</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Hajibeyov’s <em>şur</em> <strong>mode</strong> transposed to <em>mayə</em> on G</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Bahram Mansurov’s <em>şur</em></td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
<td><em>Guşə</em> <strong>səlmək</strong> as performed in the Mansurov and Bakikhanov schools</td>
<td>149-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10</td>
<td><em>Şur</em> <strong>dostgah</strong> by Ahmad Bakikhanov</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td><em>Şur</em> <strong>dostgah</strong> from <em>bərdəst</em> to <em>bayatı-türk</em> as performed today</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Rare <em>guşə</em> <strong>çiidai</strong> performed by representatives of the Mansurov and Bakikhanov schools</td>
<td>194-95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td><em>Guşə cüdai</em> with <em>rəməl</em> metre</td>
<td>195-96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Model and creativity of <em>mugham</em></td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Cadences used in <em>şur</em> <em>məşəbə</em></td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Cadences used in <em>hicəz</em> <em>şəbə</em></td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td><em>Qoşa mizrab</em> <em>shtrikh</em> from the Mansurov school (without cadence)</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td><em>Şur bərdaşt</em> as played by Bahram Mansurov and his successors</td>
<td>249-51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>Ahsan Dadashev’s <em>barmaq</em></td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7</td>
<td><em>Gəzişmə tıızak</em></td>
<td>261-62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>Transition from <em>bayət-kürd</em> <em>mugham</em> to <em>düğah</em> <em>mugham</em> as played in the Mansurov school</td>
<td>267-68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

Creativity has recently garnered attention in disciplines devoted to music. This popularity has resulted in much needed insights, shifting emphasis from the imaginative product to the imaginative process. Indeed, ethnomusicologists have been taking advantage of their access to creativity, studying and learning how to play music that demands heightened spontaneity in the moment of performance. However, while much has been written about the boundaries of creativity, an exploration of its possibilities continues to be somewhat avoided terrain. In other words, literature about how creativity is determined from within established traditions or how it is based on a recognized model abounds, while factors that cause breakthroughs beyond a model have not received much scholarly attention. Considering that unprecedented musical structures and innovative musical styles are hallmarks of those musicians who are most revered, a look into the “new” of music is necessary. In this dissertation, I explore creativity as a phenomenon of musical and ontological possibilities through a combination of both diachronic and synchronic analyses of Azerbaijani mugham.

I first heard mugham in Toronto while performing on the piano with a trio from Azerbaijan as part of the Silk Road Chamber Orchestra in Canada. Seeing the tar player mesmerizing audiences by creating an intense mood that leads to powerful catharses raised many questions in my mind about the connection between internal states and creative musical structures. My ensuing fascination with mugham developed as I began to take lessons on the tar in Toronto with Mohammad Amanollahi for a few months before I went on my first fieldwork trip to Baku. The links I established with Azerbaijani musicians in Toronto greatly facilitated my immersion into mugham circles in Baku. I was very fortunate to enter the field with contacts to
local musicians and institutions and, therefore, my fieldwork began immediately upon my arrival. I purchased my first tar and arranged for lessons with teachers from different institutions. In addition, I enrolled in three courses at the Hajibeyov Baku Academy of Music: “Analysis of Azerbaijani Folk Music” with Professor Fattah Khaligzade, “Mugham Art” with Professor Jamila Gasanova, and “Ethnomusicology and Research on Mugham in Azerbaijan” with Professor Ariz Abdulaliyev. In order to broaden my understanding of mugham, I reviewed secondary sources at libraries such as the Mirza Fatali Akhundov National Library of Azerbaijan.

My research, courses, and lessons on the tar expanded my connections further and I began to decipher the discourses around me, honing my research questions. As a result, after my preliminary fieldwork from January to July 2013, I decided to focus on the relationship between sung poetry and music because it emerged to be central to mugham creativity.

I returned to the field in February 2014 and continued my research for two years, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Weston Fellowship at the University of Toronto. By this time, my main gatekeeper in the field became my playing skills on the tar. I practised religiously as I sought to gain insight into the structure of mugham music and the involved experience. Seeing my dedication, the masters felt encouraged to teach me versions of mugham that surpassed the standardized curriculum and provide information that was not found in official sources. My discussions with them started to venture into topics that challenged the established metanarratives. As I understood that mugham creativity is implicated in various lineages through the connection between playing styles and sung texts, I decided to take lessons with teachers from different lineages. Moreover, my inquiry into the complex historical trajectory of mugham from pre-Soviet to Soviet to post-Soviet contexts revealed how the tie to poetry was distorted due to historical factors, thereby impacting creativity. Thus,
learning the history of the Azerbaijani language and the specific terminology in *mugham* poetry that is comprised of Arabic and Persian words became fundamental goals in my fieldwork.

Among *tar* musicians in Azerbaijan, there are some who are recognized as “knowers of *mugham*” (*mugham bilən*). This title refers to individuals with a profound knowledge of *ghazal* poetry and its meanings, *mugham* musical structure, Islamic gnosis, and other spheres related to *mugham* that determine creativity. They can be poets, religious figures, *mugham* instrumentalists and singers. Many knowers come from the conservative suburban towns in the vicinity of Baku because the lifestyle that is maintained there cultivates both deep knowledge of and appreciation for *mugham*.

Much information presented in the dissertation comes from my lessons with *tar* masters. Out of six of my main *tar* teachers, five are considered as “knowers.” Uncoincidentally, many of my teachers are descendants of the Mansurov and Bakikhanov lineages that started and developed in pre-Soviet Azerbaijan. They not only guard forms of *mugham* that are far wider and more complex than the institutionalized form, but they also maintain that their respective lineages are much closer to *mugham* poetry than the mainstream version of *mugham*.

What I refer to as mainstream or popular *mugham* is the modified, institutionalized, and standardized version that was formed when Azerbaijan was a republic of the Soviet empire. All *mugham* performers know this coherently organized system and this is the official version that is taught at institutions. Creativity is undoubtedly present in this form of *mugham*. However, musicians avoid transgressing the boundaries of this system and limit performances to variation and idiosyncratic ornamentation, avoiding complex modulation or creation of new phrases. Heightened creativity, closely associated with sung poetry, is encouraged and expected in older lineages that predate Soviet intervention. As my research unfolded, I chose to devote more time
to learning non-mainstream forms of *mugham* and trying to further my understanding of implicated creativity. Hence, most of my teachers were the main proponents of two conservative lineages (Mansurov and Bakikhanov) and it is their voices that are most prevalent in the pages of this dissertation. Due to issues of ethics, I chose to hide the identity of my teachers and informants when recounting discussions and quoting them.

Drinking tea, listening to recordings, going over examples of *ghazal* poetry used in *mugham*, and discussing historical aspects of the music were activities that made my lessons much more than rote repetition of *mugham* music sentence by sentence. With time, I started to partake in the worldviews of musicians; the worldviews that saturated their experiences of *mugham* and triggered creativity. Because I was also learning the Sovietized system, I had to busy myself mastering European scales, notation, and composed works for the *tar*, observing how this too impacted creativity.

I found my own performances to be quite insightful because the meanings that I discussed with masters and internalized surfaced to shape my playing. I usually performed works by Azerbaijani composers such as Qara Qarayev and even Western pieces by Schubert and Mozart in addition to *mugham*. When I played *mugham* at concerts it was always solo or with other instrumentalists but never with a *xanəndə*. Nevertheless, I found myself preparing by thinking about meanings that the music expresses, going over *ghazal* texts, and remembering the conversations I had with my teachers about the philosophy of *mugham*. During my performances I spontaneously inserted phrases from different lineages that I learned with masters and these were instances when I felt most connected to the audience and remarkably inspired.

It did not take long for me to realize that gold mines of information about my topic of interest are in the suburban towns around Baku. These are settlements characterized by a
conservative Muslim way of life where many poets, musicians, religious figures, and spiritual leaders who are knowers of *mugham* reside. In addition, private gatherings of *mugham* and *mugham* weddings took place here underground during the Soviet regime and thus the towns are described as the underground conservatory. Throughout my fieldwork, I conducted interviews in two of these towns called Nardaran and Mashtaga and obtained invaluable oral information that is nowhere to be found in official sources. As a woman and as someone coming from the West, establishing networks here was not easy. I was only permitted to attend meetings wearing local Muslim attire that covered my full body including my head, arms, and legs and behave in a way that facilitated my attempt to fit in as much as possible. My ability to perform on the *tar* and my research questions were the main gatekeepers here. Because I was studying *mugham* with teachers who were knowers themselves and who were recognized in Nardaran and Mashtaga for their expertise, I was welcomed to conduct further oral research. Also, my inquiries about experiences and meanings related to heightened creativity found much resonance with knowers from Nardaran and Mashtaga. A breakthrough with acceptance happened when my informants saw that I was determined to give back to their communities by organizing concerts and *mugham* gatherings (*Mugham Məclisi* project, see chapter 4). My genuine and enduring interest in *mugham* and my commitment to the communities I worked with were the main factors that unlocked access to important data in the suburban settlements.

In addition to my fieldwork notes and first-hand experiences as a performer of *mugham*, I incorporate findings from archival research in Baku. Private and state archives in Azerbaijan hold rare and important primary sources about the history of Azerbaijani traditional music such as writings of Uzeyir Hajibeyov or personal notebooks of the Mansurov *tar* lineage’s founders. While there is much to be discovered in the archival repositories, the level of surveillance and
control over the materials creates difficulties for researchers. I was very fortunate to have doors of these institutions opened for me due to official endorsement of my academic work by ADA University in Baku. As such, I spent many days investigating sources at the Uzeyir Hajibeyov House Museum referred to here as the Archives of Uzeyir Hajibeyov, as well as three state repositories: State Archives of Literature and Art of the Azerbaijan Republic, State Sound Recording Archives of the Azerbaijan Republic, and State Museum of Musical Culture of Azerbaijan.

Although much research in Azerbaijan today probes topics forbidden in the Soviet era, local scholars are still somewhat reluctant to question Soviet metanarratives. Academics at institutions that produce and publish research on *mugham* such as the National Conservatory or the Academy of Sciences have only very recently started to promote investigations into *mugham* that surpass, and especially challenge, Soviet research. For example, research is still fixated on theoretical analyses underpinned by Uzeyir Hajibeyov’s Soviet systematization of modes while a thorough comparison between this Soviet theoretical lens and live performance practice is long overdue. Nevertheless, there are Azerbaijani scholars whose works served as valuable sources of information for this dissertation. For example, Firudin Shushinsky was a musicologist who conducted much archival and oral history research, travelling around Azerbaijan and compiling biographical data about native musicians. Other compelling historical studies of Azerbaijani *mugham* can be found in Vagif Abdulgassimov’s “Azerbaijanian Tar” (1990) and in the writings of Rafig Imrani and Rafig Musazade who focus on pre-Soviet *mugham* and particular schools of playing. Sanubar Bagirova’s and Sevil Farkhadova’s informative publications about the religious and spiritual dimensions of *mugham* have also enriched the present study.
One outstanding researcher who is also a knower of *mugham* and a descendant of the Mansurov lineage is Faik Chelebiyev. In this dissertation, the profound knowledge of Chelebiyev contributes vastly to my arguments and ideas. Being a scholar from Russia, Chelebiyev is an outsider to the nation’s academic establishment and is able to look critically at the official ideologies that remain unquestioned by many scholars in Baku. Similarly, Tamila Dzhani-zade is another ethnomusicologist from Russia whose rigorous analyses of Azerbaijani music have informed this dissertation.

There is a lacuna of ethnographic data in Western scholarship on Azerbaijani *mugham*. However, there are several books and articles dedicated to the subject written by Jean During, Inna Naroditskaya, and Aida Huseynova to which I have continuously referred to as my work unfolded. During in *La Musique Traditionelle de l’Azerbaycan et la Science des Mugams* (1988) offers a rich account of Azerbaijani *mugham* that encompasses detailed information about the history, contexts of performance, instruments, modal structure, and intervals. He also includes a comparative modal analysis, drawing similarities and differences between the Azerbaijani system and others such as the Persian, Turkish, and Arabic modes. Naroditskaya’s *Song from the Land of Fire: Continuity and Change in Azerbaijanian Mugham* (2002) provides an important overview of *mugham* in the twentieth century and sheds light on historical factors that shaped the musical tradition. The paramount role of *mugham* in the formation of Azerbaijan’s national composition school, outlined by Naroditskaya, is the main focus of Huseynova’s book *Music of Azerbaijan: From Mugham to Opera* (2016). Huseynova effectively presents musical analysis showing how *mugham* modes theorized by Hajibeyov served as foundations for famous compositions such as *Leyli and Majnun, Koroghlu, Shah Ismayil*, and *Kurd Ovshari*. I hope to contribute to the study of Azerbaijani *mugham* in the West by tracing the transformation that
creativity underwent in pre-Soviet, Soviet, and post-Soviet Azerbaijan, impacted by the changing relationship between music and poetry.

Azerbaijani and Russian were the primary languages I worked in while gathering data from my informants. My teachers spoke mostly in Azerbaijani and some inserted phrases and words in Russian if they were fluent in the latter language. At all times, I made sure to clarify important terminology in the native language, especially when we discussed creativity. In Nardaran and Mashtaga I spoke only in Azerbaijani because most of the knowers there either do not know or prefer not to converse in Russian. The sources I explored in libraries and archives were in Russian and Azerbaijani, written in many different scripts including various versions of Cyrillic, Persian, and Roman.

Relying on information gathered from lessons, interviews, performances, primary and secondary sources during more than two years of fieldwork in Azerbaijan, I embark on an attempt to trace the historical trajectory of mugham creativity and shed light on the complex layers of musical experience in the moment of performance. Furthermore, I rely on existing literature and theory available in the disciplines of ethnomusicology, anthropology, and phenomenology for further clarification, comparison, and critique of presented material.

I have chosen to demonstrate my ideas with musical examples from Azerbaijani mugham dəstgah şur. Firstly, I learned this dəstgah in its full form from six different tar teachers, some of whom represent main mugham lineages that stretch back to the pre-Soviet era. I have also learned how to sing şur from distinguished mugham singers and have taken additional lessons in the terminology of sung ghazal poetry and its əruz structure used in the existing recordings of şur dəstgah. Moreover, şur is known as a musically very rich and vast mugham and, thus, is especially imbued with musical and ontological possibilities. For this reason, along with rast, şur
is identified as a “wedding mugham” or main repertoire at mugham weddings – milieux that place high importance on creativity. One prominent tar performer, Ahsan Dadashev, used to say: “I often choose to play şur because in this mugham I can do anything.”

The native discourse of mugham performers confirms Bruno Nettl’s assertion that it is difficult to explain musical creativity: “any attempt to describe improvisation must be, in some respects, a misrepresentation, for there is something central to the spirit of voluntary improvisation which is opposed to the aims and contradicts the idea of documentation” (Nettl 1998: 12). Based on my informants’ phrases, descriptions, and experiences related to mugham, as well as the diachronic analysis that examines creativity from a historical angle, I deduce one main catalyst at the core of creativity to be the link between music and poetry. It is my contention that poetico-musical harmony fuels processes of interpretation and imagination, which in turn bring about the indeterminate musical and ontological state. With this being the main thesis of the dissertation, I hope to contribute to the important question Owen Wright poses about Persian classical music: “is unmetred music really unmetred?” (Wright 2009: 36) as he refers to the presence of poetical metres in the rhythmical structure of melodies. This question has also been taken up by other ethnomusicologists (Amoozegar-Fassie 2010; Blum 2012; Tsuge 1974; Yarshater 1974).

The first part of the dissertation begins with a chapter that elucidates the theoretical foundation of Azerbaijani mugham. In this chapter, I focus on the musical and poetical structures in detail and explain why the link between these two parameters of mugham is crucial for creativity. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 then provide historical background about the pre-Soviet, Soviet, and post-Soviet contexts respectively, delineating the developments and changes that mugham
creativity underwent. In each case, I explore both the musical and the textual facets of *mugham* in order to provide clues about how their changing relationship affected creativity.

In the second part of this dissertation, I aim to contribute to the current scholarly interest in creativity by analyzing the role of interpretation and imagination in the performance of Azerbaijani *mugham*. The diachronic inquiry into the historical context of Azerbaijani *mugham* covered in the chapters of the first part is in constant dialogue with *mugham* creativity in the moment, as discussed in the second part. Terminology, musical structures, observations, and the experiences of musicians are infinitely impinged on by pre-Soviet, Soviet, and post-Soviet factors driven by larger socio-political forces. The dynamic immediate present is determined by all points from the past that accumulate in the “now”, and which therefore shape it. For example, the development of distinct lineages, stylistic differences, and the divergent reputations and acclaim of various schools today, all play into creativity in the moment through different approaches to poetry, əruz metres, virtuosity, plectrum technique, context of performance, etc.

Ethnographic data presented in this dissertation reveals how perceptions about creativity and creativity itself serve as symbolic battlefields between tradition and modernity. Writing about Iranian *radif*, Laudan Nooshin similarly focusses on the processes that transformed the simple modal musical repertoire for creativity into “a conceptual entity and iconic emblem evoking notions of purity, authenticity, tradition and identity” (Nooshin 2015: 82). Similarly, the propensity towards nativism in post-Soviet Azerbaijan shapes and is shaped by the prevalent practices and ideas about creativity.

I begin the second part of the present work with an overview of indigenous terminology for creativity and identify obvious incongruities between this terminology and “improvisation”, as it has been used by music researchers from the West. “*Mugham thinking*” (*mugham təfəkkürü*)
is how some Azerbaijani musicians succinctly sum up the process of *mugham* creativity. This umbrella term incorporates interpretation, imagination, as well as the flashes of musical insight that result in “new” music beyond the model. In order to dissect and examine the phenomenon of “*mugham* thinking”, I rely on emic accounts. These reveal not only the nature of creativity but also how to approach it. Consequently, I organize the chapters about creativity in the second part as such: chapter 5 is an overview of the terminology used by *mugham* musicians; chapter 6 introduces types of creativity manifested in concrete musical structures; chapter 7 delves into characteristics of creativity as described by musicians and experiences, or subjective ways of being while performing *mugham*. These divisions are reflective of indigenous words and phrases used for *mugham* creativity. A properly thorough analysis of insiders’ terminology, which is then used as a lens into the phenomenon of creativity and consequent conclusions, is the only way to approach creativity avoiding bias and misrepresentation.

Chapter 7 looks into the perceptions about and experiences of creativity in order to investigate the musical and ontological “beyond” prompted by interpretive and imaginative processes. As such, following the advice of Nettl who asks: “What is it that actually happens in the mind of the improviser in the course of a performance? This may be the most significant question for scholars investigating the process” (Nettl 1998: 16), my main aim is to look into the hermeneutics of creativity.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is my avenue into the culminating exploration of *mugham* as an interpretive and imaginative quest of the Beyond. Several ethnomusicological ethnographies (Berger 1999, 2009; Friedson 1996; Lindsay 1996; Ó Loaire 2005) have used hermeneutic phenomenology to shed light on musical interpretation. I find particularly useful those works that emphasize the importance of musical phenomena as experienced in the moment.
when meanings are in a state of flux and transformation, and hence, possibility (Berger 2009; Duranti 2009; Jankowsky 2010; Lindsay 1996; Porcello 1998). But even if there is a claim in scholarship about possibility in the moment of performance, this possibility is still bounded by a sense of closure in the system as a whole. Instead, I argue that the flux is imbued with both musical and ontological possibility, and is not closed but rather open for innovation. Allowing for and deepening the imagination of the Beyond, ghazal texts are crucial for this openness. Furthermore, I side with the critique of ethnomusicologist Thomas Porcello regarding the tendency to privilege text as static instead of focussing on the temporal aspects of experiencing music when texts are in a flux of “ways of being” (Porcello 1998: 486). By focussing on interpretation and imagination as engagement with meanings in transition, I support the position of Christopher Small (1998) that music is a process that becomes objectified only after its performance. Therefore, I advocate for analysis of how meanings given by texts are imagined, transformed and made anew in the moment of performance.

Although I rely on the writings of phenomenologists such as Martin Heidegger and Paul Ricoeur, I also identify the inherent shortcomings of these approaches that do not fully account for what transpires during moments of creativity in its most extreme manifestations. Therefore, the factor of divine intervention or the acknowledgement that imagination is a real but alternate plane of Being are also part of my analysis, and I incorporate the ideas of phenomenologists of mysticism and descriptions of Azerbaijani musicians for further insight into the numinous part of creativity. The credibility that these beliefs exercise among musicians is emphasized as evidence of the limits of human understanding and the importance of a critical self-reading that resists full closure in any scholarship. What my analysis ultimately leads to is not an explanation of the creative impulse but rather a discussion of its possibilities as an enigma.
Chapter 1
Music and Poetry of Azerbaijani *Mugham*: the Two Wings of Creativity

*Mugham* performers have to know the music and the words – these are like the two wings of a bird! If one of them is short, the bird won’t fly!

(Mugham knower from Nardaran)

What anchors the vast realm of meanings activated during a performance of *mugham*, thus determining the course of creativity? When asked about the significance of *mugham*, Azerbaijani people use phrases such as “this is our music” (*bizim musiqimiz*), “Azerbaijani classical music” (*Azərbaycan klassik musiqisi*), “this is the East” (*Şərqin musiqisi*), “it is our genetic code” (*mugham bizim genlərimizdədirlər*), “lullaby that my mother sung to me” (*mugham analarımızın laylasıdır*), “philosophy of life” (*həyat fəlsəfəsi*), accompanied by strong sentiments that reveal the profound imbeddedness of *mugham* in many domains of Azerbaijani culture and lifestyle. In this dissertation, my focus lies with the relationship between *mugham* music and poetry. Providing both diachronic (chapters 2 to 4) and synchronic (chapters 5 to 7) analyses, I attempt to show how *mugham* meanings rooted in *ghazal* poetry and associated Islamic philosohy are expressed musically through the creativity of performers. This first chapter is an introduction to the structure of *mugham* music and *ghazal* poetry that provides the theoretical basis necessary for further insights into creativity.
1.1 Defining 

Among scholars, musicians, and lovers of Azerbaijani traditional music, a broad spectrum of musical phenomena counts as 

. To begin with, is the totality of the modal system from which all Azerbaijani music is derived. This includes religious music, folk music, national composed music, dance, and jazz. In other words, it is the modal basis of these genres that is referred to as . Evidence exists that the modal system used to be called until “” was adopted in the Soviet era to substitute for (see chapter 3). 

was the equivalent of (“mode”, Rus.), another term used by Azerbaijani and Russian music researchers at the outset of the Soviet era. , the figure at the forefront of Sovietization, used the terms and interchangeably, while had a different meaning (see, for example, “Azerbaijani Music”, DK 8006). Hajibeyov’s student further promulgated this divergence, discussing as the modal foundation and as the actual genre or composition:

Although and concepts are similar, in Azerbaijani music theory these have been accepted as related but independent and having separate meanings. From this point of view, is a multipart vocal-instrumental and instrumental music structured in improvisatory style. , on the other hand, means a mode, that is, the tones that consist of differently structured sounds with certain functions (Ismayilov 1984: 9).

Ismayilov provided the following example: is the modal basis of not only but also of other such as , , , and .

Similarly, is the mode of , , , and (Ismayilov 1984: 10).
Ensuing interpretations of Hajibeyov’s ideas led to confusion of the two terms (see chapter 3). As a result, in the writings of Soviet music scholars from Russia these two notions were combined into one and the same term *mugham* was understood variously as mode, style, and genre. This amalgamation pervades scholarly writing today, and has become part of the common understanding among the majority of musicians. A few scholars of the present day (Chelebiyev 2009; Zohrabov 1991) cautiously remind us that mode should not be equated with *mugham*. Ramiz Zohrabov clarifies that it is the *məqam* system that Hajibeyov reworked into a theoretical tool for the new national composition school established in Soviet Azerbaijan. Thus, it is erroneous to equate the use of modes for composing in the Western classical style with composition based on *mugham*.

Apart from signifying the Azerbaijani modal system as a whole, *mugham* also stands for the branch of Azerbaijani traditional music known as Azerbaijani “classical music” (*klassik musiqi*). All the components of the principal genre of *mugham* called *mugham dəstgah* are within this category. *Mugham dəstgah* is the main and complete cyclical form for the realization of *mugham* modes (its structure is explained in detail below). In contrast to the first definition of *mugham* as mode, this second designation involves characteristic melodies and motifs in addition to their extra-musical associations. Thus, in this sense, *mugham* is both a type of scale and a collection of distinctive melodic behaviours.

Thirdly, within the *mugham dəstgah*, there are principal parts in which *ghazal* poetry is sung. These main sections known as *şöbə* (section) are *mugham* in the narrowest sense. Here, performers are expected to spontaneously and creatively develop the musical modes, and the link between music and poetry plays a crucial role in this activity. It is this connection that triggers engagement with meanings and experiences necessary for creativity.
Among musicologists in Azerbaijan, *mugham* is defined as oral-professional music (*şifahi professional musiqi*). Furthermore, Zohrabov argues against the term “traditional music” (*ənənəvi musiqi*) that is used for *mugham* by Western scholars and defends the division of Azerbaijani music into folk, folk-professional, and oral-professional (Zohrabov 1991: 6). *Mugham* is the oral-professional branch, bardic *aşıq* music is folk-professional, and the existent folk songs, work songs, lullabies, etc. are simply folk music. These classifications were also taught to me by other academics of *mugham* when I enrolled in courses at the Baku Music Academy in 2013. Indeed, there are many differences between these musical forms manifested in distinct instruments, repertoire, attire, context, etc. However, throughout history, the boundaries between them have also been porous, resulting in much interchange facilitated by the common modal basis (“*məqam*” above). For instance, there are many musicians who are both *aşıq* players and *mugham* performers. There are also musical sections or styles of playing that belong to the *aşıq* art but are borrowed by *mugham* performers, and vice versa. Accordingly, after drawing a line between *mugham* and *aşıq* arts, Zohrabov argues that the roots of oral-professional music (*mugham*) are nevertheless in folk music (Zohrabov 1991: 9). Rena A. Mammadova similarly writes that in *mugham* there is a unity of folk and professional elements (Mammadova 1987: 9). As such, while distinct, Azerbaijani oral-professional, folk-professional, and folk music are deeply interconnected.

The crucial point of divergence that separates *mugham* from other forms of Azerbaijani music has to do with sung poetry. *Mugham* singers perform *ghazal* texts, also considered as a “classical” (*klassik*) or “art” (*şənət*) poetical genre. Conversely, *aşıq* music uses folk poetry with different themes and structures. The nature of creativity in the two forms is determined not only by contexts, conventions, instruments, etc., but also by the sung words and the kinds of
experiences they incite. Furthermore, the particular musical delivery of ghazal poetry in Azerbaijani mugham also distinguishes it from Persian classical music. Jean During writes “...one of the specific qualities of Azeri singing, in contrast to Persian, is the tendency to produce a large number of verses on a single pitch sung in a quasi-parlando style. … By contrast, in Iran a ghazal can be distilled verse by verse over the course of a half-hour of singing” (During 2006: 39). Lastly, the presence of ghazal poetry is also the central element that distinguishes mugham from məqam and from components of mugham đostgah that are pre-composed. This dissertation is focussed precisely on the creativity of the mugham sections that entail ghazal poetry by investigating the link between the text and music. As such, lyrics not only shape the uniqueness of Azerbaijani classical music, but are also the paramount wellspring of meaning-making. A thorough understanding of this role, historically and phenomenologically, sheds light on how mugham creativity is musically expressed, understood, and experienced.

1.2 The mugham trio

Mugham is commonly performed by a trio known in Azerbaijani as üçlük (trio), and sazəndə dəstəsi (group of musicians). The triumvirate is comprised of a xanəndə (mugham singer) and two instrumentalists on the tar (fretted, waisted lute) and the kamança (unfretted spike fiddle). The xanəndə holds and plays a qaval (frame drum) to accompany the singing. Alternative names for tar players are tarçı, tarzən, and tar çalan, while kamança players are also called kamançaçı and kamança çalan. Either of the instrumentalists can be called çalğıçı (instrumentalist) and singers oxuyan (singer).

From the writings of prominent singers Jabbar Garyagdioglu (1861-1944) and Bulbul (1897-1961), it is evident that during the first half of the nineteenth century xanəndə performed
with *tar*, *kamança* and *balaban* (double-reed wind instrument), while during the second half of that century with *tar*, *kamança* and *qoşa nağara* (paired drums with rounded backs) (Shushinsky 1979: 22). The Azerbaijani *mugham* trio as it exists today was formed in the early twentieth century. Once it crystallized, this arrangement withstood even the most drastic upheavals of the Soviet regime and continues to be the popular medium of *mugham*.

Perhaps the particular synergy achieved between the *xanəndə*, *tar* and *kamança* participants that *mugham* necessitates accounts for the endurance of the trio. The very intimate connection between all the parts of the trio is certainly crucial because it propels the creative process in a performance. The standard performance practice involves the *tar* player sitting in the middle with the *xanəndə* on his or her right side and the *kamança* player on the left. This layout reflects the *tarzən*’s vital role. Among many important duties, the *tar* player signals when there are changes in sections or modulations while also ensuring that the performance unfolds in a proper manner. However, when *ghazals* are sung, the responsibility to lead shifts to the singer and the instrumentalists are limited to providing musical support in the background. During these instances, the *tarzən* plays only very sporadically, highlighting the same notes that are being sung in order to aid the conveyance of the poetic text. The *kamança* player usually holds a continuous main tone. Only in between lines of poetry, when the *xanəndə* takes a short break, can the *tar* and *kamança* players showcase solo musical “sentences” (*cümlə* or *гуşə*, see below). They can imitate the singer’s melody, insert some of the numerous standardized sentences that are part of the instrumentalists’ canonized repertoire, or create something completely new. Usually, the *kamança* player follows the *tar* player with a very short gap between their statements, echoing almost exactly the same material as the *tar* player. However, there are also instances for the *kamança* to be in the spotlight with virtuosic and captivating solo interjections.
Some musicians take sides and argue that the leader in the trio is either the tar player or the xanəndə. Those who advocate for the tar attempt to persuade us that this instrument guides the entire creative process. Others assert that the sung words are the central element because they propel all the performers and listeners on a journey of meanings. In spite of these polarized views, dynamics in the mugham trio reveal instead the interconnected nature of all three musicians’ composite creativity. For example, there are many indigenous sayings about the collective role of the tarzən and xanəndə such as: “The tarzən can both kill and resurrect a xanəndə” (tarçı xanəndəni öldrürə də bilər, dirildə də), “Inspiration for the xanəndə is the tar player” (xanəndəni oxudan tarçı olar), “The tar player must know how to lead a dialogue with the xanəndə” (tarçı xanəndə ilə sual-cavab ələməyi bacarmalıdır) (Chelebiyev 2009: 46). Even though singing is crucial because of the expressed meanings, the tar player has the important duty to make those words clear and aid in their delivery.

There are “knowers” of mugham (mugham bilən) who are experts in both the musical structure and philosophy of mugham and who are, therefore, recognized as ultimate voices of authority. One knower I interviewed explained:

To learn the art of tar and kamança takes longer than to become a xanəndə. The xanəndə just needs the voice, because when the xanəndə forgets, the tar leads him or her to remember. For example, when one xanəndə was singing with Bahram Mansurov, she was constantly going out of rhythm [ritm]. But Bahram was following her and always bringing her back to the original rhythm. That happened seven times and at the end of the performance they looked at each other and smiled. The tar is always there to help out. The tar can bring the xanəndə back on track (Nardaran knower, interview, 25 July 2015).

One might point out that the preeminence of the tarzən or kamança in mugham is evident in the existence of the solo instrumental mugham tradition while unaccompanied vocal mugham is not recognized. However, as my fieldwork shows, even instrumental mugham is based on sung
poetry: structural and connotational elements of sung ghazals are still present in the solo instrumental version of mugham (see below). Moreover, the instrumental performance of mugham developed based on the vocal form. As Faik Chelebiyev notes:

Of course, the instrumental version of mugham – in comparison to the vocal – was created much later. Throughout eras, instrumentalists gradually created their own branch of mugham while accompanying singers. This resulted in the coexistence of vocal and instrumental versions of the same mugham (Chelebiyev 2009: 52).

Chelebiyev further comments on the singer-instrumentalist link discussed above:

It is necessary to underscore that an instrumentalist without a vocalist’s thinking cannot be considered a good instrumentalist, regardless of his or her level of virtuosity. It is not a coincidence that an instrumentalist is valued not only as a soloist, but, not less importantly, as an accompanist. In the playing of a competent instrumentalist, vocalism must always be present, and the most advanced virtuosity should not be an obstacle to this (Chelebiyev 2009: 52).

For the most part, it is the instrumentalists’ playing that is based on the singing instead of the other way around. Still, there are also moments in every performance when singers follow and imitate instrumentalists. For example, there are parts in the dostgah cycle that feature instrumentalists performing muğambaşı (mugham beginning) – an introductory sentence. Following them, the xanəndə repeats the muğambaşı tune without using words. Likewise, at the end of some sections, the singer duplicates the instrumental cadential sentence called ayaq without using texts. In fact, xanəndə lessons at the National Conservatory are always taught in the presence of a tar performer. There are numerous cases when xanəndə students are asked to repeat ornamentation, gestures, and microtonal inflections based on sounds and patterns made by the tar player. It is a requirement that the xanəndə knows the instrumental version well in order to structure his or her singing in accordance with it.
1.3 The Azerbaijani tar

Many Azerbaijanis report that the main instrument of mugham is the tar. Listening to mugham played on the tar, Azerbaijani people become submerged in the philosophical realm of conjured up poetic verses, swaying their heads from side to side in deep contemplation. Tar performance is closely bound to the techniques and melodies of mugham singers. Therefore, the sounds of this instrument inevitably summon the sung texts and their meanings in the minds of the listeners. In addition, the Azerbaijani tar – in its structure and performance style – differs from similar instruments in the region. As such, being an embodiment of the particularity of Azerbaijani mugham, it is an important identity marker.

There are three kinds of tars: large tar for solo performance, orchestral tar, and small tar for students.

Figure 1.1 Diagram of the tar

The resonator known as çanaq is comprised of two bellies: böyük çanaq (big belly) and kiçik çanaq (small belly). Both parts are made from mulberry wood that has been seasoned for 10 to 15 years. The long fretted neck is known as qol and is made from walnut wood. The kəllə (head with the tuning pegs at the end of the neck) is made from the same wood while pear wood is used
to make the tuning pegs. Some *tars*, especially the ones for solo performance, are ornamented with mother-of-pearl and coloured bone that portray national emblems. These decorations are known as *şədf*. The membrane covering the belly is made from the pericardium of an ox or from catfish skin. Apricot or pear wood is used to construct the big supporting bridge called *böyük xərək* attached to the membrane. The *kiçik xərək* (small bridge), attached to the end of the neck, is made from various materials such as horn, bone, ebonite, or metal. The *mizrab* (plectrum) is made from the bark of the cherry tree, bone, bull’s horn or ebonite.

Figure 1.2 Diagram of the *tar*’s strings

Except for the *bas* string, all of the *tar*’s strings are paired. * Ağ* and *zəng* (also known as *cingənə*) strings are made from alloy steel while the rest are from brass. The strings of the *tar* are tuned relative to each other in relationships of fifths, fourths, and octaves. The standard tuning is comprised of the * ağ*, *kök* and lower pair of *zəng* strings tuned to “doh” while the rest are at “sol.” Native musicians talk about the tuning using solfège, highlighting the pitch correspondences between the strings. However, although referred to as “doh” or “sol” the strings are usually tuned to B and F-sharp, or to other various pitches, as long as they are a perfect fifth apart.

Furthermore, some *mughams* require an alternate tuning with *kök* and *bas* strings shifted in pitch.
in order to correlate with the main tones of a *mugham*. This is why *kök* strings translate to “tuning strings” (*kökləmək* means “to tune”). For example, *şur mugham* uses the basic tuning while in *hümayun* the lower *kök* string is a semitone higher than “doh”, the higher of the pair is a fourth above “doh”, and the *bas* is a tone lower than “doh.” These pitches are fundamental in *hümayun dostgah* and the three strings are often used at the end of cadences to sound the main tones, providing emphasis and support.

The contemporary *tar* has 22 frets (also known as *pərdə*) along its neck. These are made from sheep gut. The standard octave in *mugham* is said to be comprised of 17 steps, however higher ranges on the *tar* do not have enough *pərdə* for all the microtones. There are no specific names for the frets, and instead they are often referred to using the particular *mughams* in which they serve as foundational tones. For example, the fret that produces a fifth above “doh” on the *ağ* strings is known as either *segah zabul, rahab, bayati-isfahan* from *bayati-şiraz, əraq* from *rast*, or *səməyi-şəms* from *şur* because it functions as the main tone in these *mugham* sections.

The arrangement of tones and microtones along the neck of the *tar* as it exists today is mainly the outcome of the efforts of two individuals: Mirza Sadig Asadoglu (1846-1902) in the late nineteenth century (see chapter 2) and Hajibeyov in the 1930s (see chapter 3). It is this tonal organization that makes Azerbaijani music unique from all other modal Eastern musics systems. My fieldwork research showed that the microtonality of the *tar* is an important site of contestation among music scholars and performers today. One native musicologist, Vagif Abdulgassimov, writes that the *mugham* system is not of regular but of irregular temperament. However, he continues, “In the fret order of the *tar* with unnoticed difference also exists a twelve-fretted system which gives ground to perform in this *tar* the works with notes composed on the twelve-fretted scale system” (original in English, Abdulgassimov 1990: 38). In other
words, both the Western classical system that requires equal temperament and mugham that requires irregular temperament can be performed on the tar. He adds that the most noticeable lack of correspondence is heard when playing the third and the sixth (Abdulgassimov 1990: 43-4). Abdulgassimov is an exception among Azerbaijani musicologists, the majority of whom claim that the microtonal frets on the tar are “not significant” because they are not foundational steps in Azerbaijani traditional music (e.g. Abdullayeva 2000: 156). Performing musicians do not share these views because many of them employ microtonal frets in mugham. Moreover, performers use these as important steps instead of slight decorative inflections in melismas. The opposing perceptions about the microtones, caused by historical factors, as well as additional information about the specificity of the tar’s fret order, will be explained at length in later chapters.

1.4 Dəstghah

Dəstghah translates as “set” denoting the completeness of this main cyclical form that unites all the genres of mugham. There are no records about the origin and early development of dəstghah in Azerbaijan. However, Mir Mohsun Navvab (1833-1918), a prominent figure in the history of Azerbaijan’s music, wrote a treatise in 1884 where dəstghah is first mentioned and described. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that this genre formed sometime in the nineteenth century. While archival documents show that the dəstghah internal structure was very fluid in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the dəstghah cycles became fixed during Soviet times (see chapters 2 and 3).

There are two kinds of dəstghah in Azerbaijani music: vocal, performed by a trio, and solo instrumental. A dəstghah is a series of mughams, each mugham being one main section also
known as şöbə. According to Chelebiyev, *mugham* or şöbə is a “one-part vocal-instrumental composition in free metre, allowing for improvisation within certain rules” and also therefore the “main component of a *dəstgah*” (Chelebiyev 2009: 4). In a trio performance, şöbə are the sections that feature the singing of *ghazal* poetry. At least five *mughams* are joined in a cycle to form the basis of a *dəstgah*. Creativity that develops, unfolds, and exhibits this chain of *mughams* is the main purpose of any *dəstgah*. The *dəstgah* cycle earns its name from the first principal *mugham* that begins it, known as *mayə*. For example, in ʂur *dəstgah*, ʂur *mugham* is performed as the *mayə*.

The confusion associated with the word *mugham* identified above is relevant here because the terms *dəstgah* and *mugham* have been conflated in scholarship. There is an understanding of *mugham* as all parts in a *dəstgah*, and consequently, as *dəstgah*. Musicologist Zohrabov (1991) writes about this issue and clarifies that *dəstgah* and *mugham* are not equivalent: *mugham* is a one vocal-instrumental section while *dəstgah* is a multi-section genre that consists of several *mughams*. Performers confirm this argument. When I asked my teachers to differentiate between *mugham* and *dəstgah*, they spoke with one voice that each şöbə in a *dəstgah* is its own *mugham*. Besides, the name of the genre “*mugham dəstgah*” means “a set of *mughams*.”

*Mugham dəstgah* presents a gradual ascension in pitch level: a “staircase rise” towards its culmination expressed in the highest range with the most extreme melodic elaboration and emotional tension. Thus, the *dəstgah* form is a journey towards a musical zenith. Sanubar Bagirova describes this process philosophically:

Every section is a bit higher than the previous one in register…. Development can be thought of as an ascending, evolving process: on the one hand, as a literal movement upwards, and, on the other hand, as a gradual form-intonational renewal. As we can see,
what is revealed here is the dialectics of movement and development (Bagirova 2007: 23).

The şöbə components build this staircase form of a dostgah. They link all the main tones and register levels of a mode into a unified structure. They also develop musical material in order to ascend higher and higher. Each şöbə encompasses a number of sentences (guşə and cümlə) which are also in a specific series designed to steadily broaden and raise the range. Bagirova states: “the majority of musical time in a dostgah is given to the ascension of the melody towards culmination. The return or the descent that follows is much more compressed. This proves the idea that precisely the demonstration of the mode is the main task” (Bagirova 2007: 16). This exhibition is the primary locus of creativity in şöbə parts.

Below is a diagram of şur mugham dostgah with its composite şöbə parts and respective main tones. It must be noted that this diagram, as all notations in the dissertation, shows the written pitch, while the concert pitch is a semitone lower. The mayə shown as G here is sounded as F-sharp on the tar (with tuning of the instrument centred on F-sharp and B).

Figure 1.3 Primary tones of main şöbə in şur mugham dostgah

The first, second, and last şöbə in a dostgah have specific functions – without them there can be no dostgah musical form (Chelebiyev 2009: 107). These are called bordašt, mayə, and
ayaq respectively. Bərdašt is the introduction to the whole dostgah and features gestures from different principal şöbə part of the dostgah. Rafiq Musazade mentions that bərdašt means a collection of guşə and şöbə (Musazade 2012: 78) in line with the objective to prepare the listeners for the full dostgah. Chelebiyev reports that bərdašt used to have its own name in addition to “bərdašt” but this knowledge was partly lost during Soviet rule, which is why musicologists often do not mention original bərdašt titles in their writing (Chelebiyev 2009: 164). For example, according to masters, the bərdašt of şur dostgah has the alternate original title əmiri nəva.

Mayə (foundation) is the main şöbə of a dostgah, located in the lowest register and performed after the bərdašt. Mayə also refers to the main tone of a given mayə section, and the main tone of the whole dostgah cycle. Pərdə is a synonym for this. Although the mayə is second in sequence after bərdašt, it has primary function and significance, and is usually the longest şöbə. Whilst all the following şöbə are located above the mayə rising towards the culmination, most of them return to the mayə at the end, concluding with a mayə cadence. For example, after the şöbə that is at the peak of the cycle, a descent to and cadence in mayə are mandatory. Since all şöbə after the mayə progress upwards – developing notes higher and higher until they reach the climax – a low mayə in a dostgah results in a wider overall range of the whole cycle. Thus, a mugham dostgah such as şur has a broader range because its mayə is in the low register.

The culmination in a dostgah is known as zil or mayənin zili, meaning “high register” or “mayə in the high register” respectively. This şöbə also carries a specific function because it is the musical zenith, often talked about as “transformation” or even “rebirth” (see Bagirova 2007: 24). Mayənin zili shares the same modality with the mayə and is usually an octave above it. Sometimes the zil has its own name: for example, in şur dostgah this section is known as either
səmayi-şəms or zil şur. There are those dəstgahs in which the mayənin zili is situated at a lower pitch-level, thereby providing an opportunity to stack additional şöbə (usually 3-4) after the zil that reach even higher. This prolongation is done to maximize the ascent of a dəstghah and the ensuing experience even further. For example, in şur, the zil is on G, but there are sections that reach beyond such as hicaz and sarənc. In this case, the second culminating part in a dəstgah is known as dəstgahin zili.

The final şöbə in a dəstgah, called ayaq (foot), returns to the mayə at the end of the cycle’s culmination. In şur dəstgah, the ayaq is called nişibi-fəræz. While the development from mayə to zil can take up to two hours, ayaq moving in the reverse direction takes a minute to perform. The ayaq does not have a form of a mugham or şöbə. It is simply a descent. Musicologists and musicians often mention the importance of the return to the beginning at the end of a dəstgah. Some musicologists and musicians frequently tie ayaq to religion and philosophy via the idea of mugham as a circle or single point of end and beginning – the source and goal of everything.

In addition to bərdəşt, mayə, zil, and ayaq, there are other şöbə and guşə forming the dəstgah cycle. Some of these are in the same mode as the mayə while others are modally-contrasting and require modulation. Therefore, transitional sections which are used to go from one mode of one mugham to another are also incorporated into the dəstgah. These are called keçid and there are precise rules for their performance known by mugham masters. Sometimes, expert performers of mugham find their own transitions and these become part of the common rules of transition. This kind of creativity is discussed at length in part two of the dissertation. As mentioned above, almost all şöbə parts return to the mayə at the end. If such a transition is not
possible due to the modally-constraining nature of a şöbə, then there is a double-transition: first to a mugham that can be linked with the mayə of a dəstgah, and then to the mayə itself.

Although mugham sections in a dəstgah are primary over all others, there are also non-improvisational and pre-composed song-like and dance-like components: dibacə, təsnif, zərbi mugham, şikəsta (all vocal), and dəraməd, rəng, diringə (all instrumental). These sections are in simple duple, triple, or quadruple metres. The kind of creativity that characterizes şöbə parts is not demanded in the pre-composed parts. They are largely there for contrast and for the singer to take a break between the şöbə. When a dəstgah is performed in its solo instrumental version, these constituents are skipped altogether. Consequently, they must be understood as additional components, as opposed to main ones. Bagirova explains

If we compare mugham composition with literature plot (such comparison can be justified), then we can assert that the fabula (chronological order of events) of mugham (i.e., mugham dəstgah) progresses precisely through mugham parts. Təsnifs and rəngs, if present, have a character of inserted contrasting episodes, similar to the numerous inserted divergent stories present in Eastern poems and novels from Middle Ages (Bagirova 2007: 11).

Rəng (colour) is an instrumental genre often compared to a dance. It is comprised of complete episodes called parcha. These can begin on any step of the mode but must end on the main tone. Ismayilov (1983: 54) writes that the functions of rəngs include: (1) creating contrast between şöbə, (2) connecting şöbə, and (3) providing a rest for the singer. The change in the metrical frame and different participating instruments (during a rəng, the xanəndo plays on the qaval but does not sing), forge the appropriate contrast. Rəngs are composed by mugham performers, and if popularized, they are passed on and enter the mugham model to be used by other musicians. Sometimes information about who invented a rəng in the first place is also transmitted and retained.
Dəraməd (entrance) is a type of large and complex rəng with its own distinct purpose. Performed at the beginning of the dəstgah, its melodies represent multiple şöbə, thereby introducing the listeners to the entire cycle. Usually, a dəraməd does not have its own name, being called by its dəstgah. However, throughout my məğham apprenticeship I have encountered dəramədəs with their own titles (for example “Bağdadi” is a şur dəstgah dəraməd). Occasionally, due to time restrictions, a regular rəng may be played in the place of a dəraməd, and this is called yalançı dəraməd (false dəraməd).

Təsnif is a vocal-instrumental song genre sung by the xanəndə, who also accompanies him- or herself with a qaval. Təsnif, like rəng, bears its məğham’s name and is performed following a məğham section. Təsnifəs can reflect multiple şöbə sections in a dəstgah. When a təsnif, similar to a rəng, serves as a transitional link between two modally-constrasting şöbə, there are specific rules that must be taken into consideration. In the second half of the twentieth century, many xanəndə such as Hajibaba Huseynov, Gulu Askerov, and Alibaba Mammadov were authors of dozens of təsnifəs widely known in all of Azerbaijan.

Dibaçə is a large təsnif which encompasses the modality of multiple şöbə (usually 3 to 6). It has the same function as a dəraməd and is thus performed at the beginning of a dəstgah. While it is more common for just one of these to be performed, there are cases when a dəraməd, dibaçə, and bərdəstə are played in this order. The term dibaçə originated in classical poetry where it signifies the introduction to a poet’s divan (collection of poems). Although this word was used before the 1980s by older generations of məğham musicians, today it is no longer in use.

The most important role of the pre-composed inserted pieces is the formation of contrast, both emotional and structural. Tamila Dzhani-zade explains that the contrast creates “a release from the tense lament of məğham declamation, changes its psychological concentration to
physiological reaction to dance forms” (Dzhani-zade 1989: 326). According to many scholars, the divergence of these two polarities (şöbə and guşə vs. rəng and təsnif) is based on their temporal structures: non-rhythmical versus rhythmical, free versus organized. The former temporality is linked to spirituality and the latter to physicality (Dzhani-zade 1989: 326).

Additionally, this duality is also reinforced through the poetry (Dzhani-zade 1989: 327). Love is the theme in all dostgah poetry. However, its expression is strikingly different in the şöbə and təsnif components. In the former, ghazals of classical poets Fuzuli (Muhammad bin Suleyman), Khurshidbanu Natavan, and Aliaga Vahid are chosen. The intensely philosophical content of these is contrasted to folk texts about human love in təsnifs. The latter are indeed more suitable to the rhythm, mood, function, and creativity of təsnifs. Very rarely are ghazals performed in təsnifs, and even then lighter ghazals are selected.

1.5 Ghazal poetry

“What ghazal poetry expresses is the same as that which mugham music conveys” is a common phrase among mugham musicians, past and present. In a similar vein, one renowned tar player from the first half of twentieth century, Gurban Primov, noted: “The sounds made by the tarzən’s fingers and the words sung by the xanəndə carry the same content” (Badalbeyli 1955: 45). As already noted, the musical activity of the instrumentalists and the singer in a mugham trio is highly intertwined. This affinity transcends matters of sound and also concerns morphology, meaning, and experience. As such, Chelebiyev writes that mugham and ghazal are inseparable in terms of their structural, rhythmical, and semantical relationships (Chelebiyev 2009: 51).

Ghazal is the main poetical genre used in mugham. The verses are sung in the primary şöbə sections where the text profoundly affects the creativity that takes place. Other parts in the
dəstgah that entail singing – such as təsnifs and dibəçə – feature poetry mostly comprised of syllabic folk forms. There are many xanəndə masters blessed with the talent to compose texts for təsnifs and yet it is extremely rare for the xanəndə to create ghazal lyrics (see, for example, the case study on Hajibaba Huseynov in chapter 3). Thus, most of the ghazals used in a dəstgah have been written by distinguished poets such as Fuzuli (Muhammad bin Suleyman, 1494-1556), Seyyid Azim Shirvani (1835-88), and Aliaga Vahid (1895-1965).

The ghazal genre is a universe of complex layers of meaning rooted in Islamic gnosis (irfan) and Sufism (təsəvvüf) or mystical Islam. The pain of separation from the Divine and the yearning for union are the main themes explored in ghazal couplets. Most poets of ghazals were Sufis who believed that art is the most effective vehicle towards the Divine. As a result, Islamic aesthetics is crucial for understanding the structure and content of ghazal poetry, just as it is essential to the music of mugham. While the music presents development through the gradual ascent of the main pitch, the lyrics, taken separately, do not demonstrate the same linear progression. Rather, ghazal poetry is a “plotless form, which characterizes, first of all, an internal state, but not external action” (Sultanova 2011: 48). There are two semantic poles: you “Beloved/God” and I or the protagonist who is undergoing the state of yearning. The poetry is abundant in rich allegories, provocative metaphors, and profound references to stories of the Muslim world, as well as sacred texts and lives of the Prophets. To the uniniated, ghazals may be interpreted as declarations of human love. However, the underlying meaning is about love for the Divine. Often, ghazal poets identified themselves as “Majnun” or the “crazy one for love”, referencing the timeless tale Leyli and Majnun about human love that transformed into divine love.
There are between four and fifteen two-line units called beyts in one ghazal. Beyt means “house” in Arabic and in its entirety a beyt expresses one idea. Each of the two lines is called misra, and the second misra in each beyt rhymes with the rest following a standard form: AA, BA, CA, DA, etc. The last beyt of a ghazal, called mağta, contains the name of the poet. The misras are in a question-answer structure with the second line completing the first by providing a clue to the riddle that the first line poses. In terms of content, each beyt is unrelated to the rest and this gives an overall anti-narrative structure to the ghazal. One tar player, who is also an expert in mugham poetry, explained: “in a ghazal, it goes like this: one beyt can be about mountains, the next about steppes. The two misras have to be connected to each other and they have to open [reveal] each other…but not the beyts, they can be about different things” (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 11 December 2015). This is why the ghazal genre has been figuratively compared to pearls on a string. Metaphors are evoked one after another, conveying the same state of the pining protagonist in different ways. Through such repetition, the spiritual and emotional power of the poetry gains momentum. Although the beyts are unrelated to each other, there could still be one overarching idea that is approached from different angles using various examples.

_Ghazal example by Fuzuli (Kerimli 2005 2: 196)_

Öylə sərməstəm ki, idrak etməzəm dünya nədər,
Mən kiməm, saqi olan kimdir, meyə şəhba nədər.

Gərçi canandan dili-şeyda üçün kam istərəm,
Sorsa canan, bilməzəm kami-dili-şeyda nədər.

Vəsldən çün aşiqi müstəgni eylər bir vüsal,
Aşıqa mə’şuqdan hərdəm bu istığna nədər?
Besotted deeply, I fail to comprehend: What is this World,  
Who am I, who is the cupbearer, what is this ruby wine.

If my infatuated heart burns with desire for my Beloved,  
If she asks what this desire is, I would not know.

To unite with the Beloved remains a longing ‘til its fulfilment,  
The Lover’s yearning for the Beloved, where is its source?

The one who knows the universe’s mysteries is not a sage,  
True knower is one who does not know the secrets of the world.

Your cries and moans offend the world, oh Fuzuli!  
If you are in ecstasy from the pain of love, why do you suffer?

There is a vast body of rules about the use of ghazals in a mugham dəstgah. For example, the xanəndə is free to leave out some beyts of a ghazal and even reorder them. Furthermore, one ghazal can be divided among two or three şöbə. However, the beginning of a ghazal must always coincide with the beginning of a şöbə and the end of a ghazal must be sung at the cadence of a şöbə. In other words, a single şöbə cannot contain two different ghazals as would be the case if one ghazal ended in the middle of a şöbə and another one started right after. Another tenet is pertinent to the repetition of misra lines: while a misra may be repeated in its entirety numerous times, it must be musically varied. This is done to emphasize the meaning of a particular line and thereby influence the state of the performers and the listeners. Lastly, if a ghazal is started and not finished in the bərdəşt, it must be repeated from the beginning once again at the start of the mayə. This underscores the mayə’s function as the beginning of a dəstgah despite the preceding bərdəşt (see examples of ghazals at the end of this chapter).
Creativity involved in choosing *ghazals* for a *dəstgah* and fitting them to the music is one aspect that is a site of disagreement among musicians. My experience learning *mugham* shows that the same *ghazal* can be sung in different *şöbəs* and *dəstgahs*. It is interesting that while many *mugham* musicians support this view, others defend the idea that each *mugham* expresses its own unique mood and requires specific *ghazals* whose content reinforces the feelings expressed in the music. This perception is attributed to the division of *mughams* into different moods by Hajibeyov, the founder of the national composition school in Azerbaijan. For instance, *çahargah mugham* is tied to courage and war, *segah* to passion and love, and *şur* to lyricism and inspiration. In line with this classification, some musicians and scholars assert that *ghazals* can also be categorized according to different moods (see, for example, Kyazimova 1997). However, on the grounds that (a) the same *ghazal* is often performed in different *mughams*, and (b) *mugham* music and poetry open up broad possibilities for interpretation and imagination, the rigidity of such classificatory schemes that align a *mugham* or a *ghazal* with only one possible mood can be challenged.

While the same *ghazal* can be sung in different *dəstgahs*, there are still limitations that seem to be related more to the poetical metres instead of the nature of emotions expressed in the poem. However, even this rule involves flexibility. One *tar* player summarized the practice as such: “First of all, singers must know *ghazals* very well. A *ghazal* must be chosen to show the *əruz* metres of a *mugham*, but *ghazals* are flexible” (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 4 December 2014). An introduction to *əruz* and a deeper insight into *əruz* creativity are necessary to probe further the question of *ghazal* variability in *mugham*.
1.6 Ėruz

 Ėruz is an ancient system of prosody based on the Arabic language that was created in 767 by philologist Al-Khalîl ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi (d.786). The laws of Ėruz spread throughout the regions of the Islamic East, becoming the framework for ghazal poetry in Arabic, Persian, and Turkic languages. With time, the Ėruz system underwent development and the original structure of 15 metres (15 ḫahr) was increased to 19. Each metre is a pattern of long and short syllables; a structure that repeats and governs every line in a poem (e.g., misras in a ghazal). As such, the lyrics of ghazals are formed as a sequence of long and short syllables, and when they are spoken or sung this pattern must be present to achieve the correct pronunciation and effect of a ghazal.

Azerbaijani Ėruz metres number eleven main types. Each ḫahr represents a particular pattern of long and short syllables that structures every line of a ghazal. The metres are identified by their traditional Arabic nomenclature, known as təfîlə rhythmic formulas, which serve as paradigms for recognized verse metres. For example, one common metre used in şur mayə is rəməl with its own distinct pattern of long (L) and short (S) syllables, symbolized by the təfîlə fAilAtun (LSLL = fA-i-lA-tun).

Figure 1.4 Rəməl təfîlə

| L S L L | L S L L | L S L L |

While Arabic and Persian languages employ vowels that differ in length producing long and short syllables, Turkic languages such as Azerbaijani do not have vowels of varied duration,
except in those cases where words are borrowed from Arabic and Persian. Therefore, in the
ghazal poetry of Turkic-speaking peoples, there are various ways to maintain the metres of əruz.
In Azerbaijani, these are emphatic accents that are used in place of long syllables, vowels that are
elongated artificially, and Arabic and Persian words that are incorporated into the texts (Babayev
1990: 5). Indeed, the most effective method for the incorporation of long and short vowels has
been the use of Arabic and Persian terminology. The reliance on such words is also necessary
because they are redolent with meanings tied to religious knowledge.

The importance of əruz is constantly highlighted by mugham masters today who provide
many reasons to substantiate this claim. The length, ornamentation, and stress of each syllable
are dependent on the əruz metre. In addition, knowledge of əruz metres facilitates creativity
because (a) musicians can vary musical fragments correctly in accordance with a particular əruz
pattern, and (b) there is more freedom to choose a variety of ghazals, skilfully matching
prosodical metres with the characteristic melodies of a mugham. Many musicians also speak of a
particular effect that əruz has because it “brings forth” (ortaya çıxarmaq) the meanings thereby
helping to expose the content of sung texts. Moreover, some mention that one’s state of
consciousness is influenced by proper and continuous employment of əruz because it allows one
to tap into musical creation within a particular repetitive temporal order.

How do parameters of əruz pervade when ghazals are sung in mugham? This question is
critical because the main șöbə parts in a mugham dəstəgah can be and are often falsely perceived
to sound metre-free. However, the əruz structure is imperative when singing ghazals. What’s
more, as my research shows, the prosodical metres govern even the instrumental parts of the
accompanists. Scholars who inquired into Persian classical music have reached similar
conclusions. For example, Ehsan Yarshater writes that the “metre-free” avaz sections in Persian
radif are in reality highly structured due to the metres of the poetry: “despite apparent freedom from any rhythmic pulsation, the avaz is not entirely devoid of some phrasing organization, although the preponderance of ornament often blurs its subtle phrasing. The rhythmic organization of the avaz, insofar as it exists, is derived from the metre of the poem sung” (Yarshater 1974: 70).

The most basic version of rəmol metre illustrated above has the unit fA-i-lA-tun (LSLL) repeated four times in one line. As such, there are 16 vowels, 12 of which will be elongated during a performance. The short vowels always have to be performed as short, while the long ones can be lengthened with flexibility through the use of melismas and other ornaments. The same situation can be observed in Persian radif:

It must be noted that in the avaz the short syllables are rendered as short and are not prolonged beyond a very small fraction of a note, whereas long syllables may be held, as is the case in poetry reading, as long as desired. This alone establishes an important correspondence between the metre of the poem and its musical rendition in the avaz (Yarshater 1974: 72).

It is up to the xanəndo to choose how to prolong and artistically manipulate these vowels in order to achieve the desired dramatic effect. Accentuation of specific words and their meanings through musical embellishment of long vowels is one common tactic. Evidently, despite the precision that ēruz demands, there are obvious possibilities for creativity, such as the numerous ways a xanəndo can treat long vowels. Music scholar Sevil Farkhadova elucidates that the opportunity to divide long vowels provides much ground for artistic imagination: the different ways to realize a given metrical pattern melodically are inexhaustible (Farkhadova 1991: 67).
The form of mugham dostgah offers yet more leeway for creativity with øruz. Whereas most of the dostgah demands obedience to øruz metrical structures, there are also instances when the rules are often infringed. As the dostgah unfolds and moves towards the apex, very intense and highly ornamented expression in singing takes precedence over øruz. In zil the main goal is a powerfully emotional performance and therefore øruz often recedes into the background. Elkhan Babayev divides vocal parts in a dostgah into (a) recitative (rechitativ, Rus.) sections with many words on one note and (b) chant (raspev, Rus.) with one syllable sung with many different notes (Babayev 1990: 18). The beginning of the dostgah features more recitatives while towards the culmination the chant dominates and the bohr is distorted (Babayev 1990: 19). Nevertheless, I have also heard much discontent from masters who criticize those xanəndo who cannot achieve clarity of øruz metres in the culminating sections of the dostgah. They contend that a true xanəndo must be able to sing in a very high register, using virtuosic vocal technique and ornamentation but never at the expense of losing øruz. In their view, xanəndo performers must strive towards perfection that lies in the ability to do all these tasks simultaneously.

Øruz metres also organize the temporality of instrumental parts even when no singing is involved. As noted above, each mugham has its own set of characteristic melodies bounded by its modal constitution. Some masters argue that the motifs that define specific mughams are based on øruz metres. When I was learning to play various guşə on the tar, many were structurally and metrically reflective of øruz patterns, especially in more conservative styles. During lessons, my teachers even pointed out which sentences on the tar were in precise øruz metres, insisting that the tar’s melody is the exact imitation of the singing in øruz.

This brings us back to the earlier question about the flexibility of ghazals in mugham. While many masters do contend that each mugham has particular melodies and gestures that are
based on specific ēruz metres, these correlations are not well defined and seem to be only “felt.” The ensuing argument that only certain ghazals can be used in a mugham, because the prosodical metres of both match, is similarly an area of tacit knowledge. Rob Simms, writing about Persian radif, also reports that ēruz forms a template but is varied with flexibility and the free-metring is “ultimately a spontaneous, intuitive skill” that nevertheless “can influence the meaning expressed in a line” (Simms 2012a: 202). Research does show that those xanəndə who know or feel the ēruz metres well are the ones who can fit one ghazal to different mughams. Thus, it seems that through creativity they are able to adjust the musical and textual parameters towards harmony and, consequently, clear expression of meanings.

A number of historical processes that have impacted the structure, content, and efficacy of ghazal poetry and ēruz will be summarized here and delved into in later chapters. Starting with nationalism in the late nineteenth century and continuing with language reforms in the Soviet Union, Arabic and Persian words in Azerbaijani poetry were being increasingly purged. Ghazals written in Azerbaijan today are still infused with Arabic and Persian words to an extent. However, a comparison to earlier centuries reveals a drastic change. For example, the Azerbaijani poet Imadaddin Nasimi (1369-1417) wrote ghazals with a wide range of Arabic and Persian words and did not attempt to adjust Azerbaijani Turkic language to ēruz. Following him, in the sixteenth century Fuzuli began to systematize Azerbaijani to be more compatible with ēruz metres. This line of development continued and by the time of Aliaga Vahid in the twentieth century it became possible to use almost only Turkic words in ghazals.

The relevance of ēruz was drastically curtailed with the Sovietization of Azerbaijan. For example, notations of mugham clearly demonstrated utter disregard for ēruz. For this reason, Babayev writes against the use of notated mugham because the music cannot fit into a
Westernized system of measures (Babayev 1990: 20). There is also confusion created by the “bəhrli” (metred) and “bəhrsiz” (unmetred) division of mugham that was promoted by Hajibeyov and his follower Ismayilov. Ismayilov identified the şöbə and guşə parts in the dostgah as bəhrsiz mugham, completely overlooking the presence of ghazal metres. These changes accompanied the aversion to religion and furthered the expulsion of Arabic and Persian words, which in turn also limited the precedence of əruz in mugham.

As a result, many xanəndə performers memorize how to properly render particular ghazals while not being invested in understanding the underlying əruz system. This lack of knowledge can limit creativity or result in creativity that distorts prosodical metres. The əruz theory is not even taught to students of mugham at music institutions. Certain masters, however, do learn əruz through their own initiative and use it when performing. There are also those xanəndə who are devoted to comprehending the irfan and tasəvvüf sciences behind the poetry. They study deeply the Arabic and Persian terminology and this perfects their pronunciation. Approaching mugham from this angle, a “feeling” of əruz is acquired without a full awareness of əruz theory.

Since əruz is crucial in mugham, knowers stress that the “feeling” of the metres is imperative while performing even if the insight into the theory is lacking. In other words, even if the xanəndə does not know the principles of əruz, he or she has to intuitively pick it up and make sure that the chosen poetry matches the music. This view is echoed by musicologists who have looked into the issue. For instance, Babayev states that a treatise from seventeenth-century Central Asia by Dervish Ali makes the argument that a musician must know the əruz metre of each musical section and pick poetry accordingly. Therefore, mugham cannot be viewed as “free art” (Babayev: 5). Chelebiyev similarly states that one of the main rules of mugham is that the
singer must know how to pick ghazals for a specific mugham, taking into account the register, as well as the melodic and metrical particularities (Chelebiyev 2009: 99).

In fact, not knowing or speaking the Azerbaijani language and, consequently not being able to feel əruz, means that one cannot sing mugham. Although mugham was also practised in Armenia, it was primarily in its instrumental form because the Armenian language does not entail əruz and, therefore, it is impossible to properly sing mugham. On the contrary, those areas in Azerbaijan that are closely linked to Iran and Persian culture through strong language ties are home to ghazal poets and experts in the əruz system. One example is the Absheron area with numerous suburban towns around Baku known to have populations of Tat people who migrated from Iran in the nineteenth century. There are many superb ghazal poets who live in these areas even today, and there are also many knowers of mugham who are considered by all as the leading connoisseurs when it comes to mugham performance. This reputation rests on their profound knowledge of əruz and ghazal structures and their uncompromising demand for the proper performance of texts in mugham (see chapter 3).

1.7 Guşə, cümlə, and avaz

*Guşə* (corner) is the main structural unit in a mugham. Each *guşə* part of a mugham section is called muğamın guşəsi. In each mugham there are usually 5 to 7 *guşə* following each other in a logical manner. Each successive *guşə* contains notes that are higher, stretching the range of a mugham upward. The final tone of every *guşə* must be the main note of the respective şöbə, thereby finalizing each unit. The first and last *guşə* in a mugham are especially fixed and must always be present. These function to identify a mugham and therefore their melodies are more rigid. When sung, these two *guşə* do not use ghazal texts and the singer cries exclamatory
statements such as “ay aman” or “ay dad” instead, following the melodies of instrumentalists. The rest of the guşə in between allow for much more flexibility: some can be omitted, others altered, and new ones created.

In addition to guşə that are part of a mugham, there are also dəstgah guşə. Chelebiyev explains that a dəstgah guşə is not part of any mugham and has its own character and name (Chelebiyev 2009: 220). I have not encountered this concept among my teachers, but Chelebiyev’s analysis is convincing and it is probable that the concept exists tacitly. I provide here a summary of Chelebiyev’s notes (Chelebiyev 2009: 220-39). Dəstgah guşə can be performed not only within its original dəstgah but as part of another dəstgah as well. Moreover, they can exist at any point in a dəstgah and be part of any mode. As example, Chelebiyev lists gəbri in the şur highest register. The main function of such a guşə can be preparation or transition for the upcoming şöbə which follows it and which is in the same mode; this is because the following and preceding şöbə can be the same in modal terms, yet differ melodically. In this case, this type of guşə is not only similar to the successive şöbə modally but also melodically. Interestingly, this also might have something to do with əruz regulating the melodic form of musical fragments. Chelebiyev does argue that two mughams can be similar in mode but still be distant because of divergent melodic parameters. Another goal of this kind of guşə is the activation and expansion of dəstgah’s steps. The guşə can reach higher notes than those used in its proximate şöbə.

Guşə are parts of mugham that are slightly longer and more complex than similar sections called cümlə (sentence). Often, two cümlə constitute one guşə. In this case, the first cümlə finishes on one of the supporting tones while the second completes the first by ending on the main tone with an established cadential gesture. In contrast to guşə, which are extricable from
the *mugham* musical fabric and are defined as “complete musical phrases” (*tam musiqi frazası*) or “philosophical ideas” (*falsəfi fikir*), *cümlə* cannot be played separately and do not have their own names. Furthermore, *cümlə* lack the structural integrity of *guşə*. Indeed, only the latter are structurally linked to *beyts* of a *ghazal*. Just as the second *misra* completes the first, the second half of a *guşə* is an answer to the first. In fact, there are highly metrical *guşə* that are often inserted in performances by conservative musicians that are said to be based directly on *əruz*. In *şur mayə*, these are *cüdai*, *gövhər*, *səlmək* and others (see below). Babayev asks about their origin and formation, concluding: “It seems that the metrical patterns that make up these *guşə* were transferred into the music from the poetical metres of *ghazals*. Solidifying as *guşə*, the specific *bəhr* of the poetry produced the musical rhythm” (Babayev 1990: 66).

Lastly, the smallest musical unit in a *dəstgah* after *cümlə* is *avaz* (voice). These are short elaborations of the main tone using surrounding notes. There is a necessary sequence of *avaz* which formulate a *cümlə* or a finished musical thought *guşə*. The *avaz* are also complete in their own sense and thus between them there is a short pause. In fact, learning *mugham* on the *tar*, I was taught each *cümlə* or *guşə* with a series of *avaz*, stopping to grasp each of these smaller units before assembling them together into full musical sentences. Once again, a tacit awareness of the *avaz* entities is built up when one learns *mugham* in order to perform pauses with correct placement and length.

Below are examples of *guşə* and *cümlə* in *şur mayə*, each divided into *avaz* parts that are indicated with bar lines. As noted above, all notations in the dissertation (including those of the *xanəndə*’s part) show the written pitch of the *tar*, while the concert pitch is a semitone lower.
Figure 1.5 First *cumlo* of *şur mayo*

![Musical notation for the first cumlo of şur mayo.](image1)

Cadence

![Musical notation for the cadence.](image2)

Figure 1.6 *Guşə gövhəri* of *şur mayo* in Mansurov school

**Cumlo 1**

![Musical notation for the first cumlo.](image3)

**Cumlo 2**

![Musical notation for the second cumlo.](image4)

Cadence

![Musical notation for the cadence.](image5)
1.8 Case Study: Şur

In the past, *mugham* developed regionally, with three main schools flourishing in the Karabakh, Shirvan, and Absheron geographical areas. Due to the institutionalization of traditional music in Soviet Azerbaijan, *mugham* repertoire was standardized and the style taught in musical institutions today is more or less homogeneous. This historical trajectory will be covered thoroughly in the chapters that follow, with a detailed investigation of *şur mugham dəstgah* in pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet Azerbaijan. The complex structure of *şur dəstgah* as well as endless possibilities for creativity that this *dəstgah* in particular offers, allow for illuminating diachronic and synchronic analyses.

Below are brief notes about parts of the standardized *şur dəstgah*. Each şöbə and guşə encompasses a series of tones that encircle and gravitate towards one or two central tones (underlined in the table and notated as whole notes). As mentioned above, *mugham* is played with microtones that are demarcated on the *tar* as separate frets. Due to the present-day socio-cultural context, most musicians play with microtones (see chapter 4). However there are a few performers who choose to avoid these pitches in specific settings such as performances with accompaniment on the piano. For this reason, in the chart below I have indicated which microtones are used as well as which tempered tones may replace them. In *şur mayə*, most performers play a tone that is between A-flat and A and one between A and B-flat. Some players replace these microtones with A and B-flat, respectively. In my notations, I designate these two tones as follows:

![Musical notation](image-url)
The two tones are not exactly A half-flat and B three-quarters-flat as these accidentals show. Instead, the signs are only approximations for what is in reality a very complex and varied practice. As I explain in chapter 4, there are many debates about microtones in post-Soviet Azerbaijan and many performers come up with their own versions of how the frets should be arranged on the tar. Therefore, pitches such as these two in şur mayə acquire possibilities: some may play them slightly lower or higher, and others replace them with A and B-flat, as stated above. The same observation can be made for microtones found in şur-şəhnaz.

Table 1.1 Notes about the main components of standardized şur dəstgah

| Dəraməd (rhythmical, instrumental introduction) | Mode: şur | Tones used: all |
| Etymology: entrance (Musazade 2012: 78) |
| This is the rhythmic instrumental introduction to şur dəstgah that encompasses multiple şöbə of this dəstgah. There is more than one popularized dəraməd for şur. The most common one came to Azerbaijan from Iran, borrowed by tar player Ahmad Bakikhanov. Another widely used dəraməd is called Bağdədi. |

| Bərdəšt (şöbə, introduction) | Mode: şur | Tones used: all |
| Etymology: collection or gathering (Adilov 2005 1: 49) |
| Begins an octave higher than mayə and, with a series of cümlo, presents a descent down to the main tone of the dəstgah. The first half of şur bərdəšt features gestures from nəva mugham, and the mode is slightly changed. This is why şur bərdəšt is also known as əmiri-nəva. This is also the name of the bərdəšt in nəva dəstgah. |

| Mayə (şöbə) | Mode: şur (main şur 1-½-1 tetrachord: G-A-B-flat-C) | Tones used: E, F, G (mayə, main tone), A-flat, A (or microtone), B-flat (or microtone), C, D, E-flat |
Etymology: foundation (Adilov 2005 2: 13)

Mayə is the main and longest şöbə in a dəstgah. Şur mayə is comprised of various guşə when played by representatives of older and more conservative lineages. These guşə include: cüdai, gövhəri, garayili, hacı dərvəşi, səlmək. The mainstream version of şur mayə is comprised of approximately five cümə.

Şur-şəhnaz (şöbə)
Mode: şur (main şur 1- ½-1 tetrachord: C, D, E-flat, F)
Tones used: F, G, A, B-flat, C (main tone), D-flat, D (or microtone), E-flat (or microtone), F, G

Etymology: şəhnaz is ornamented silk textile (Adilov 2005 2:318)

This şöbə contains a few cümə of şəhnaz mugham that can also be performed as a short dəstgah on its own. Performers of lineages that date back to pre-Soviet times perform highly microtonal guşə in this section.

Busəlik (guşə)
Mode: şur (but cadence in rast)
Tones used: A, B-flat, C, D-flat, D, E-flat (main tone), F

Etymology: (a) kiss (Adilov 2005 1: 73) (b) from Abu Salik – poet; leader of a spiritual or religious group (according to some musicians) (c) ēbu and salik were two mughams among the Uyghur in the thirteenth century (Musazade 2012: 92).

This is a transition leading to bayatı-türk and therefore it uses tones encompassed by both şur and rast modes. Busəlik is a guşə made up of two cümə.

Bayatı-türk (şöbə)
Mode: rast (main rast 1-1-½ tetrachord used: B-flat-C-D-E-flat)
Tones used: A, B-flat, C, D (main tone), E-flat (main tone), F, G, A-flat
**Etymology:** Turk *bayatı, bayatı* is a seven-syllable folk poetical genre

Standardized *bayatı-türk* is comprised of two *cümlə*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Şikəstəvi-fars (şöbə)</th>
<th>Mode: <em>segah</em> (main <em>segah</em> ½-1-1 tetrachord used: D, E-flat, F, G)</th>
<th>Tones used: B-flat, C, D, E-flat, F (main tone), G, A-flat, B-flat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Etymology:** Persian *şikəstə* (reference to Persian calligraphy and classical music)

This *şöbə* is played in many other Azerbaijani *dəstgahs* such as *rast, mahur hindi*, etc. It is always in *segah* mode, but transposed to different registers according to the various *dəstgahs*. There are idiosyncratic features in each *dəstgah* although the overall melodic shape is the same.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mübərriqə (guşə)</th>
<th>Mode: <em>segah</em> (main <em>segah</em> ½-1-1 tetrachord used: D, E-flat, F, G)</th>
<th>Tones used: B-flat, C, D, E-flat, F (main tone), G, A-flat, B-flat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Etymology:** from the word “*bərr*” which is a name of God, meaning benevolence, continuous giving, and prosperity (Guliyev 2016: viii)

*Mübərriqə* is a *guşə* part of *şikəstəyi-fars*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Əşiran (guşə)</th>
<th>Mode: <em>şur</em></th>
<th>Tones used: C, D, E-flat, F, G, A-flat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

---

49
Etymology: relative, kin (Musazade 2012: 96)

This is a transition to somayi-şəms. It is also used in case the xanəndə has a middle-register voice and needs to return back to the mayə via this guşə instead of continuing to higher sections.

**Somayi-şəms (şöbə, usually zərb-mugham)**

Mode: şur (main şur 1-½-1 tetrachord: G, A, B-flat, C)

Tones used: F, G (main tone), A-flat, A, B-flat, C, D, E-flat, F, G (one octave higher than mayə)

![Mode: şur](image)

Etymology: səma dance of the sun, reference to Sufism (according to most musicians); literally, sun in the sky (Adilov 2005 2: 275)

Alternate spellings: (a) simayi-şəms, etymology – face of the Sun (Adilov 2005 2: 292); (b) səbayi-şəms, etymology: morning Sun (Adilov 2005 2: 261)

Today, somayi-şəms – the zil in şur dəstgah – is usually played as a zərb-mugham or “rhythmical mugham.” This genre is comprised of alternating instrumental, rhythmical parts that act as a refrain between mugham vocal sections. Zərb-mugham was created as a result of merging rəng with mugham. Some hypothesize that several mughams that were non-zərb became zərb under the influence of aşiq music in the 1930s. There are recordings from pre-Soviet times in which somayi-şəms was always non-zərb.

**Hicaz (şöbə or guşə)**

Mode: şur (main şur 1-½-1 tetrachord: C-D-E-flat-F)

Tones used: G, A-flat, A, B-flat, C, D (main tone), E-flat, F (highest register)

![Mode: şur](image)

Etymology: region in Saudi Arabia; holy land of Islam

Hicaz is the highest point in şur dəstgah. In its standardized version, hicaz is performed as a guşə, however more extended forms of hicaz as a şöbə also exist in the more conservative schools. For example, hicaz in the Manurov lineage encompasses parts: hicaz, hicaz-ərəbi, ləhni-ərəbi.

**Sarənc (şöbə)**

Mode: segah (main segah ½-1-1 tetrachord: A, B-flat, C, D)

Tones used: F, G, G-sharp, A (main tone), B-flat, C, D
Etymology: a place; a bird’s name (Adilov 2005 2: 257)

If əməy-əms and the following parts are not rhythmic, then guşə şah Xətai must precede sarənc as a transition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qəməngiz (guşə)</th>
<th>Mode: segah (main segah ½-1-1 tetrachord: A, B-flat, C, D)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tones used:</td>
<td>F, G-sharp, A (main tone), B-flat, C, D, E-flat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Etymology: provoking sadness (Musazade 2012: 103)

This guşə is part of sarənc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nişibi-fəraz (ayaq)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mode: şur</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Etymology: going down from above (Adilov 2005 2: 196, 1: 200)

Nişibi-fəraz is the ayaq or the descent back to the mayə and final cadence of the cycle.

Tones used: all notes above, descent to mayə
In order to show how ghazal texts structure one full șur dostgah cycle, I provide an analysis of a performance by mugham singer Alim Qasimov, tarzən Bahram Mansurov, and kamança player Talat Bakikhanov, recorded in 1985 by “Melodiya”, part of the USSR Ministry of Culture (Qasimov 1986). Here, three ghazals by Memmedeli Shafai, Fuzuli, and Nizami Ganjavi are used consecutively in the dostgah. The full text is written out below, accompanied by my own translation and əruz configurations (L for long and S for short) in the original poem and as sung by the xanəndo. If a beyt or misra is repeated in its entirety or partially, I indicate this in parentheses. In the case where the singer changes the text of the poem, I include the original lyrics in brackets.

Dəraməd

Bərdəşt

Ghazal 1 by Mammadali Shafai (text provided by Valeh Rahimov)
əruz metre: rəməl LSLL LSLL LSLL LSL

Dün gecə yarımə söhbət məclisi meyxanədə, (misra repeated)
Bir məqamə yetdi ki, məst(oldu mey peymanədə.

My conversation with Beloved at last night's məclis,
Soon reached the moment when the wine became intoxicated in its goblet.

LSLL LSLL LSLL LSL
LSLL SSLL LSLL LSL
LSLL LSLL LSLL LSL

Ətribiz oldu o bəzəma söhbəti-rühanımız, ( “Ətribiz oldu o” repeated)
[Ətrbar oldu o bəzəma söhbəti-rühanımız]
Qalmadı nitq aşınadə, nə nəfəs biganədə.
The gathering, perfumed with our spiritual discussions,
Left me completely speechless, and the indifferent breathless.

LSLL SLLL
LSLL SLLL LSLL LSL
LSLL LSLL SLLL LSL

Ərz(i) qildım yara, ey şəkkər ləbü-şirin zəban,
Vərmədərs qızınlə nöqsan məni-divanədə.
[Vərmədərs qızınlə bir nöqsan məni-divanədə]

I said to my Beloved: hey, honeyed lips and sugared words,
Is there a fault within your love because of which I am the mad one?

LSLL LLLL LSLL LSL
LSLL LLLL LSLL LSL

Məyə

(Repetition of the ghazal from the beginning – 3 beyts)

Dün gecə yarımə səhbət məclisi məyənədə, ("Dün gecə yarımə səhbət" repeated)
Bir məşqamə yetdi ki, məst oldu məy peyənədə.

LSLL LSLL
LSLL LSLL LSLL LSL
LSLL LSLL LSLL LSL

Ətəribiz oldu o bəzəmə səhbəti-rühənimiz,
[Ətərbar oldu o bəzəmə səhbəti-rühənimiz]
Qalmadı nitq aşınadə, nə nəsəs bıgranədə.

LSLL SLLL LSLL LSL
LSLL LSLL SLLL LSL

Ərz(i) qildım yara, ey şəkkər ləbü-şirin zəban, (misra repeated)
Vərmədərs qızınlə nöqsan məni-divanədə.
[Vərmədərs qızınlə bir nöqsan məni-divanədə]
Eşq(i) şartından deyil divanə olmaq, söylədi, (misra repeated)
Qoy deyilsin Leyli-Məcnun söhbəti əfsanədə.

The postulates of love do not entail madness, said Beloved,
So let us leave the themes of Leyli and Majnun in the legend.

Təsnif

Şur-şəhnaz

Eşq(i) şartından deyil divanə olmaq, söylədi, ("Eşq(i) şartından deyil divanə olmaq" repeated)
Qoy deyilsin Leyli-Məcnun söhbəti əfsanədə.

Away with meaningless cries, give up the soul to the Beloved,
Till morning dawn, the owl too weeps in the ruins.

The nightingale, I heard, is not a lover but a crazy infatuate,
Instead, I only saw true love embodied in the moth.
As the candle’s glow burned the wretched’s wings,  
Before crying out, he was devoured by the fire.

Cismi-biruha, Şəfai, can verer əqli nigar,  
Hıfs olarkən təzələndən düşən bir şənədə.

Shafai, true beauty can return the soul to the soulless body,  
With the memory of a single hair falling on the comb’s prongs.

Bayat-türk

Ghazal 2 by Fuzuli (Sayilov 2013: 76)  
Əruz metre: rəmel LSLL LSLL LSLL LSL

Ney kimi, hər dəm ki, bəzmi-vaşlini yad eylərəm, (misra repeated)  
Ta nəfəs vərdir quru cismimə, fəyədə eylərəm.

In the manner of a flute, I recall the advent of the union every moment,  
While my breath flows through my forlorn body, I will keep on crying.

Ruzi-hicrandır sevin, ey murği-ruhim kim, bu gün  
Bu qəfəsddən mən səni, əlbətə, azad eylərəm. (beyt repeated, rəng in the middle)
Rejoice on this day of separation, the bird of my soul,
For I will liberate you surely when I release you from this cage.

\[\begin{align*}
&\text{LSLL LSLL LSLL LSL} \\
&\text{LSLL LSLL LSLL LSL}
\end{align*}\]

\textit{Rəng}

\[\begin{align*}
&\text{LSLL LSLL LSLL LSL} \\
&\text{LSLL LSLL LSLL LSL}
\end{align*}\]

Vahm edib ta salmaya sən məhə məhrin hiç kim,
Kimə yetsəm zülmü çəvrəndən ona dəd eylərm.

\textit{Fearful, nobody dares to love you moon-resembling beauty,}
\textit{At every encounter, I shall complain about the endless torture of your love.}

\[\begin{align*}
&\text{LSLL LSLL LSLL LL} \\
&\text{LSLL LSLL LSLL LSL}
\end{align*}\]

Qan yaşım qılmaz vəfa, gəryan gözüm israfına, (\textit{misra} repeated)
Bunca kim, hərdəm ciyər qanından imdad eylərm.

\textit{My blood-soaked tears and crying eyes will never reach your worth,}
\textit{And crying out every second, I beg my body for more blood.}

\[\begin{align*}
&\text{LSLL LSLL LSSL LSL} \\
&\text{LSLL LSLL LSLL LSL} \\
&\text{LSLL LSLL LLLL LSL}
\end{align*}\]

\textit{Şikəstəvi-fərs}

Qan yaşım qılmış vəfa, gəryan gözüm israfına,
Bunca kim, hərdəm ciyər qanından imdad eylərm.

\[\begin{align*}
&\text{LSLL LSLL LSSL LSL} \\
&\text{LSLL LSLL LSLL LSL}
\end{align*}\]
I will not be offended if the enemy’s unfairness finds me,
Since my heart is addicted to pain from the torments of the Beloved.

**Reng**

I understood that the union is out of my reach, but, with hope,
Every now and then, I uplift my somber thoughts.

**Qənarvi-şəms (zərb)**

*Ghazal 3 by Nizami Ganjavi* (Yusifli 2004: 17)

Aşıq iftarını sevda meyi-nab etmədədir,
Love again is ruining my repentance vows,
As the lover breaks his fast with the wine of love.

Könlümə bir mələyin sevgisi od saldı, onun,
[İnsanın sevgisi od saldı, adı]
Adı Zöhrə, Gün onu canı hesab etmədədir.
[Günü də, Zöhrəni də göydə sarab etmədədir]

Angel’s love ignited fire in my heart, and she is,
[Angel’s love ignited fire in my heart, and her name]
Named Venus, while the Sun considers her his heart.
[Makes the Sun and Venus futile bodies in the sky.]

Hicaz

Onun eşq atəşi hər qəlbə girər, amma nədən.
Tək mənim qəlbimi atəşdə kəbab etmədədir?

Her love’s fire enters every heart, but why,
Only my heart is demolished by that fire?

Sarənc

Gözlərin baxdı mənə, söylədi: səbr et, səninəm. (“Gözlərin baxdı mənə” repeated)
Doğrusu, səbr edərəm, ömr(i) şitab etmədədir.

Your eyes looked at me and said: master patience, I am yours.
Sure enough, I can be patient, but my life is passing fast.
Ahu gözlərini yatmış zaman ovlar ovçu,
Görüb ahu gözünü ovçusu xab etmədədər.
[Əmr rəyədə şikar olmağa tab etmədədər]

*Those enchanting eyes, sleeping as the hunter preys on them,*
*But once he sees them, they captivate the hunter.*
*[Still obey the law that they must be patient while being hunted]*

---

**Rəng**

**Qəməngiz**

Gar xəta isə Nizamini həlak etdirmək,
[Gar Nizamini xəta isə halak etdirmək]
Aşiqəm, yar məni öldürsə səvab etmədədər.

*If Nizami’s devastation must be a mistake,*
*I am still a lover, blessed when my beloved kills me.*

---

**Nişibi-fəraz**

Alim Qasimov is known for his preference of more complex and unconventional ghazal poetry with overtones of mysticism and profound philosophical themes. He studied with masters who knew əruz well and he also sang in religious contexts that required expertise in prosodical metres and pronunciation. Therefore, this xanəndə skilfully selects and matches more complicated and esoteric ghazals to mugham music whereas some singers are constrained in performing only the poems they have memorized from their teachers or other performances.
Alim Qasimov begins this dastgah with a ghazal by Mammadali Shafai who was a twentieth-century Azerbaijani poet from the suburban Absheron town of Mashtaga. Shafai’s poetry is difficult to find in published compilations. However, it has been passed on in private notebooks of poets, musicians, and knowers. There are other poets similar to Shafai whose ghazals have not been officially printed due to Soviet directives regarding religious subject matter, but certain individuals keep and transmit their works privately. Fuzuli and Nizami ghazals are also spiritual, but these are poets who are part of the established canon that comprises Azerbaijan’s classical heritage. Thus, their poetry was published officially in the USSR.

The significance of øruz for the creativity of the singer is manifested in many musical parameters of this dastgah (a similar inquiry can be found in Dessiatnitchenko 2015). First and foremost, the pattern of long and short syllables is followed very closely throughout. øruz pervades even when the singing takes place in the zil register. Furthermore, when there is repetition of part of a line, it is cut precisely at the point where one tafīlə unit ends so that the flow of øruz is not disrupted. For example, Alim Qasimov begins şur-şəhnaz with:

Eşq-(i) şar-tin-dən de-yil di-va-nə ol-maq
L S L L L S L L L S L L
Eşq-(i) şar-tin-dən de-yil di-va-nə ol-maq, söy-lə-di
L S L L L S L L L S L L L S L

In şikəsteyi-fars, he sings the following repetition, breaking the line at the end of a tafīlə unit at the expense of breaking a word in the middle:

İn-ci-mən hər ne-cə kim, e-
L S L L L S L L
İn-ci-mən hər ne-cə kim, ağ-yar-(i) bi-dad ey-lə-sə
L S L L L S L L L S L L L S L

– 60 –
There are instances when the əruz pattern is modified. However, these exceptions show that breaking the rules also requires mastery over prosodical metres. First, if əruz is changed in the original text of the poem, the singer must abide by this. For example, in the line “Sübhə tək bayquş da faryad eyləyir viramda” the last əfilə is LL (two long syllables) instead of LSL and the singer, knowing this, performs accordingly. Similarly, misra “Ahu gözlüləri yatmış zaman ovlar ovçu” ends with LL instead of SSL and must be performed as such. Second, the xanəndə feels when accentuation in a particular Azerbaijani word runs contrary to the əruz and would sound too amiss if it was sung with əruz. One example is the word “ilə” meaning “with” in Azerbaijani that appears in the line “Lövhi-aləmdən yudum eşq ilə Məcnun adını.” The proper way to pronounce this common word is with an accent on the second syllable “-la” and, therefore, when spoken this syllable is usually elongated as well. The əruz configuration here is LS but Alim Qasimov sings it as SL so that “ilə” is rendered in a proper way. Third, if the xanəndə skips a word or changes the text of the poetry, he tries to maintain the əruz pattern as closely as possible. Alim Qasimov sings both lines in one beyt differently from the original text in the poem:

Kön-lü-mə bir mə-lə-yin sev-gi-si od sal-di, o-nun,  
L S L L S S L L S S L L L S L  
[Kön-lü-mə bir mə-lə-yin sev-gi-si od sal-dı, a-dı]  
[L S L L S S L L S S L L L S L]  

S S L L S S L L S S L L L S L L  
[Gü-nü də Zöh-rə-ni də göy-da şə-rab et-mə-da-dir]  
[S S L L S S L L S S L L L S L S]
However, the changes do not interfere with the metrical arrangement of long and short syllables. Also, although the word “bir” is left out by the singer in the line “Varmıdır eşqində bir nöqsan məni-divanədə”, he replaced LSLL with LLL to amend the exclusion:

Var-mi-dir eşq-in-də bir nöq-san mə-ni-di-va-nə-də

| L | S | L | L | L | S | L | L | L | S | L |

Var-mi-dir eşq-in-də nöq-san mə-ni-di-va-nə-də

| L | S | L | L | L | L | S | L | L | L | S | L |

Fourth, a short syllable may be elongated at variance with əruz for dramatical purposes. When the əruz pattern is broken in this manner, the word is further emphasized and made meaningful. Below are two examples showing how short syllables in “yarə” (Beloved) and “pərvanədə” (moth) are made into long syllables to accentuate the dramatical importance of the two words:

Ərz-(i) qıl-dım yarə, ey şək-kər lə-bü-şər in zə-ban

| L | S | L | L | L | L | L | S | L | L | S | L |

Eşq-i am-ma öz gə-züm-lə gör-mü-şəm pər-va-nə-də

| L | S | L | L | S | L | L | S | L | L | L | L |

The most important way in which əruz impels creativity has to do with musical possibilities inherent in long vowels. The long syllables are not strictly twice as long as the short syllables. In fact, they do not have a fixed length and therefore can be stretched and ornamented as the singer pleases. In this șur dostgah Alim Qasimov continuously repeats parts of lines, full lines, or whole beyts. When this happens, he alters the text musically because this kind of variation is crucial for the expression of meanings. The variation occurs precisely in the long syllables because they allow for different musical expression. For example, here are notations of the misra “Ərz(i) qıldım yarə, ey şəkkər ləbü-şirin zəban” which is repeated two times in mayə:
Another relevant example is the line “Eşq(i) şərtindən deyil divanə olmaq, söylədi” that is sung at the end of mayə and at the outset of şur-şəhnaz:
In şur-şəhnaz:

This example demonstrates how the shift to şöbə şur-şəhnaz is signalled by more extended and elaborate treatment of long syllables. For example, there are continuous suspended vibrato-like (“vib.” in notation) ornaments on the long syllables. Indeed, as the dəstgah gains momentum, there is increasing flexibility with regards to əruz and ornamentation of long syllables becomes more intricate. However, despite this gradual change, the xəndə continues to follow the əruz pattern closely, only making changes due to specific reasons outlined above.

The tar player performs guşəs that are part of the Mansurov lineage and adds his own gezişmə (one type of creativity in mugham, see chapter 6) as heard in the second cümə in şöbə şur-şəhnaz that is played one octave above (this kind of transposition in the middle of şur-şəhnaz is common). Virtuosic gestures involving the zəng string on the note C (indicated here with “z”) gain momentum and lead to a cadential gesture at the end of the musical phrase that could be structured based on the rəmal metre. The ending “L” unit is an ornamental figure around the supporting tone C and therefore can be counted with one L designation.
Throughout the dəstgah, there are occasional instances in which the şruz seems to influence the instrumentalist’s accompaniment, such as in the cadential excerpts below heard in bərdəst and bayatı-türk respectively:
Heightened creativity by the *tarzən* that spontaneously results in new musical sentences based on *əruz* is more common in unofficial milieux such as the *məgham məclis* or weddings.

In the *şur dəstgah* examined above, instrumentalists’ passages that could be accurately mapped onto a *rəməl təfılə* pattern are subtle and infrequent while most musical phrases are much more flexible and irregular, or they have their own rhythm that does not coincide with *əruz*. Even in the *xanənda* part, there is much variability and elasticity. While the *əruz* is surely an organizing principle of the performed poetry, different listeners may be at odds with each other when trying to decide the S and L designations for sung syllables. What is important to stress as a conclusive point is the significance of conveyed meanings for creativity. Although it may be difficult to discern precise structures of *əruz* in the music, the influence of expressed meanings on the internal states of performers is fundamental to musical innovation in the course of performance.
Chapter 2  
Pre-Soviet Shusha and Baku: 
the Burgeoning of *Mugham* Creativity

The late nineteenth century in Azerbaijan was marked by groundbreaking advancements in the arts owing to the changing political climate. The formation of the Azerbaijani national identity and the flowering of a cultural enlightenment, driven by the local intelligentsia, characterized the pre-Soviet context. This backdrop was crucial for the development of *mugham* at this time as both the musical and textual parameters underwent important changes. Shusha and Baku, two cities that served as centres of *mugham* activity, were home to musicians whose innovations in the structure of the *tar*, instrumental performance technique, and *xanəndə* art revolutionized *mugham*. Possibilities for creativity were broadened and the *mugham* system was augmented due to the new contexts for teaching and performing: the *məclis* (gathering) tradition, public concerts, and schools for religious singing. As a result, *mugham* was refined and differentiated, becoming an important representative of the nascent Azerbaijani identity.

2.1 Nationalism and cultural enlightenment in pre-Soviet Azerbaijan

The seed that gave rise to the Azerbaijani intelligentsia in the nineteenth century was planted with the European and Russian education sought by the native elites (Cornell 2011: 12). Many members of Azerbaijan’s high society studied in Russian universities that were modelled on German institutions and included European works of philosophy and literature in their
curricula. The ideologies they were exposed to, coupled with the religious modernization among Turkic neighbours and national awakenings among Armenians and Georgians, all influenced the Azerbaijani intelligentsia to enact change. First, the forging of the Azerbaijani national identity was sparked and quickly gained momentum. Second, prominent figures of Azerbaijan’s elite, such as Haji Zeinal Adibin Taghiyev, Musa Naghiyev, and Shamsi Asadullayev, began to invest into the arts, thereby fueling a cultural enlightenment. The latter process, as Audrey Altstadt explains, is akin to Europe’s Enlightenment rather than the Renaissance (Altstadt 2016: 1). It was led by a number of educated men who “shared a vision that learning would elevate their Muslim Turkic community to the level of contemporary Europe which they identified with enlightenment, reason, science and technology, social reform, political participation and constitutionalism” (Altstadt 2016: 1).

Three elements were central to the nation building in Azerbaijan at this time: Turkism, modernism, and Islam. Hence, the tricolour flag adopted in 1918 and reintroduced after independence in 1991 is comprised of the colours blue, red, and green, which stand for the three ingredients of the national identity, respectively. Because ethnic identity was linked to Ottoman Turks, some scholars assert that pan-Turkism dominated among pre-revolutionary Muslims who did not feel that they belonged to particular nations of Azerbaijanis, Uzbeks, Turkmens, Kazakhs, etc. (Astourian 1994: 42). However, while it is true that the Azerbaijanis called themselves “Turks”, Altstadt warns against seeing this as strictly pan-Turkism, because the identity which was crafted was to be distinctly Azerbaijani (Altstadt 1992: 70). Investigating how mugham developed in the pre-Soviet context supports this claim (see below).

The intelligentsia in pre-Soviet Azerbaijan refers to the secular and modernized societal group that excludes the religiously trained elite (Cornell 2011: 12). While developing a
supranational Islamic identity, the elites opposed the power structure that Islam created, openly criticizing it in their works. Moreover, they promoted secular education. However, the elites did not attack religion (Altstadt 1992: 57). While ridiculing some molla, they never rejected Islam and many of them were practising Muslims. Their position was influenced and shaped by the “Muslim modernization” movement progressing across the Muslim world in the late nineteenth century, and, more specifically, by Jadidism – a modernist movement for socio-religious reform among Volga and Crimean Tatars.

The intelligentsia’s main agenda was to oversee the furtherance of the enlightenment that they launched. Their objectives included issues of language and educational reform, development of the press, in addition to the social and political functions of the arts. Schools were financed, with libraries and courses geared at improving the status of Muslim women (Altstadt 1992: 33). The press was also financed by the elites, and used as a forum to debate questions of power and identity (Altstadt 1992: 34). Furthermore, there was also a growing interest in the Azerbaijani vernacular, which had been championed by intellectuals and poets since the eighteenth century: “The move away from the Persian language was part of the local elite’s break with Persian culture, the Iranian state and the Shi’ite religious hierarchy” (Altstadt 2016: 11).

While ideologies related to Azerbaijani nationalism and enlightenment were borrowed from external sources, they were implemented by the native elites who subsequently established and fostered them internally. The role of Russia in these processes was minimal. When Azerbaijan became part of the Russian Empire in the nineteenth century its cultural sphere was not targeted by the ruling powers. Russia was mostly concerned with administrative control, while local culture and arts were left untouched. However, Russia was deeply implicated in the
sense that perceptions about the identity of its Muslim populations spread and had to be addressed by the local elites. As Altstadt explains, “Despite the internal debate on Russia’s ‘Westernness’, the ruling stratum saw themselves as Westerners, as bearers of civilization to their ‘savages’, the Asian peoples of their land empire” (Altstadt 2016: 4). Russia orientalised the Caucasus as an Asian alterity in order to be recognized as a key player on the European stage and assume the role of a civilizing agent on par with Europe (Grant 2009: 94). Moreover, the homogenizing labeling of Azerbaijani, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Tatars, etc. as “Muslims” or “Turks” served to identify them as the singular “Other.” Therefore, the identity that Russia promulgated for the Azerbaijani had to be carefully countered by the elites, and this process was reflected in the artistic sphere, such as in the nationalization of *mugham* and the beginnings of the nationalist composition school.

Members of the elite had close ties to the leading performers of *mugham*. One of the most prominent representatives of the Azerbaijani intelligentsia, Uzeyir Hajibeyov, wrote about this link between *mugham* and the bourgeoisie of Azerbaijan: “Musical and aesthetic needs of pre-revolutionary bourgeoisie circles were met by the art of *sazandar* – knowers of traditional music, skilful performers who were able to induce in listeners the state of *nəşə* [a kind of intoxication with music] which led to many of them weeping” (Hajibeyov 1966: 51). According to many sources (e.g. Hajibeyov 1966; Shushinsky 1979), *mugham* performers and the intelligentsia often mingled at the same events such as *mugham* gatherings and weddings, collaborating on developing art and music. Thus, ideologies of the elites described above were circulating among *mugham* figures and affecting their activity. The forging of a national identity in Azerbaijan inspired the cultivation of *mugham* in the following ways: (a) changes made to the structure of the *tar* and the singing of *ghazals*; (b) the birth of new contexts for development and
performance of the music; (c) a peak in technical mastery and performance skills exemplified by
the generation of most influential musicians; and (d) expanding repertoire.

Likewise, enlightenment, which worked hand in hand with nationalism, contributed to the
same outcomes. More specifically, enlightenment promoted a wider acceptance of music and
mitigated the prosecution of music by religious figures. For example, during the second half of
the nineteenth century, public events featuring mugham started to be held frequently and openly.
Before this time these occasions were much more secretive and hidden because mollas were
heard protesting and prohibiting music believed to be associated with the devil.

However, it is likely that Islamic philosophy remained important for mugham musicians,
although primary sources from this time do not contain references to Islam. It is probable that
records of discussions and ideas about mugham’s religious parameters were avoided because of
Russia’s anti-Muslim agenda or were destroyed during the Soviet era. Post-Soviet scholars
widely comment on the dearth of work on Islam in Azerbaijan and the difficulty of conducting
such investigations because all research that was carried out during the Soviet period cannot be
referred to due to bias and propaganda (Yunusov 2004: 8). However, clues about the centrality of
Islam for mugham can be found in the pre-Soviet inclination towards the harmony between
mugham music and ghazal poetry as well as the imbeddedness of mugham in religious practices.
Admittedly, these two circumstances prevalent in pre-Soviet Azerbaijan helped creativity to
evolve, and they will be explored in detail throughout this chapter.

Both tar playing and xanəndo singing experienced breakthroughs at the end of the
nineteenth century as a result of the innovations made by tarzən Mirza Sadig Asadoglu and
xanəndo Jabbar Garyagdioglu, who were from the city of Shusha. The synchronicity of these two
milestones was no coincidence. While Mirza Sadig Asadoglu, also known as Sadigjan,
revolutionized the structure of the tar, making it distinctly Azerbaijani, Jabbar Garyagdioglu was the first to introduce ghazal singing in Azerbaijani rather than Persian, as had been customary. Both of these changes were similar in nature because they were aimed at making mugham into a more uniquely Azerbaijani artistic form.

The main venue for mugham performances prior to the end of the nineteenth century was the toy məclis (wedding gathering). Some weddings were centred on extensive performances of dəstgahs with few folk and dance melodies, while others allowed for more dancing, depending on the class and position of the hosts (Shushinsky 1979: 20). In addition to weddings, another important setting developed at this time: the intimate gatherings with poets and musicians, also called məclis (Bagirova 2007: 90). Here, musicians, poets, dervishes, writers, and members of the intelligentsia worked together to transform mugham, with particular focus on developing the consonance between music and words. Young musicians and poets participated in these gatherings and learned by performing and receiving criticism from the connoisseurs. Hence, the məclises were also known as “schools” (Imrani 2000: 3). Mir Mohsun Navvab in Shusha, Meshedi Melik Mansurov in Baku, and Mahmud Aga in Shirvan first organized and led məclises during the second half of the nineteenth century. Stars of mugham would travel between these three centres to perform. Shushinsky describes these məclises as meetings for high-class people in which xanəndə sang full dəstgahs and no dancing was allowed (Shushinsky 1979: 20). Indeed, this is where the most elaborate and complex forms of mugham were performed.

Chelebiyev calls the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century as the golden era of Azerbaijani mugham art (Chelebiyev 2009: 14). This is because in the second half of the nineteenth century, there were many rising stars of mugham – both tar players and singers. Moreover, in the first half of the twentieth century, many brilliant
instrumentalists and xanəndə were raised with amazing virtuosity and a gift for preserving the old traditions as well. Their talent was nurtured in the newly founded məclises and stimulated by the novelties that pertain to məgham, linked to the concurrent wave of nationalism.

Towards the late nineteenth century, the genre of məgham dəstgah was being passionately developed by local musicians. Precisely at this time and until the Sovietization of Azerbaijan, records show incredible complexity and instability in the form of the dəstgah. There were many versions of one dəstgah as the genre was at its peak of expansion. As Bagirova notes, before 1920 dəstgah cycles “did not have stable principles of form” and were performed differently in Karabakh, Baku and Shemakhi (Bagirova 2007: 225).

The prominence of this historical period for the music of Azerbaijan is also highlighted by the birth of the nationalist composition school that was based on məgham modes. The pioneer in this area was the legendary Hajibeyov who composed the first opera in the entire Muslim world: Leyli and Majnun. During his childhood, Hajibeyov was constantly surrounded by the intelligentsia and attended məgham gatherings. His family was part of the local higher classes and was close to poetess Khurshidbanu Natavan (1837-197) who also held musico-poetical məclises in Karabakh (Abasova 1985:30). Possessing knowledge of and appreciation for məgham, Hajibeyov set out to merge national music with Western classical music as to him the latter meant “universal” and modern music of highest achievement.

Leyli and Majnun premiered in 1908 in Baku. Mugham parts were all improvised and the only directive was to perform a məgham that coincided with the emotional content of a scene. The tar player had to accompany the vocalist, improvising in the same mode as would be the case in a trio performance. The opera was not notated with the exception of a few sections such as interludes and dances. As such, very little of məgham was sacrificed because it remained
separate from the Westernized and notated fragments. Hajibeyov invited the best _tar_ players to perform in his opera. However, many arguments between them formed because of the heterogeneous nature of _mugham_ at this time. Due to the debates about the right way to perform certain melodies, only Gurban Primov agreed to participate in the performance.

Even though _mugham_ trailblazers surely contributed to the intelligentsia’s efforts towards nationalism and cultural enlightenment, and many of them even participated in the elite’s projects such as Hajibeyov’s opera, there were crucial differences that separated the activities of _mugham_ figures from the rest of the elites. For instance, the Westernization of _mugham_ was not on the agenda of those who organized _mugham_ _məclises_. Furthermore, although _mugham_ was being shaped into a distinctly Azerbaijani musical form, strong links to Iran were maintained in _mugham_ circles, unlike among the secular elites. Lastly, forms of practised Shia religion and dervish singing were fundamental for _mugham_ performers in pre-Soviet Azerbaijan. Notwithstanding the differences, both groups were united in the impetus to build native culture into a mouthpiece for the Azerbaijani consciousness of identity in the new era of nationalism.

2.2 Shusha’s Sadigjan

The mountainous westernmost region of Azerbaijan called Karabakh is home to the nation’s historically most important musical centre – Shusha. Countless acclaimed _mugham_ instrumentalists and vocalists were born in and around this city, including Sadigjan, Gurban Primov, Jabbar Garyagdioglu, Khan Shushinsky, Seyyid Shushinsky, and many others. Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, Shusha acquired a pivotal role in Azerbaijan’s political, economic, and cultural spheres (Shushinsky 1968: 54). There was a lot of trade centred on Shusha and the city’s international links directly impacted its cultural
achievements. In this milieu, activity related to the native culture, including *mugham*, flourished. Furthermore, the religiosity of the city – manifested in the opulence of mosques and effervescent observance of rituals within the Islamic calendar (Shushinsky 1979: 54) – helped to cultivate *mugham*.

Firudin Shushinsky writes about the importance of *məclis* meetings in Shusha during the second half of the nineteenth century – gatherings for performers and poets that simultaneously functioned as schools for younger musicians. One of the first Shusha *məclis* traditions was founded by poetess Khurshidbanu Natavan in 1872. It was called “*Məclisi-üns*” (“gathering for discussion”) and was designed for musicians and composers of *ghazals* to join efforts and develop *mugham*. A renowned polymath Mir Mohsun Navvab – who was known as a poet, artist, musicologist, astronomer, chemist, mathematician and hypnotist – also established “*Məclisi-fəramuşan*” (“The gathering of the forgotten” – dedicated to classical art of the past) in Shusha. These “musical *məclis*” as Shushinsky (1979) calls them were different from religious or wedding gatherings that also featured *mugham*. The former did not seem to have a specific function except for aesthetic enjoyment and development of the music’s structure. Moreover, discovering the virtuosic potential of performance was highly encouraged in this context, aligned with ideologies of identity formation and nationalism characteristic of the times.

Shusha’s significance is highlighted by another crucial circumstance: performers of *mugham* showcased their art at public concerts for the first time in 1897. Subsequently, similar events were introduced in other cities such as Baku. Hence, another context for *mugham* was created and musicians began to perform for various organized charity events (Ismailzade 2006: 46). Prior to this, traditional music could only be heard at weddings, religious rituals, and *məclis* gatherings, all of which were exclusive to a certain degree. The new venue for performing
The tar was not only brought on the stage but also made into a solo instrument, superseding its former role as an accompaniment instrument. Bagirova explains that the tar was transformed in the nineteenth century, establishing the tradition of solo instrumental performance of mugham (Bagirova 2007: 144). So how did this new version of the tar come to be?

The figure responsible for reconstructing the tar is Sadigjan from Shusha, a musician and craftsman who learned his skills from Iranian musicians. The formation of a single “Azerbaijani” national tar by Sadigjan took place at the end of the nineteenth century. After this groundbreaking achievement, his version of the tar was popularized in all the main urban centres of Azerbaijan. Before this, there was much variation in the instruments played across Azerbaijan’s geographical regions, and it seems that in many areas the instrument was missing. For example, historical accounts of travellers disclose that the tar was not as prominent in the Absheron and Shirvan areas, suggesting that it was introduced later at the turn of the twentieth century. A scholar from Russia who travelled to Absheron in 1824 described a performance he witnessed at a bey’s house in village Buzovna. This account has no mention of the tar:

After dinner, Muslim musicians and singers appeared to entertain the tired visitors. The orchestra was comprised of four instruments: nagara, two small oval-shaped drums with one that was louder and more musical compared to the other, quieter and less pleasant to the ear; saz which was a balalayka with four strings; balaban which was a type of flute; and qaval or a round-shaped drum. The saz was leading in the orchestra, providing a tone in which the piece was played; the musician playing on the saz was also the singer (Berezin I., quoted in Abasova et al. 1992:111).

One tar master with whom I studied confirmed that before the Absheron məclis tradition matured, there was no mugham there, and no instruments such as the tar and kamança. Instead, saz was the main instrument used in performances along with tutek and zurna. Only in the
second half of the nineteenth century did the tar and kamança appear in this region, and mugham began to eclipse other musical genres and styles (Emin Mammadov, interview, 27 July 2016).

Likewise, the tar is missing in reports about the Shirvan area, where a wealthy landowner Mahmud Aga held his musical maclises in the nineteenth century. A vivid description of a musical soirée has been preserved in Alexandre Dumas’s travel journals, offering a glimpse into the musical scene in Shemakhi at the time. Upon arrival, Dumas extolled the charm of the host’s palace, more beautiful than any he had seen from Derbent to Tbilisi:

We entered the parlor, designed in absolute Eastern style. Simple but expensive decorations cannot be adequately described on paper! All the guests sat on satin pillows with golden flowers which were covered with laced pillowslips, imbuing these most flamboyant flowers with extraordinary pleasantness and tenderness. In the depth of the room, along the entire length of a large window, sat three female dancers and five musicians.

The music gave a signal. It was comprised of a drum on metal stands, resembling a gigantic egg, cut in half, as well as a tambourine, similar to ours, a flute that looked like ancient tibicina, a mandolin with metal strings, on which one plays with a feather, and finally, a choghur on a metal stand, due to which the choghur moves its strings across the bow, and not the other way around.

All of this creates wild music, not very melodic, but in fact, very original (Shushinsky 1979: 16).

Unlike in the Absheron and Shirvan regions, biographical data about mugham musicians shows that the tar was prevalent in Karabakh from the early nineteenth century. However, before the birth of the distinct national Azerbaijani tar by Sadigjan, this instrument in the Caucasus was very similar to the tar found across the border in Iran and was locally referred to as the “Caucasus tar.” Only after the transformation of the tar by Sadigjan was a uniquely Azerbaijani tar called “Karabakh tar” developed:
Before, there used to be the “Caucasus tar” which was made in Tbilisi. After the innovations of Sadigjan, the new tars were made and called “Karabakh” tars and from here everything began to evolve. Presently the tar we (in Azerbaijan) play has the sound of an entire orchestra. This is the tar tied to Sadigjan. God bless him (Mansurov, “Memories about father Meshedi Suleyman”, 650.1.36: 3).

There is ample evidence that the tar was first brought to the Caucasus from Iran. Specifically, both secondary sources and current masters who know well the history of mugham assert that it was Ali Shirazi who brought the five-string tar to Azerbaijan (Mansurov and Dadashov 2005: 89; Shushinsky 1982). At the time the tar had five strings, 28 frets along its neck, a small belly, and was played on the knees. Before teaching Sadigjan, Ali Shirazi gave lessons to Mirza Aga Alesker Garabaghli who was the first tar player in Karabakh (Shushinsky 1982). The latter was also a kamança player and a singer at Ibrahim Khan’s (1732-1806) palace in Karabakh. Mirza Mukhtar (1841-1929), who was Mirza Alesker’s son, was a distinguished xanəndə who knew Persian and Arabic, and performed with Sadigjan.

One knowledgeable musician reported: “Sadigjan learned from Ali Shirazi, Kharrat Gulu, and Kor Khalif. They all came from Iran, but these were Azerbaijanis. They knew mugham and religion well. And they came to Azerbaijan to perform in religious rituals” (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 11 December 2015). Admittedly, throughout his life, Sadigjan maintained prominent ties with Iran and the tar performance tradition there. Shushinsky recounts that once, when travelling to Iran, Sadigjan cut the frets (porda) on his tar, and intimidated Iranian tar players who, as a result, refused to compete with him. He also performed very well for Naser al-Din Shah Qajar (1831-96) who then awarded him medals and gold. The Shah asked him to stay at court, but Sadigjan said that he could not live without Karabakh. However, the master did live intermittently in Iran and from 1875-78 he engaged in extensive study of the Iranian tar which led to his revolutionary adjustments made to the instrument.
The seventeen-fret system that characterizes Azerbaijani tar was Sadigjan’s primary creation. Ethnomusicologist Dzhani-zade reports:

The main point in the reconstruction of the tar by Sadigjan was the setting of frets on the neck of the instrument according to the Azerbaijani tone system. The frets marked a system with 17 steps, like the ancient Arabian and Persian ones, but their measure and the order of the intervals were different (Dzhani-zade 1998: 67).

In the same vein, Abdulgassimov underscores that the Azerbaijani fret system devised by Sadigjan is similar to other modal systems of “Eastern peoples” in terms of the quantity (17 tones), yet different in its interior structure (Abdulgassimov 1990: 33). As is evident, Sadigjan’s goal was to make the fret system match the unique modal palette of Azerbaijani music.

Shushinsky states that he got rid of many predə and left only 17 in one octave. As he omitted certain frets, he also added others. For instance, the first predə that measures a semitone from the open string is an insertion of Sadigjan. This predə is called zabul and according to primary sources in Azerbaijan’s archives, it was added so that mugham zabul could be sung correctly in a lower register (Mansurov, “Bahram Mansurov’s written notes”, 650.1.32: 3). Another document states that in no other Eastern country are maqam modes played on the first zabul predə (Mansurov, “Rules about mugham şöbə”, 650.1.25: 37).

As mentioned above, prior to Sadigjan’s adaptations, the tar usually had five strings. The two pairs of ringing zəng strings and the bas string were other important additions of the master-performer. According to Abdulgassimov, there is great advantage in these strings as they are used in “the harmonic way” (Abdugassimov 1990: 26). They are often played at the end of musical sentences (cümle, guşə, and şöbə), or between avaz segments, functioning as punctuation marks that signal short pauses. These can also be used in the middle of fragments to add more colour to a mugham and maintain a steady background sound of one of the fundamental tones.
Moreover, the *bas* and four *zəng* strings provide symmetry in the main tuning, thereby achieving balance and stability in the overall tuning system. As a result, the *tar* does not go out of tune frequently. Lastly, various techniques and virtuosic patterns are played with these strings, giving Azerbaijani *mugham* its uniqueness and brilliance. Among musicians, the following expression is notable: “A *tar* without the sympathetic strings is like pilaf without butter” (*Cingənsiz tar yağsız ḍın kimdir*) (Chelebiyev 2009: 50). One current performer commented about this phrase thus: “yes, these strings give balance to the *tar* tuning! They also make *mugham* sound like the *saz*. In Iran they do not have this (refers to Persian *tar*). For example, this is why they do not have the rhythmic *mughams*. They are not Turks!” (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 4 June 2015).

Importantly, Abdulgassimov writes, “having increased the number of the strings of the *tar* Mirza Sadig gained the wide use of the *tar* as a solo instrument and especially it created the solo instrumental opportunity of *mugham*” (Abdulgassimov 1990: 32). In other words, attaching the extra strings was the decisive step towards making the instrument into a solo one.

Another one of Sadigjan’s inventions was the new position of playing on the *tar*: the instrument was raised to chest level instead of being rested on the knees while performing. According to musicians, Sadigjan made changes to the big and small bellies of the instrument in order to facilitate playing on the chest: these parts were hollowed deeper for a broader diameter and a more oval shape. However, During counters the claim that this position for performing was an invention of Sadigjan because the school of Ali-Akbar Farahani in mid-nineteenth century in Iran was already employing it (During 1988: 57).

In addition, Sadigjan added a connecting sound post inside the bellies for support, and at the same time allowed for increased intensity of sound. Also, this created the vibration called *xun* (sorrow) that is commonly used during a performance when the *tar* is shaken for an echo effect.
Abdulgassimov again underscores the particularity of the Azerbaijani tar due to these features: “We would like to mention that there had not been such qualities in the musical instruments of the Eastern world” (Abdulgassimov 1990: 23). An interesting conclusion is drawn by Dzhani-zade who writes that the change in playing posture made this instrument into a Turkic one because the Azerbaijani saz – linked to its Turkic heritage – is held at the same height on the chest and could have served as a model for Sadigjan (Dzhani-zade 1998: 66).

Besides innovations related to the instrument’s structure, Sadigjan expanded the repertoire and the playing technique. For example, he added (a) a şöbə section manənda müxalif to mirza hüseyn segah, (b) şöbə hasar muhalif to zabul, and (c) many different parts to mahur, thus greatly enriching these mughams. Moreover, the ancient dances and rəngs such as turaci, ceyran, uzundərə, tərəkəmə, vağzali that are still played today, were all composed by Sadigjan (Mansurov, “Memories about father Meshedi Suleyman”, 650.1.36: 3). In this way, he not only defined the specificity of the Azerbaijani mugham system but also contributed to the nationalization of Azerbaijani music.

The level of tar virtuosity was advanced considerably by the master due to the numerous new techniques and tricks he created. There are many accounts about Sadigjan’s remarkable skills, such as these below by Meshedi Suleyman Mansurov (1872-1955), a tar player from Baku whose lineage forebears were close to Sadigjan:

Father used to say that he [Sadigjan] played with one hand. His fingers were covered with burnt candle remains and then placed into a wool scarf. The callus that formed as a result, made his playing sound as if the right hand’s plectrum was involved when it wasn’t (Mansurov, “Memories about father Meshedi Suleyman”, 650.1.32: 3).

Once Sadigjan and Lazar [famous tar player from Sadigjan’s time] were present in one məclis. After playing for a bit, Sadigjan suddenly took a knife and cut off the frets on his tar. He began to play without them. The audience was mesmerized (Mansurov and Dadashov 2005: 106).
Stories abound of virtuosos removing frets on the *tar* in order to impress. They are usually juxtaposed with descriptions of other acrobatic tricks such as playing while placing the *tar* behind one’s neck or playing using only one hand. Stunts of this sort were very popular as the *tar*’s profile as a solo instrument grew in pre-Soviet Azerbaijan. Thus, fretless *tars* were most likely manifestations of virtuosity rather than indications of particular attitudes to pitch order.

Sadigjan maintained a very strong link to the Absheron musicians. He first came to Baku in 1878 when he was invited by Meshedi Melik Mansurov (1845-1909), the head of the main Absheron “Mansurov” *tar* lineage. Sadigjan was also close to the son of Meshedi Melik Mansurov, Meshedi Suleyman Mansurov, who was a famous player of the next generation.

According to the primary sources belonging to this lineage (Mansurov, “Memories about father Meshedi Suleyman”, 650.1.32: 2), Meshedi Suleyman Mansurov first met Sadigjan in Tbilisi where he heard his playing and was very impressed. After returning to Baku, Meshedi Suleyman Mansurov told his father Meshedi Melik Mansurov about Sadigjan, praising him endlessly. Then Sadigjan came to give a concert in Baku. Both Meshedi Melik Mansurov and his son went to the concert and were both thrilled by the playing. After the concerts, Sadigjan always came to participate at the *mugham* *maclis* gatherings held by Meshedi Melik Mansurov (see below). Mahmud Aga, a wealthy patron of traditional music in the Shirvan region, also heard about Sadigjan and sent a golden carriage with Arabian horses to fetch him. Thus, Sadigjan cultivated connections to the main *mugham* regions in Azerbaijan at that time, and this certainly promoted his new instrument which soon spread all over the nation and became the standard version. As Chelebiyev notes:

The new Azerbaijani *tar* [Sadigjan’s version] spread in North [Caucasus] and South [Iranian] Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, and later in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan,
Turkmenistan, Dagestan, and Turkey. In all the named places, up until this day, musicians play precisely on the new Azerbaijani *tar*, meaning on the *tar* of Sadigjan. From the time of Sadigjan to current days, Azerbaijan is the country of the *tar*, similar to the opera tradition of Italy. The old *tar* is only used by Persian musicians (Chelebiyev 2009: 13).

While Chelebiyev stresses the geographical dissemination and popularity of the *tar*, he also refers to this as an instrument representative of Azerbaijan. As highlighted before, all the advancements of Sadigjan were aimed at creating a uniquely Azerbaijani *tar* in line with the nationalization that dominated this era. Certainly, many comments presented above by today’s musicians and scholars accentuate the fact that Sadigjan’s changes made the instrument more “Turkic” and separated it from the Iranian version that had been predominant in Azerbaijan before.

The main student of Sadigjan was Gurban Primov, and his other followers were Arsen Yaramishev, Balan Melikov, and Bahram Mansurov, the latter being an important representative of the Mansurov Absheron *tar* lineage in Soviet Azerbaijan. Gurban Primov’s role is crucial because he was also the main proponent of his teacher’s style, which was quite influential in the formation of the Absheron style. Gurban Primov went to *maclises* organized in Shusha and met Hajibeyov, who also attended them. The two became lifelong friends. Gurban Primov quickly became a renowned *tar* player in Shusha and was invited very often to homes and weddings of the wealthy. This is how he met the famous *xanəndo* from Shusha, Jabbar Garyagdioglu, and the two decided to form a permanent trio with *kamança* player Sasha Oganezashvili, moving to Baku in 1905. In Baku, Gurban Primov was one of the first to introduce the *tar* as a solo instrument, following in the footsteps of his teacher Sadigjan.
2.3 Shusha’s *xanəndə* traditions

Pre-Soviet Shusha was known for its rich *xanəndə* traditions, inspiring one of Russia’s most beloved poets Sergey Esenin (1895-1925) to famously proclaim: “If one is not singing, one is not from Shusha!” Esenin had an opportunity to stay in the Caucasus and enjoy the local hospitality and music. The city’s historical contribution to *mugham* lies not only in Sadigjan’s achievements, but also in the breakthroughs of *xanəndə* Jabbar Garyagdioglu as well as the religious training provided to young *xanəndə* performers.

In parallel with the development of *mugham* playing on the *tar*, *xanəndə* art evolved, thrust into the bustling current of nationalism. The soaring achievements in *tar* performance were met by advances in *mugham* singing. A unique modal system was established to be exhibited in the first performances on stages and to be recorded by many international companies seeking to capture the distinctly Azerbaijani *mugham*. As such, this time can be described as the peak of *mugham* art.

When it comes to the singing of poetry, one very significant change took place. *Xanəndə* Jabbar Garyagdioglu from Shusha was the first to perform *mugham* in Azerbaijani, rather than in Persian. He used *ghazal* poetry by Fuzuli and other poets who wrote in the vernacular. Singers have followed suit ever since. This tendency was urged further during the Soviet era when more and more *ghazal* poetry began to be written using Azerbaijani words while relying less heavily on the Arabic and Persian terminology. In other words, the systematization of the local language in terms of the *əruz* in *ghazal* poetry reached its final stage when very few Persian or Arabic words were required. Instead, Azerbaijani Turkic words were made to fit the long and short vowel configurations through such means as accentuation (see chapter 3).
It was at one of the first “Eastern” concerts in Shusha that Jabbar Garyagdioglu sang Azerbaijani *ghazals* of Fuzuli, Seyyid Azim Shirvani, and Khurshidbanu Natavan. Shushinsky writes: “The fact that Jabbar sang in our dear language facilitated the dissemination of *mugham* among the masses” (Shushinsky 1979: 57). In addition, Jabbar Garyagdioglu created new versions and parts of *mughams rast*, çahargah, segah, and mahur (Shushinsky 1979: 75). He was an amazing performer of mahur, and sang it later on in life with Bahram Mansurov, which could explain the incomparable richness of Mansurov’s mahur that exists even today. Jabbar Garyagdioglu left for Baku and formed his own trio there. This troupe became so successful that from 1900 to 1905 not a single wedding or gathering passed without its presence (Shushinsky 1979: 58).

The *xanəndə*’s accomplishments largely stemmed from his expertise in the poetical sphere of *mugham*. For example, in addition to Azerbaijani, Jabbar Garyagdioglu sang in Persian with superb diction. Moreover, he was always extra careful when choosing *ghazals* for particular *mughams* to achieve the required harmony between words and music. He was a master of *əruz* poetical metres and said: “A *xanəndə* who does not know *əruz* is not a *xanəndə*” (*əruzu bilməyəndən xanəndə olmaz*) (Yusif qizi 2008: 86). His mastery of the *əruz* system is what allowed him to begin singing Azerbaijani *ghazals* in *mugham* because he knew how to match the words to the music. Jabbar Garyagdioglu probably learned this skill in religious training schools located in Shusha.

One major factor that played into the enrichment of *xanəndə* art at this time was a particular context for teaching young *mugham* singers. These “schools” were designed specifically for *xanəndə* students and were separate from the *məclis* tradition. They were also closely tied to the Shia Muslim religion in Azerbaijan because the main purpose of the training
was preparation for performances in various rituals during the holy months of the Muslim calendar. Shusha was the pioneering city when it came to these establishments. Shushinsky writes:

The art of xanəndə reached its blossoming state in the second half of the nineteenth century. In Shusha, and then in Shemakhi and Baku, special music schools were opened. At that time, this tradition was most famous in Shusha. This was the result of the city’s geographical location and wide cultural and economic ties (Shushinsky 1979: 11).

The first schools for teaching xanəndə singers opened in the city in mid-nineteenth century. Master Kharrat Gulu (Karbalayi Gulu Yusifi, 1823-83) owned the first institution of this kind, and two other prominent schools opened shortly after: one headed by Kor Khalif and the other by Molla Ibrahim (Gasanova 2006: 20). The graduates lived to become some of the most renowned xanəndə: Haji Gusi, Abdulbagi Zulalov, and Jabbar Garyagdioglu. These were accomplished performers recognized for their mastery of texts and creativity. For example, they were able to sing ghazals in different languages and added many new sections to existing mughams, analogous to the formation of new mugham parts by tar players.

Haji Gusi learned religious singing in the school of Kharrat Gulu. Following this, he organized and oversaw many gatherings for mugham performers. Haji Gusi added new sections to rast, şur, and mahur, combined şəhnaz and kürdii into a new mugham kürd-şəhnaz, and created a new mugham called gatar (Shushinsky 1979: 25-8). When it comes to ghazals, the singer selected texts in Persian and Azerbaijani, usually performing works of Saadi, Hafiz, Khayyam, and Fuzuli. He became famous and was often requested at the məclisəs held by Mahmud Aga in Shirvan and by Meshedi Melik Mansurov in Baku. Jabbar Garyagdioglu was another student at Kharrat Gulu’s school; this explains why he demonstrated such command over
ghazal poetry and əruz. In addition to prioritizing pronunciation and proper əruz usage, religious singing demands profound understanding of texts linked to the Islamic sciences.

Religious rituals during the month of Muharram were centred on sacred texts that were sung in the dəstgah form. Suitably, mugham was at the core of the proceedings. A degree of simplicity in the singing was required in religious contexts because the music was meant to strengthen the experience instead of distracting the listeners. Therefore, this performance style differed from the one featured in public mugham concerts or musical məclises. However, familiar melodies of mugham and modulatory links between different şöbə were still used. Also, pronunciation and meaning were emphasized. This is why this kind of training was highly beneficial for a xanəndə. Performing year after year in religious events, students acquired skills and established a solid foundation for mugham art. As Farkhadova explains:

Substantial attention was directed at vocal preparation for şəbih performances. Not only did performers of these rituals need to have a strong voice but also they had to perfect their technique. This is why special schools led by professional and experienced musicians were opened in Baku, Shemakhi, and Shusha. It so happened that the best performers who graduated from these schools became professional singers (among these is Jabbar Garyagdioglu and Seyyid Shushinsky) (Farkhadova 1991: 18).

Intensified preparation for Muharram began three months in advance. Additional teachers from Iran who were usually dervish masters travelled to Shusha in order to instruct aspiring xanəndəs. There were also local religious figures who taught at the schools. As Bagirova explains, many dervish sects and brotherhoods existed in Azerbaijan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The local dervishes were educated in religious schools (mollaxana or mədərsə) where they became proficient in numerous languages (especially Arabic and Persian), mugham, and poetry, while many of them were poets themselves (Bagirova 2007: 159).
The art of mugham was thoroughly taught at these schools. For example, depiction of the young warrior Qasim ibn Hasan in the Karbala battle would begin in mugham bayati-şiraz, and the participants, one after another, sung a şöbə in a sequence (Shushinsky 1979: 14). As such, dəstgahs were performed in their entirety as part of these rituals. If singing şur dəstgah, the progression would be: şur, şur-şəhnaz, dügah, şikəsteyi-fars, hicaz, əraq or sarənc (Shushinsky 1979: 14). Shushinsky reports that the xanəndə would perform on their knees and often with eyes closed (Shushinsky 1979: 15). In addition to the sacred texts, ghazal poetry by Khagani, Nizami Ganjavi, Imadaddin Nasimi, Fuzuli, and Khurshidbanu Natavan was part of instruction at these xanəndə establishments.

One interesting question arises based on the perceptions that have formed among musicians and scholars regarding the Karabakh style of singing. Specifically, it seems that virtuosity and brilliant technique in the high register have been hallmarks of the style in this region. This association of the Karabakh xanəndə style with advanced virtuosity is still very common. For instance, one current music scholar explains:

The Karabakh performance school has been highly idiosyncratic. Here, the primary demands have been a voice that is beautiful, strong, and with a wide range, as well as the ability to sing freely both the low and high registers…. The mastery of Karabakh singers lay in the manner of performance, in the unmatched technique, and in the ability to make improvisation abundant in ornamentation, zəngulə, etc. (Gasanova 2006: 21).

However, singing in religious contexts is strictly devoid of any kind of dazzling display of complex technique. Aside from the xanəndə schools, there were also religious məclisəs in which the particular manner of mugham singing that is devoid of ornamentation was essential. Bagirova characterizes this manner of performing as such: “The primary demand made on renditions of mugham in ritual settings was strictness and relative simplicity of the melody. Rich
ornamentation, common in Azerbaijani music in general and in \textit{mugham} especially, here was gravely limited” (Bagirova 2007: 158). Thus, development of the Karabakh virtuosic style next to the widespread religious training and religious \textit{məclīses} is puzzling.

One reasonable hypothesis is the overriding role of the non-religious \textit{məclīs} tradition in which the \textit{xanəndə} style evolved together with the \textit{tar} technique and could not lag behind the advancements in virtuosity. Both elements of \textit{mugham} had to be in harmony. Therefore, when Sadigjan crafted the new \textit{tar}, precipitating the invention of new tricks and skills for performance, the singing had to evolve accordingly.

Based on the Karabakh case, preparation of \textit{xanəndə} performers in the religious \textit{məclīs} and in the religious schools did not entail an opposition to the virtuosic singing. On the contrary, \textit{mugham} art was refined in different, yet complementary ways. Participating in the \textit{məclīs} tradition, singers cultivated the link between music and poetry, and the clear conveyance of poetry using sophisticated technique. Studying singing for Muharram events contributed to honing skills related to modulation as well as the pronunciation of words and conveyance of meanings. As a result, the tradition of singing was greatly enriched and the horizons of creativity expanded.

2.4 Baku \textit{məclīs} tradition

The 1870s oil boom in Baku sparked industrial growth and brought in hordes of immigrants that eventually outnumbered the native Turks (Altstadt 1992: 28). For example, the local Azerbaijani population declined in the capital from 60\% in 1897 to 21\% in 1913 (Naroditskaya 2002: 92). Among the incomers, most were from Russia, Armenia, and Iran.
Society was divided along ethnic lines: Russians associated with Armenians, while Azerbaijanis stuck with Iranians. The highest positions in the administrative and legal structure belonged to Russians, Armenians were among the most wealthy merchants and oilmen, and Azerbaijanis owned most of the land and worked in industries other than oil (Altstadt 1992: 29-31). In addition, a burgeoning scene formed in Baku around the new European commercial elite. As a result, renowned European and Russian musicians were invited to give performances in Baku. Yet Azerbaijanis remained at the heart of cultural activity in Baku and attracted the most distinguished local writers, poets, and musicians from other cities, thus spearheading the cultural enlightenment. Although they clustered in Baku, they sought to speak for the whole nation and unite the native population with the ideologies they promulgated. As Alstadt explains:

The political and cultural Azerbaijani elite saw themselves as leaders of a community beyond Baku, encompassing Shemakhi, Kuba, Shusha, Nakhjivan, Ganje (even as they called it Elizavetpol), and countless villages. Their efforts to clarify the identity of that community, to forge it into a conscious and active body, and to lead it to greater political and economic power were a central focus of their lives (Altstadt 1992: 49).

One fruit of the elite’s efforts was the birth of the national composition school that was based on mugham modes merged with the European classical tradition (see Huseynova 2016). In this section, my focus is on the fate of mugham in Baku, specifically the development of tar and xanəndə art in the Absheron məclisəs.

On the cusp of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the tar was transformed and promoted into the spotlight, mugham singers began to incorporate ghazals in the vernacular language, and new sections were added to mugham. Consequently, mugham was becoming an important symbol for the new identity of the Azerbaijanis. However, the process of defining this identity was still caught in a flux, apparent in the expressions that were used for traditional music
in Baku: “Eastern orchestra”, “Eastern concert”, “Tatar amateurs”, “Muslim stage”, etc. On the one hand, these phrases reveal that while *mugham* was being made more unique to the Azerbaijanis, the consideration of the modal system as a shared heritage with other “Muslim” and “Eastern” regions persisted. On the other hand, as Naroditskaya rightly points out, these designations and the perceptions they manifested belonged to the intelligentsia (Naroditskaya 2002: 97). Perhaps, as the elites were keen to fulfil the goals of enlightenment, they identified traditional music as part of the “Eastern” and “Muslim” world to make it seem “backward” and in need of refinement and Westernization. They adopted these expressions from Russia’s orientalising tropes about the Caucasus, and consequently these became a justification for their agenda of enlightenment. Furthermore, usage of these terms was indicative of the international population in Baku comprised of Russians, Europeans, and Armenians for whom these words were tokens of the Azerbaijani identity.

Primary sources such as notes of musicians who took part in the private *məclis* gatherings in Baku or wealthy landowners who organized the sessions do not contain these expressions. Descriptions of their activities by their descendants today as well as the lists of *ğuşə* and *şəbə* that they left do suggest how they approached *mugham* and what their goals were. *Məclises* in Baku were similar to happenings in Shusha and Shirvan, with musicians and poets partaking in the common exploration and development of this art form. Like in Shusha, figures central to Baku *məclises* sought to fortify their networks with Iranian musicians. Indeed, these events were quite famous in Iran and many Iranians crossed the border north to Absheron in order to participate in Baku’s *məclises*. In addition, the main task seemed to be the cultivation of creativity through the link between *mugham* music and poetry.
Similar to Shusha, there were public concerts, xanəndə schools, and məclisəs in Baku and the Absheron suburban towns. Out of these three, it seems that the musical məclisəs were especially conspicuous and pivotal. Aga Salah (1800–48) was the figure in charge of the underground musical gatherings in Baku prior to his son Meshedi Melik Mansurov. These well-off landowners owned a very spacious house in the Old City of Baku near the Juma Mosque where the meetings took place. The məclisəs of Meshedi Melik Mansurov, unlike those that were being held before, were focused on mugham. Furthermore, they strengthened the networks among musicians from different regions in Azerbaijan and beyond. As a result, with these məclis that began in the 1880s, the mugham system was developed in an unprecedented manner.

The main representative of the Mansurov lineage today, acclaimed tar player Emin Mammadov, provided the following information about the Absheron tradition of mugham məclis (Emin Mammadov, interviews, 24 March 2015 and 27 July 2016).

In order to build up his məclis enterprise, Meshedi Melik Mansurov began to befriend all visiting musicians and host them at his house. He even made arrangements for his servants to guard main roads that led into and out of Absheron and watch for any people with instruments. These travellers were then invited to his abode to be enchanted by his unmatched hospitality, and ended up living there for some time. One such musician was the famous kamança player Mirza Sattar from Iran. There is evidence that Sattar was the first kamança musician in this region of Azerbaijan and he subsequently became the founder of the kamança tradition in the Absheron area. Soon Meshedi Melik Mansurov developed an extensive network of musicians and began to gather them for performances of mugham. As the news about his məclisəs spread throughout Azerbaijan, leading musicians and poets from Karabakh and Shirvan started to join these musical happenings on a regular basis. In the beginning, the məclisəs featured only performances of
mugham. With time, the sessions evolved to incorporate discussions about mugham and collaborative effort towards expansion and organization of the system.

The next stage was brought about when Meshedi Melik Mansurov changed how his məclisəs proceeded: soon they centred on certain themes. For instance, one məclis would be dedicated solely to şur dəstgah and the next one to segah dəstgah. In the pre-Soviet times, there were different versions for each dəstgah and no set sequence of şöbə (see the şur case study at the end of this chapter). Additionally, the dəstgah varied greatly in different lineages and regions. Therefore, even though one entire məclis would only be focussed on şur dəstgah, the participants would not get tired of the same mugham played over and over. Many masters today stress this point, thereby underscoring that the way mugham is currently performed lacks variety and creativity: in other words, if the same mugham were to be played numerous times, the audience would get tired of the repetitive melodic structure. The lists of şur dəstgah from pre-Soviet məclisəs certainly prove how limitless and open-ended performances used to be.

The məclis tradition continued to evolve as many new guşə were being invented at this time. After widening mugham, the task was to systematize it, according to Emin Mammadov. He clarified:

I’ll give you an example of how the system was growing because of the məclis gatherings. In the early twentieth century, a singer from Karabakh would visit us and sing 20 parts in mugham şur, both şöbə and guşə. After him, somebody from Baku would sing şur. The first one was for example 20 years older than the second. They sang different versions, and only maybe 2-3 parts were the same. Then after 20 years, the older one died while the məclis meetings continued. And then the younger singer came and sang those şöbə and guşə from the older guy as well as his own. He took all his parts and added them to his. Thus, he ended up singing şur dəstgah for the whole two hours! Then when the Soviet power came, schools were established and mugham was condensed for the curriculum. Before, however, these məclisəs would go on and on for days and even nights; time was not important. Learning at these was easier, everyone listened and nobody got tired (Emin Mammadov, interview, 26 February 2015).
Singers, instrumentalists, poets, dervishes, writers, and representatives of the intelligentsia comprised the attendees of the Absheron məclises. Young musicians were also invited to listen and learn. If a student was asked to play, the masters who were present would provide feedback. In cases of bad performances, the musicians would be thrown out. From notes belonging to the Mansurov lineage, we can read information such as:

At the məclises, masters of mugham with very deep knowledge would always be present. As such, if one guşə, one zəngulo [singer’s technical gesture in the high register], or one mugham was not sung or played correctly, these masters would tell the musicians: “stop the playing, this part is not correct. Sing and play all over again.” And they would start to play all over (Mansurov and Dadashov 2005: 80).

Surely, certain issues must have been contested based on differences in perspective among the many masters who were present. However, pronunciation, or modulation between mughams, for example, had strict requirements and problems related to them necessitated clarification and correction. Other than the məclis context, young mugham musicians had no opportunity to perfect their skills because masters did not give private lessons.

Because of the simultaneous presence of musicians and poets, these məclises came to be called “musico-poetical” (məcməş-şüəra). This characteristic was especially pronounced in the Absheron area. The principal goal during the meetings was precisely the achievement of harmony between mugham music and words. Rafig Imrani (2000: 14) provides information about a famous poet and xanəndo Aga Kerim Zeynal oglu (1849-1910) who was a relative of Meshedi Melik Mansurov. This individual also held məclises but these gatherings for poets although they soon merged with those of Meshedi Melik Mansurov. What was discussed in the collaborative məclis events included: historical issues about mugham music, the relationship between music and poetry, the rhythm of poetry and music, and the pronunciation of poetry.
written in əruz and other poetical metres. Imrani writes that in comparison to other məclises in Azerbaijan, those held in Baku by the Mansurov lineage were specifically centred on the art of choosing proper ghazals by the xanəndə. Above all, performers of mugham strived to attain accord between music and words. Therefore, they emphasized the imaginative, figurative, and structural correspondence between mugham poetry and music (Imrani 2000: 14).

Fostering the relationship between music and poetry, the məclis became the milieu par excellence for heightened creativity. Emin Mammadov described:

One instrumentalist was playing and one of the singers suddenly got inspiration and he then created a new boğaz [çülə or guşə of xanəndə] on the spot. And if it was liked, it was immediately named. During those times, people had superb memory. And this boğaz with its distinct name became immediately part of that mugham. And this is how our mughams became wider and wider, with more and more guşə. So the guşə were created at the məclises, but this happened spontaneously during performances when someone had an inspiration and it came from God. Something completely new was performed, and once it was named it became known by everybody as such. This is why all of the mughams here in Azerbaijan are Azerbaijani, although their roots are from Iran. Many of these mughams were created then at the məclises. Because of this, now 90% of the mugham content is Azerbaijani and 10% is Iranian, while in the beginning it was the reverse (Emin Mammadov, interview, 26 July 2016).

Accounts such as this one not only provide historical data but also inform the present-day situation and views. Creativity was compromised in the Soviet era (see chapter 3) and masters today lament these changes by referring to the glorious pre-Soviet past. Nevertheless, these detailed explanations are not simply fabricated; they do reflect true historical scenarios. Records of mugham structure provided at the end of the chapter confirm the significance of heightened creativity in the pre-Soviet məclises.
2.5 The tarzəns of pre-Soviet Baku

The first tar player in the Mansurov legacy was Meshedi Melik Mansurov. He also played on the kamança, saz, and garmon, and was an esteemed mugham knower. His son Meshedi Suleyman Mansurov wrote about his father:

Father Meshedi Melik was a known intellectual of his time. He was a landowner and a notable lover of music. As I opened my eyes each day, I would always hear the sounds of the tar, kamança, and xəndə singing. Everyone in Baku knew that each time music was heard, it was coming from the məclisəs at our house…. All the city’s poets, musicians, knowers, and landowners were guests at our house. They just called him Meshedi Melik. I learned so many things from these guests! As such, I became interested in this art from childhood (Mansurov and Dadashov 2005: 17).

One of the few people who could equal Meshedi Melik Mansurov’s musicianship and knowledge at that time was Sadigjan and the two were very close friends who always consulted with each other on matters regarding mugham (Mansurov, “Bahram Mansurov’s written notes”, 650.1.32: 5).

Meshedi Melik Mansurov had two sons who continued the Mansurov musical legacy: Meshedi Suleyman Mansurov and Mirza Mansur (1887-1967). Meshedi Suleyman Mansurov had very close ties to all the mugham performers of those days and therefore was pivotal in the musical scene: “Meshedi Suleyman remained in history as one mugham’s distinguished knowers. There was no artist, no musician at this time, who had not been a guest at his house” (Mansurov and Dadashov 2005: 9). After the death of Meshedi Melik Mansurov, the məclisəs continued under Meshedi Suleyman Mansurov. Among those present were mugham stars JabbarGaryagdioglu, Seyyid Shushinsky, Gurban Primov (Mansurov, Eldar 1995: 13). Composer Hajibeyov was also a frequent guest (Mansurov, Eldar 1995: 13).
Meshedi Suleyman Mansurov’s *tar* was exemplary of the late nineteenth century since it had 11 strings, 17 tones in an octave, and 22 frets along the neck (Abdullayeva 2000: 96). This was Sadigjan’s new version of the *tar* that by this time became the popular model in Azerbaijan. Indeed, Meshedi Suleyman Mansurov was a devoted friend of Sadigjan, just like his father.

There are memoirs of Meshedi Suleyman Mansurov, written by his son Bahram Mansurov (1911-85):

For the wedding of Shamsi Asadullayev’s son Mirza, Sadigjan and his trio were invited from Tbilisi to Baku. 500 gold units were offered. I [Suleyman Mansurov] was the best man at this wedding. They began to play *hümayun*. I was looking at the players and listening. I saw that everyone is playing but all the performers are in such unison that it all sounds like one. The *xanəndə* was also singing. Only when they were playing the cadence, it became clear that all three were performing. I could not stand it and began to cry. Shamsi Asadullayev approached and asked “Suleyman, why are you crying? This is a wedding!” I said “Uncle, you do not understand the way they are performing” And what did I do? I announced to everyone “one diamond ring, now.” I told the groom to bring his ring and give it to Sadigjan – there was never a player like this, and there never will be! (Mansurov, “Memories about father Meshedi Suleyman”, 650.1.36: 2-3).

There are reports that Meshedi Suleyman Mansurov’s playing at the time was a replica of Sadigjan’s. Once Meshedi Suleyman Mansurov was invited by a wealthy landowner in Shusha who asked him to play like Sadigjan because he wanted to reminisce and remember the master of Shusha. After Meshedi Suleyman Mansurov played *rast mugham*, the host kissed and thanked him, saying “Now I understand, Sadigjan did not die, he is alive!” (Mansurov, “Memories about father Meshedi Suleyman”, 650.1.36: 2).

Meshedi Melik Mansurov’s other son, Mansur Mansurov (known as Mirza Mansur), also continued as a dignified representative of the Mansurov lineage. His style was different, however, because he studied with another contemporary *tar* player Mirza Faraj who learned in Iran. Meshedi Suleyman Mansurov wrote about his brother: “Mansur at a young age played *rast*
and şur mugham on the tar very well. He took lessons from Mirza Faraj” (Mansurov and Dadashov 2005: 33).

The paramount contribution of Mansur Mansurov to the history of tar playing was in the sphere of education. To be more specific, he helped to devise the structure of the mugham repertoire for students once musical institutions were established at the outset of the Soviet rule. His playing technique, methodology, and modulation rules were adopted for the curriculum of young musicians at various institutions. Mansur Mansurov worked at the first musical school in Baku, established by Hajibeyov in 1922, as well as the main Conservatory and Asaf Zeynalli Music College.

Just like their father, the Mansurov brothers both helded to develop the məclis. Imrani explains:

If in the məclis of Meshedi Melik (from 1863 to 1909) the focus was on the rules and regularities of the whole dostgah form and the link between music and poetry, the meetings of Meshedi Suleyman (from 1909 to 1920) continued to evolve the foundations of instrumental playing established in the school of Meshedi Melik, systematizing them. Meshedi Suleyman’s məclis also stressed the musical interludes – təsnif, rəng, dirinqə.

Mirza Mansur, continuing the tradition of məclis (from 1920 to 1964), centred his activity on problems associated with the techniques of playing on traditional instruments. Advancing the methods of modulation, he developed the improvisational aspect of mugham performance. He had a great role in creation of methods for teaching tar playing (Imrani 2000: 32).

Another contemporary of Meshedi Melik Mansurov, Mirza Faraj (1847-1927) was also from the Old City of Baku. Like Sadigjan, he made significant changes related to the tar, but his innovations were mainly techniques appropriate to the new version of the instrument (Chelebiyev 2009: 13). He was a virtuoso and a knower. His granddaughter described him as such: “Grandfather was a lover of ghazal poetry. He recited ghazals in Azerbaijani and in
Persian with great inspiration” (Rzayeva-Baghirova 1986: 23). It is probable that this insight into the poetical aspect of **mugham** fuelled his creativity in terms of **tar** technique. There are recollections about him being unable to finish one **döstgah** in three hours because of the imaginative engagement he demonstrated with **mugham** through technique (Rzayeva-Baghirova 1986: 29). Because of his deep knowledge about **mugham** and his performance skills he was called “Mirza” (educated) (Mansurov and Dadashov 2005: 78). His granddaughter recounts: “He even played on the **tar** while laying in bed and stretching. I would watch his fingers carefully: lots of the time, his right hand was not playing at all, the plectrum was not moving, and he only played by moving around the frets with the left hand” (Rzayeva-Baghirova 1986: 13).

Mirza Faraj was a prominent figure in the networks of **mugham** musicians in Azerbaijan and in Iran. He was present at all the **məclis**es and major weddings that featured **mugham** performances. This master virtuoso attended events in the Absheron area, Shusha, as well as the **məclis**es of Mahmud Aga in Shirvan. In addition, his connection to Iran was very strong as he attended lots of **məclis**es there and studied with Ali Shirazi (Rzayeva-Baghirova 1986: 26).

Mirza Faraj left memoirs about **məclis**es that took place at his house. In these accounts, the ties between Baku and other towns in the Absheron area (such as Mashtaga and Nardaran) are evident. Visitors from Mashtaga and Nardaran who came to participate in the **məclis**es of Mirza Faraj are mentioned in this report:

The people of Mashtaga understand and love **mugham**, and they are proud of their **mugham** performers…. Hearing the sounds of music, Nardaran music lovers got on their horses and travelled to us with excitement. **Məclis**es grew and were very interesting. Everyone sought to show their talent and skill. Among those who visited, there were not only those who sang well but also poets who read **ghazals** well (Rzayeva-Baghirova 1986: 23).
The pivotal role of these suburban areas during the Sovietization of *mugham* is covered in the next two chapters.

Mirza Faraj was responsible for providing instruction to teachers at various Soviet music institutions. This again points to his overriding knowledge and skill. Among his students were Mansur Mansurov and Ahmad Bakikhanov (see next chapter), the latter of whom was his distant relative. Many *mugham* musicians came to visit this master to ask questions about *mugham*. Mansur Mansurov came especially often, and it is to this pupil that most secrets of Mirza Faraj had been passed (Rzayeva-Baghirova 1986: 36).

Lastly, his advice about playing *mugham* on different instruments sheds light on important issues in the history of *mugham* creativity that will be taken up in subsequent chapters. His granddaughter reports: “He did not approve of *mugham* played on the piano. He said that the subtleties of the music that move the heart can only be played on the *tar*. When he was asked in 1925-26 to notate his *mughams* to be played on the piano, he refused” (Rzayeva-Baghirova 1986: 45).

2.6 Şur dəstgah in Pre-Soviet Azerbaijan

Many of the hosts who established məclises in pre-Soviet Azerbaijan made directives to jot down parts of *dəstgahs* that were performed. These records, held at archives, reveal the fascinating complexity of the *dəstgah* genre at this time. Whereas in Soviet Azerbaijan, a rigid model for each *dəstgah* was imposed, and is still in effect today, the variety that existed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries seems boundless. This burgeoning creativity was partly caused by the changes in the *tar* form, *ghazals*, *mugham* sections, and performance
contexts. Moreover, the kind of relationship between mugham music and poetry that was at the forefront during this period also greatly contributed to creativity and variation in a dəstgah.

Şur dəstgah from Meshedi Melik Mansurov’s məclis in 1888 had the following sections, sung by Kableyi Agabala (left column) and Mirza Aga Karim (right column) (Mansurov, Eldar 1995: 11-2):

The lists above shows şur dəstgah at the time when Agabala was 28 and Mirza Aga Karim 45 years old. After a couple of decades, Agabala was invited to Mansurov’s gathering where he sang şur dəstgah incorporating parts of Mirza Aga Karim (these are underlined) (Mansurov, Eldar 1995: 11-2):
Figure 2.2 Şur dəstgah from Mansurov’s məclis in the 1920s

mayə
dəşəzəd
çıdai
gərəvili
gövrəri
güləzi
müərrəqə
muyə
busəlik
bayatı-türk
şərh-aşub
dügəh
ruhül-ərvah
zəmin-xara
şikəstəvi-fars
əşiran
səmayi-şəms
tızək
hicaz
şəh Xətai
məvəvrənəhr
mehdi-zərrəbi
gəbri
mənovi
sərənc
dügəh
ruhül-ərvah
nişibifərəz
hezare-Arak
hezare-Azərbaycan
müərrəqə
muyə
novruz-əcəm
əbuləçəp
bayət-şiraz
şəhri (Tehrani)
haç Yuni
rak-hindi
nişibifərəz
taxti-kavus
bazəm-şur
Here are two more versions of şur dəstgah from a 1925 Mansurov məclis (Musazade 2012: 71-2):

Figure 2.3 şur dəstgah from Mansurov’s məclis in 1925

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>şur</th>
<th>şur</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dəraməd</td>
<td>dəraməd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cūdai</td>
<td>zirkeş</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gərayili</td>
<td>səlmək</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>busəlik</td>
<td>gülriz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muyə</td>
<td>buzək</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>səlmək</td>
<td>dübəyt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seba-shams</td>
<td>Qəcar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hicaz</td>
<td>goruze-şur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mehdi-zərrabi</td>
<td>bayati-kürd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mənovi</td>
<td>bayati-türk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gəbri</td>
<td>ruhulu-ərvəh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>şah Xətai</td>
<td>zəmin-xara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dügah</td>
<td>hicaz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>məvarənnəhr</td>
<td>sarınc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baba Tahir</td>
<td>Əbu-Əta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sarınc</td>
<td>sixti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dəsti</td>
<td>gəbri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hacı Yuni</td>
<td>dəsti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pəhləvi</td>
<td>gəlayi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nəsibifəraz</td>
<td>kabuli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saqinamə</td>
<td>əfşari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hacı Yuni</td>
<td>hacı Yuni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bid yuni</td>
<td>qaraca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qaraca</td>
<td>sabuhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sabuhi</td>
<td>aşiq-gush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gatar</td>
<td>şəhr-aşub</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This is şur dəstgah of Mirza Faraj (Rzayeva-Baghirova 1986: 47):

Figure 2.4 Şur dəstgah by Mirza Faraj

\textit{mayə}
dəraməd
şur
muyə
busəlik
səlmək
zirkeş
gilriz
siyahruh
cūdai
şəhr-əşub
nişibi-fəraz
xocəta
şikəsteyi-fars
səmayi-şəms
hicaz-bağdədi
hicaz-ərəbi
raz-məcnuni
gəbri
govərəi
sərənc-əbu-əta
qəməngiz
mehdi-zərrəbi
şək-əəınaz
kūrd-əəınaz
şur-əəınaz
şahi-əəınaz
dılkəş
covərəi
şur

Many comparable lists are available to undertake a very thorough analysis of separate dəstgahs, but that is beyond the scope of this dissertation. It will suffice to summarize a few issues emerging from a preliminary comparison of these renditions of şur dəstgah in the Absheron gatherings. First, the most obvious observation is heterogeneity of the dəstgah
structure that can be explained by the sociohistorical context outlined in this chapter. Despite the palpable variability, there are many sections that reappear in the different performances of this dəstgah though they do not appear in a particular order. Their recurrence points to their centrality in şur dəstgah. Indeed, many of these sections have been retained and are part of the standardized şur dəstgah (see chapter 1 and 3): mayə, bayati-türk, şikəsteyi-fars, mübürriqə, aşiran, şəməyi-şəms, hicaz, sarənc, qəməngiz, and nişibi-fəraz. The standardized version formed in Soviet Azerbaijan and is still played today.

In addition, there are components that are repeated in different versions here but are missing from the institutionalized şur dəstgah of today: səlmək, zirkəsh, gülriş, cüdai, şəhr-aşub, gəbri, həcə Yuni, ruhül-ərvah, şəh Xətəi, gərayili, and others. My fieldwork shows that many of these have been retained by conservative musicians today (see chapters 3 and 4). Importantly, characteristics that they share – steady metre, complexity of technique, question-answer structure – reveal a close link to ghazal poetry, confirming earlier assertions that Absheron maclises focussed on the harmony between music and poetry. While showing me how to play cüdai, Emin Mammadov exclaimed: “Before, xanəndo would sing to the melody of cüdai! Now we only have these guşə in instrumental versions, and not in all lineages, only the more conservative ones” (Emin Mammadov, interview, 5 March 2015). Some of my teachers even identified exact metres of oruz corresponding with these guşə.

Pre-Soviet şur dəstgah also includes fragments that are part of today’s standardized system but are separate from şur dəstgah. For example, bayati-şiraz seen here in şur dəstgah is today a distinct full dəstgah cycle on its own. Muyə that also appears here is currently only part of zabul segah dəstgah. In mainstream practice these components are never incorporated into şur dəstgah. Their preponderance in pre-Soviet şur dəstgah is accounted for by the fact that the
*dəstgah* cycles were not predetermined and modulation between *mughams* was highly encouraged. The musicians had to be creative and string *mughams* together in the moment of performance using various modulatory links.

Lastly, what about those parts of *şur dəstgah* that appear only once among the many pre-Soviet versions and are not in practice today? The best hypothesis is that they originated due to the wide regional networks of musicians who attended the *məclises*. Imrani reports that some of these rare parts can be found in books about the history of Iranian music (Imrani 2000: 24). He argues, “The reason behind these additions lies in the participation of Iranian musicians in *məclises* who considered their inclusion into *şur* as musically logical and possible” (Imrani 2000: 26).

In the Karabakh region, the earliest lists of *mugham* are found in the writings of Mir Mohsun Navvab. In his work, there is no *şur dəstgah*, but there is *nəva dəstgah* that incorporates many sections of *şur*. *Mugham şur* is not found in music treatises from the Middle Ages and the first record of its existence in Azerbaijan is as *şur dəstgah* in the Absheron area in late nineteenth century. Based on musical evidence, many masters and scholars speculate that *şur* evolved from *nəva* or *hicaz* (e.g. Musazade 2012: 68). Both of these *mughams*, which have been documented in much earlier times, are part of *şur dəstgah* today. One of my *tar* teachers informed me: “this is *nəva*, before there was no *şur*. Before the nineteenth century there was no *şur*, but *nəva* was there. Then in the twentieth century, *şur* was advanced. *Şur* took *nəva*’s parts, as it is very close to it musically. It became *şur dəstgah*” (Eldar Miriyev, interview, 29 May 2015). For example, *bərdəşt* of *şur* is reported to have its own name “*əmiri-nəva*.” Indeed, the *bərdəşt* of *şur* and *nəva* is very similar, the only difference being in the cadence. It is possible that after *nəva* was purged by the Soviet authorities it only survived in *şur dəstgah*. 
Conclusions

The Azerbaijani elites joined forces striving to improve the status quo of the community they represented within the Russian empire. The gradual growth of local nationalism spilled into the activities and ambitions of native mugham musicians. For example, at the Karabakh and Absheron məclisəs, poets and singers worked together with master-instrumentalists to develop the mugham system. This collaboration unfolded within musicians’ broad networks between major cities in Azerbaijan and musical centres in the vicinity, such as Tehran and Tbilisi. Therefore, although mugham playing and singing were starting to be shaped as uniquely Azerbaijani practices, they continued to maintain ties to the modal musical traditions across geographical borders. To illustrate, despite the fact that xanəndə started to sing ghazals in Azerbaijani, Persian ghazals continued to be frequently performed in pre-Soviet times. Nationalism ripened in the early Soviet period only to encounter the newly imposed aesthetics of socialist realism. Correspondingly, at the peak of its momentum, the creativity of mugham had to be Sovietized. The consequent radical changes made to the activities and achievements of mugham musicians will be thoroughly investigated in the next chapter.
Chapter 3
National in Form, Socialist in Content: the Sovietization of Mugham Creativity

There is no real mugham without metre. Mugham is from God. But today, they think they are playing mugham, but it is an invention. The form of mugham remained, but the meaning was lost. As Hajibeyov said himself: national in form and socialist in content. This is how it was everywhere in the Soviet Union.

(mugham performer)

Following the dissolution of the Russian Empire, the independent Azerbaijan Democratic Republic only lasted 18 months, after which it was annexed by the Soviet Union and remained part of the USSR until 1991. Within three weeks of the Bolshevik takeover, the new Soviet regime turned its attention to the education and nationalization of cultural institutions (Alstadt 2016: 172). Accordingly, new rules for Azerbaijani traditional music began to be formulated immediately. Indeed, music served a very important role in the cultural policy of the new regime, moulding the ideal communist person. As stated by the Central Committee of the Communist Party in 1925 “In a socialist state, there is and can be no neutral art” (Altstadt 1992: 124). Throughout the 1920s and early 1930s – also known as the “years of organization” – debates and reforms with regards to art were endless. With emerging definitions of socialist realism and art that is “national in form, socialist in content”, the new aesthetics had been firmly implanted. Although power flowed from the Centre, located in Moscow, local musicians in Azerbaijan were successful in exerting their own influence and steering the processes from the inside. Still, compromise was inevitable and many facets of mugham had to succumb to the newly-imposed
directives from Russia: while the tar was tempered, mugham repertoire was Westernized and standardized. These modifications coincided too with secularization and language reforms that affected the textual parameters of mugham. As a result, processes of engagement with meanings, which lay at the core of mugham creativity, were radically altered.

3.1 Uzeyir Hajibeyov and the aesthetics of socialist realism

In order to understand the fate of music in Soviet Azerbaijan, a closer look at the views and activities of Hajibeyov is necessary. Hajibeyov was a pivotal figure in Azerbaijan’s music scene and this centrality was unwavering, representing an internal and leading force during the early Soviet transitional period. Socialist realist art that was “national in form and socialist in content” had to be created in all the republics; however, scholars must not lose sight of particular historical trajectories shaped by different individuals and events in each of them.

Andrei Alexandrovich Zhdanov (1896-1948) who oversaw cultural policy in the Soviet Union defined socialist realism for the first time in 1934. He declared that socialist realist art must depict “reality in its revolutionary development” (Schwarz 1983: 110). While becoming the official policy in 1934, this aesthetic started to frame art long before the onset of the Soviet reign. Socialist realism was based on the main tenets of socialism – the people, the everyday, the revolutionary zeal, and the glory of communism – preached by Lenin in the early 1900s, and inspired by the writings of revolutionary democrats such as Nikolay Chernishevsky in the nineteenth century. These ideas represented an uncompromising quest for realism sparked by the argument that what is beautiful is life in its natural manifestations. The depiction of reality in art
became the aesthetic adopted in Communist and Soviet philosophy, redefined as socialist realism or “art for the masses.” As James Bakst explains:

Socialist realism is a method, type, or form of figurative emotional thinking which corresponds to the objective aesthetic wealth of Soviet reality, to the practice of revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, and to the building of Socialism. Socialist realism is a means of true reflection of Soviet reality from the position of Socialist aesthetic ideals (Bakst 1966: 285).

The establishment of socialist realism was marked by the glorification of the nineteenth-century Russian repertoire or “Russkaya klassika” (Taruskin 1997: 95). For non-Russians, therefore, proletarian dictatorship signified Russification because the only way to raise the cultural level of the populations was to imitate Russian models. Richard Taruskin defined socialist realism, writing, “The recipe, to put it bluntly and oxymoronically, was heroic classicism” (Taruskin 1997: 517). The apotheoses for Soviet composers were masterpieces of The Mighty Five and Tchaikovsky as well as selected classical Western works, with special reverence paid to Beethoven. These compositions were referred to as “universal” music – the ideal exalted by the authorities. Taboo works were elitist products divorced from reality and labelled as cacophonies of sounds.

Stalin’s contribution to socialist realism was the famous motto: art that is “national in form and socialist in content.” The content had to be socialist realist, seving as the unifying element across all the republics. However, the form had to be national. The creation of distinct nationalities was crucial to the cultural policy from the early days of the Soviet Union when it was known as korenizatsiya (nativization, Rus.). Nationalism was instrumental in the “divide and rule” tactic: nationalities were created to divorce people from their roots and prevent unification that could be detrimental to the new regime. As the requirements for Soviet art were further
concretized, “national” in Azerbaijan was distanced from what national had been in the pre-Soviet context. As Altstadt asserts, the Bolsheviks did not support Azerbaijan’s national identity that was being founded by the local elites (Altstadt 2016: 36). The Bolshevik version of “national” in this case was a matter of surface and invention, imbued with socialist content. The main reason for this lay in the need to cut ties to the past and avoid the possibility of pan-Turkism or pan-Islamism in the face of the new rule.

National composition schools were the perfect vehicles for helping to create Soviet nationalities. Great efforts were invested into merging local musical traditions with “universal” classical music in order to compose new operas, ballets, symphonies, and the like. These compositions were played in the newly-built opera and ballet houses, conservatories, and symphony halls that mushroomed across the republics, portraying art that was national in form and socialist in content. The works were also displayed at the dekadas (ten-day festivals) of national art, introduced in 1936 in Moscow. These festivals exhibited the arts of the Soviet republics, demonstrating the success of the Communist policy towards nationalities. Also, visitors were evaluated by the Centre and offered the chance to make important connections, while the Centre in turn welcomed the opportunity to gain first-hand information about the cultural climate in the republics.

Hajibeyov was a graduate of the Gori Seminary, an institution that gave rise to the most distinguished cultural and political leaders in the early-twentieth century Caucasus. These individuals were fervent activitists, motivated by the ideas of democracy and revolution. Many of Hajibeyov’s stances were not far-removed from the principles of Soviet philosophy and surely found resonance with Soviet aesthetics. Writing about art of the masses, Hajibeyov underscored:
The two most evil enemies of art in the East – political slavery and religious fanatism – are destroyed in their roots with the blows of the great revolution… the outdated accepted and conservative attitudes towards art are replaced by the new progressive, revolutionary and elevated perceptions, giving broad opportunities for gigantic steps towards progress and revolution in art…. Do we, Azerbaijani Turks, need to spend time, energy and resources in order to learn the art of universal [obshchemuzykal’nomu] music? Yes we do, because by learning European music, we become familiar with that universal music that has been developing throughout many centuries, giving to the world numerous genius creators and compositions that not a single nation, that wants to be cultured, can remain unfamiliar with (Hajibeyov, quoted in Abasova and Kasimov 1970: 19).

While eager to revolutionize local musical traditions, Hajibeyov was equally keen to preserve elements of the past. Some scholars argue that composers in the republics simply imitated “Eastern themes” that characterized Russian classical music (Frolova-Walker 1998; Krebs 1970). For example, Stanley Krebs states, “Composers of Tadzhik, Kazakh, Uzbek, and Azerbaidzhanian descent now abound. Their music sounds like that of any Soviet composer using oriental modes in the manner of Rimsky-Korsakov and his disciples” (Krebs 1970: 28). However, it is my contention, similar to Naroditskaya (2002) and Aida Huseynova (2016), that features of mugham modes were retained and used as basis for the unique national composition school in Azerbaijan. In other words, Hajibeyov did undertake a careful examination of Azerbaijani music in order to establish the local composition school. His task was to reinterpret and modify mugham via Western notation and represent it as a tool for composers to write operas, symphonies, ballets, etc. Encouraging the investigation of native art, Hajibeyov wrote that Azerbaijani music must reach the heights of European music and contribute to the progress of the whole civilization.

In 1936, Hajibeyov was exalted by the Soviet authorities, including Stalin himself, for writing his opera Koroghlu. This work was hailed as the perfect example of “national in form, socialist in content” and a “true” synthesis of Azerbaijani and Western classical music.
Afterwards, in 1945 Hajibeyov finished his monumental work *The Basis of Azerbaijani Folk Music* where he outlined and theorized the main modes of Azerbaijani music. With these achievements, Hajibeyov proudly stated,

> Following the establishment of the Soviet rule in Azerbaijan, our people found their own independent path on which to move quickly towards progress. The art of Azerbaijan today stands much higher than the art of Arabs and Turks, who live beyond the USSR. Moreover, our art is gradually getting rid of the foreign influence – more precisely the influence of so-called Eastern music (Hajibeyov 1966: 85).

The reinterpretation of *mugham* carried out by Hajibeyov meant that Azerbaijani compositions were still based on traditional music but were purged of their “Eastern” quality. Hajibeyov thus wanted to emphasize that this was truly national music elevated to the level of European classical music, and not an imitation of “Eastern” themes in a manner of self-exoticization.

What about *mugham*, apart from the composition school? Local music also had to abide by the plan and become national in form, socialist in content. Many obstacles faced *mugham* that had to be brought closer to folk music, Westernized, and standardized in order to become properly “national.” At the same time, the expression of *mugham* had to be socialist realist, portraying heroics, realism, and life-affirming optimism. This was a complicated task for art rooted in Islamic aesthetics with philosophical content about separation from the Divine Beloved. As a consequence, language reforms and secularization were crucial for the necessary changes. Also, the way *mugham* was newly represented for the composition school also greatly influenced *mugham* as it was traditionally practised, taught, and performed, ultimately aligning it with the desired agenda.

Hajibeyov’s role in the fate of *mugham* was paramount. Already in the early 1900s he made attempts to bring *mugham* closer to Western music with his opera *Leyli and Majnun*. He
attended məclisəs and learned from famous tarzənəs and xanəndə. However, his goals for 
mugham were very different from those who organized or performed at the məclis gatherings 
(see chapter 2). Nevertheless, as Huseynova affirms, “Mugham remained the main source of 
inpiration for Hajibeyli throughout his life, and he proceeded from the use of mugham ‘as is’ in 
his early works toward its application through the various means of composed music in his later 
one” (Huseynova 2016: 66). What he did was “he suggested new interpretations of the 
fundamental principles of traditional Azerbaijani music” (Huseynova 2016: 68). As will be 
shown in this chapter, Hajibeyov took the middle path: he certainly based his theorizations on 
actual mugham rules, following treatises of experts such as Mir Mohsun Navvab, but he also 
adjusted mugham to fit the Eurocentric system he constructed. Although his reinterpretation of 
mugham mainly served the composition school, it also had a strong impact on the traditional 
performance of mugham. I agree with Huseynova and Naroditskaya that his goals were his own 
and they happened to correspond with the Soviet agenda. However, the more important question 
in the present work is precisely how mugham was altered and how this affected creativity. 

Lastly, it is crucial to emphasize Hajibeyov’s accomplishment in saving mugham through 
the changes he imposed. The new political climate meant that traditional music had to change, 
and many individuals in the 1920s and the 1930s tried to completely get rid of mugham and tar 
because of their links to Persian culture. Therefore, Hajibeyov’s transformations ensured 
continuation of the music and instruments in Soviet Azerbaijan. The salvaging of mugham that 
Hajibeyov and other mugham performers attained was highly significant, especially considering 
the role of musicians from Russia who would arguably have done more harm had they been in 
total control.
3.2 Institutionalization of *mugham*

Despite the initiative of native musicians, the Centre remained in control and exerted its guidance. Composers from Russia, trained in the classical nineteenth-century style, travelled to the republics on a mission to civilize the “backward” populations. The genre most suitable for this task was opera, considered especially potent even by Stalin himself. Just as with Sergey Vasilenko in Uzbekistan and Yevgeny Brusilovsky in Kazakhstan, Reinhold Glière was on duty in Azerbaijan, establishing the operatic tradition that was national in form and socialist in content. Certainly, the Soviets may be compared to rescuers of the inferiorized Orient (Said 1978). As proclaimed by Stalin, “the national question in the Caucasus can be resolved only by persuading the primitive, uncultured nations and peoples into the flow of the highest culture” (Vinogradov 1938: 7). However, there were important differences in each republic of the Soviet enterprise. The activism and agency of individual local musicians cannot be underestimated in scholarship that aims towards an unbiased and truthful representation of particular historical circumstances.

The Soviet regime demanded a centralized system: all musical activity in Azerbaijan was overseen in Baku, and all musical activity in the USSR was controlled by Moscow – the ultimate apex of power. Accordingly, in Soviet Azerbaijan, the musical centre of gravity shifted to Baku, which became a home to the most renowned musical figures. Much was accomplished in the very first years of the Soviet rule, and it all began in Baku: the organization of special folk-proletariat art; nationalization of theatres, musical institutions, and all repositories with historical sources; organization of a single state symphonic orchestra; establishment of the conservatory in 1921 and the Azerbaijan State Theatre of Opera and Ballet in 1925. All these institutions related to music became properties controlled by the government. Because education was one of the
main domains for the exertion of Russia’s power, the fate of *mugham* within the walls of the conservatory is of notable interest in the present study.

The conservatory in Azerbaijan was modelled on the Russian system of education, and Russian art was placed on a pedestal. As Boris Schwarz notes, “A certain degree of Russification was unavoidable, particularly since all conservatories in the Soviet Union had to follow a unified curriculum” (Schwarz 1983: 133). At first, there were five divisions at the conservatory: piano, vocal, orchestra, theory-composition, and “Eastern” music (Abasova et al. 1972: 29). The “Eastern” division was managed by Hajibeyov who taught notation for *tar* and who invited notable *mugham* performers to provide instruction. Research reveals that things were rather complicated with the teaching of “Eastern” music: while it was not difficult to implement the Russian curriculum for Western classical music, traditional modal music had no corresponding model. Moreover, the conservatory was an utterly new and completely different environment for *mugham* lessons. Attracting the native population to study *mugham* was an additional challenge, and Hajibeyov put a lot of effort addressing these issues. For instance, he called on Azerbaijani to undertake official music education and produce their own creative geniuses on a par with Bach and Beethoven. He also criticized the oral tradition of *mugham*, arguing that it resulted in performers who did not have a grasp of the theory behind their art. More specifically, according to Hajibeyov, such performers cannot explain the difference between two modes because they learn by rote from their teachers (Safarova 1973: 48). He found fault in some of the best *mugham* musicians who refused to teach at the conservatory and instead continued to perform at weddings; a context that was perceived by Hajibeyov to be inferior. Paradoxically, in addition to classes on theory and notation for traditional instruments, *mugham* continued to be taught orally...
even at the conservatory. Still, these lessons often fell victim to much suspicion, supervision, and constant reforms.

A proposal to create an independent institution out of the “Eastern” division was launched in 1922 as a corrective to complications with the enrolment of native students. As a result, the Turkic Music College was established with a specific focus on “Eastern” music. Western theory and instruments were still taught there – since they were mandatory for any music school at the time – but these were not given priority. Because of Western classical music’s marginality in this curriculum, a degree from the Turkic Music College was considered lower than one from the Conservatory, thereby reinforcing the hierarchy of Western and Eastern musical traditions. Mansur Mansurov taught mugham on the tar at the Turkic Music College, while Hajibeyov taught tar with notation – a system he devised himself (Abasova et al. 1972: 33). Although kamança and xanəndo classes were available, most students specialized in the tar. Furthermore, music history, theory of Eastern music, and theory of Eastern poetry were also added soon after the college opened. As a result, many Azerbaijani students registered at the new establishment while, at the same time their numbers decreased at the Conservatory. This is why the two institutions were merged once again in 1926, and more reforms followed due to persistent uncertainties arising at the Faculty of “Eastern” Music.

In the 1930s, further upheaval in “Eastern” music education emerged. The Department of Eastern Music within the Conservatory was dismantled in 1933 due to demands for higher professionalism. Teaching of the tar and kamança continued on par with other European instruments, based solely on the notated system, as was dictated officially. However, notwithstanding these official statements, native instruments were still taught as before, and mugham continued to be played impromptu (Huseynova 2016: 72). Also, the standardization of
the *mugham* repertoire was enacted at this time and entirely-notated instruction books for traditional instruments were published (e.g. *School for Tar* by Seid Rustamov from 1935, still used today). Thus, towards the end of the 1930s, Hajibeyov’s aims for the progress of national music were finally actualized.

During World War II, Hajibeyov established the “Azerbaijani Division” at the conservatory for aspiring musicians from rural areas dispersed throughout Azerbaijan. The accepted students were talented but did not have enough knowledge of Western classical music theory to progress to the conservatory. At the “Azerbaijani Division”, Ahmad Bakikhanov and Mansur Mansurov taught *tar* and *mugham* (Abasova et al. 1972: 91). In 1948, the division was closed since its role was taken by music middle schools. This system continues to this day as there are music middle schools and institutions such as the Conservatory and Asaf Zeynalli Music College centred on the instruction of traditional music.

The rich local traditions of *mugham* *məclises* and schools of *xanəndə* came to a halt in Soviet Azerbaijan due to the obligatory institutionalization and nationalization of all musical activity. The connections to religion and to Iranian musicians that these traditions cultivated became taboo. Moreover, all the property that belonged to wealthy landowners such as the Mansurovs was confiscated by the newly established government. Musicians I interviewed today recall that their lineage predecessors maintained underground *məclises* until the Soviet surveillance authorities discovered and banned them. Only in suburban regions such as Nardaran and Mashtaga did *mugham* continue to be performed free from Soviet intervention (see below).
3.3 The battle for mugham and tar

Oxu, tar, oxu tar!
Sing tar, sing tar!
Səsindan on latif şər dinləyim.
I shall hear the most beautiful poem in your voice.
Oxu tar, bir qadar!
Sing tar, a bit more!
Nəğməni su kimi alişan ruhuma çiləyim
I shall pour your songs as water onto my burning soul
Oxu, tar!
Sing tar!
Səni kim unutar!
Who could possibly forget you!
Ey geniş kütlənin acısı, şərbəti,
You are the people’s sorrow and happiness,
Alovlu sənəti!
The ardent art!

Mikayil Mushfig (1908-38) was executed by the Soviet authorities during the bloody repression when countless intellectuals, artists, and cultural leaders were slaughtered. In his poem “Oxu Tar” (Sing Tar) he defended the tar while another poet Suleyman Rustam (1906-89) wrote about the need to purge the instrument:

Kəs səsəni, oṭmə dedim, oṭmə dedim,
Fall silent, do not sing, do not sing, I said,
Ōtma tar.
Do not sing, tar.
İstəməyir proletar, sənda çalışan Qatar
The proletariat does not want gətar performed by you
Sən bijimə oṭməzsin, bəlli bizim deyilsən,
You cannot sing with us, how obvious that you do not belong to us,
Səndən uzaq yeni həyat,
You are distant from new life,
Səndən uzaq inqilab.
And you are distant from the revolution.

Yəni çəşqən nəğmələrə sən etməzən əsla tab
You cannot handle the new songs of joy
Bir zövq almaz bu cəmiyyət ölğün, ağlar səsindən.
The song of socialism can never be performed on the tar
Sosializm tərənəsi əsla tarda çalınmaz.
The politics of our factories cannot be produced on the tar.
Tarda vermək olmaş bizim zavodların səsini.
The miserable tar cannot understand this country’s harmony...
Qəvrəyəməz bu əlkənin ahəngini dərdli tar...
The day it dies, let’s sing a new song
Tarla bizim inqilablar ola bilməz haməvaz...
If the tar is not silenced
Təzə nəğmə oxuyləm onun öldüyü günde
The tar cannot partake in our revolutions...
Əñər tar lal olmassa
Dəyişərəm adımı...

– 119 –
The process of defining what is permissibly “national” according to the Soviet standards cost thousands of lives across the USSR. The 1920s witnessed a hunt for the bourgeois nationalists as many individuals were arrested and killed. This horror culminated in the 1930s “Great Terror” when numerous prerevolutionary writers and artists were liquidated along with their work, threatening to erase historical memory (Altstadt 1992: 131-2). Mugham – an important national treasure of Azerbaijani culture – was implicated in ties to the past that the Soviet regime needed to eradicate or represent in a different light. While most Azerbaijani musicians’ lives were spared, they ended up embroiled in hurdles of reforms and battles that would decide the destiny of mugham.

Overall, there were three tendencies as part of the debate over traditional music. One group argued that Azerbaijani traditional music cannot and should not be merged with Western music. This view opposed both the official directives from the Centre and the development of Azerbaijani music already started by Hajibeyov and his followers. Another frame of reference, led by Hajibeyov, promoted a “true” synthesis of the old Azerbaijani elements with the new Western musical language. The third position was taken up by individuals who were mostly non-musicians. They asserted that mugham and the tar must be removed entirely because they could not be fused with Western music and were too closely associated with the musical traditions of neighbouring non-Soviet countries.

For example, RAPM (Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians) and Proletkult (a contraction of Proletarian Culture), two organizations based in Russia but with adherents in the republics, fought to get rid of all pre-revolutionary forms of musical art. Their members felt that music remained unaffected by the revolution and they condemned the apolitical reserve of the
musical environment and the absence of a class approach. Azerbaijani individuals linked to these associations declared war on cultural treasures of the past, such as mugham and the tar. This extremist trend began in the early 1920s with the activities of Mustafa Guliyev, the Commissar of Enlightenment (i.e., Minister of Education). He denounced Hajibeyov’s efforts, promulgating his views about the failure of mugham opera in the press. Marina Frolova-Walker covers this dramatic turn of events, writing that this initiative from Guliyev:

…was supported by numerous collective letters from the ranks of the proletariat. The workers of the oil industry and the railways suddenly developed a vigourous appetite for “real opera”: “We need new Azerbaijani operas,” they wrote, along with such slogans as “Cultured modern opera or nothing,” and even “Ban the old mugam opera” and “Turk opera must go, along with the Arabic alphabet and the yashmak (veil)!” (Frolova-Walker 1998: 340).

Guliyev defended a drastic break from Persian musical traditions, calling for extreme Westernization of Azerbaijani music analogous to what happened in nineteenth-century Russia. Some countered his claims, bringing to attention the incompatibility of the two tuning system. He replied that Russian folk music was also incompatible with Western temperament but composers such as Glinka were able to create the needed musical rapprochement (Frolova-Walker 1998: 341).

With the onset of revived nationalism in the mid 1930s, triggered by Stalin’s command for art national in form and socialist in content, the national component was firmly back in the equation. However, national had to be manifested only on the surface, otherwise, national form and content would be treated as “bourgeois nationalistic art.” In fact, even the national form was planned to be temporary as the end result was a single international Soviet socialist culture. At this time, Hajibeyov’s Koroghlu and the development of mugham theorization came to the rescue.
as proper examples of “national” artistic expression. The debates and reforms slowly died out, replaced by a determined course for Azerbaijani traditional music.

Emin Mammadov, the current representative of the Mansurov lineage, summarized the turbulent years of Soviet intervention:

The time when Bolsheviks came to power, there was a desire to destroy Azerbaijani culture. This was after the 1920s…. During those days, all the local wealthy people such as ağalar, bəylər were in danger. The Soviet power was keeping them under great pressure and there were orders from Russia to extinguish all of our national treasures. For example, there was no opportunity to wear aristocratic attire, only simple suits could be worn. All the aristocracy was destroyed and disdained. Also our məclisəs were prohibited. The authorities killed so many of our prominent cultural figures. If there were gatherings, it was thought that these were conspiracy meetings against the Soviet power. Everything had to be socialist, Russian, Soviet. Uzeyir Hajibeyov was well respected by Stalin, and all the musicians were protected because of that…. Thankfully, the repression lasted only several years. This was a short period. I remember I played Gurban Primov in the movie about Mikayıl Mushfig. There was a scene in which we discussed the period of time when the tar was in danger. The fact that Hajibeyov was in favour with Stalin helped us a lot. And this is why Koroghlu and the tar were allowed. Stalin loved this opera when he saw it! (Emin Mammadov, interview, 27 March 2015)

Composed works such as Koroghlu clearly reflected the agenda for art that is national in form and socialist in content. What about mugham with its links to the Persian, Arabic, and Islamic worlds? Both the playing and the singing had to undergo many changes in order for mugham to be aligned with the agenda and become permissible.

3.4 Sovietizing mugham repertoire: standardization, Westernization, temperament

Native Azerbaijani musicians manoeuvered the Sovietization of mugham based on orders from Russia. While making the necessary changes, they were also the ultimate saviors of this art form. Many of them simultaneously admired the Soviet vision for art and realized what kind of sacrifices awaited the mugham system. Thus, they chose a middle course: altering mugham,
while preserving many of its elements underground. This resolution deserves much recognition and is largely responsible for the knowledge retained to this day in post-Soviet Azerbaijan. As one master explained to me:

People who opposed the *tar* were the people in power. These were the Russians and the Armenians. But Hajibeyov, Gurban Primov, Bahram Mansurov and others were all protecting our music. The only thing is that they had to cut off so much! Especially that was the work of Bakikhanov! That was what he had to do since our *mughams* became so wide but the Soviet curriculum was limited…. However, the *məclises* continued secretly. They used to gather privately. It happened even in a store, they would gather and listen – the store would be closed and they would all sit together and listen. Knowers of *mugham* would also be present. But eventually they did get caught and these gatherings had to stop. But even then, *tar* players passed on unofficial versions of *mugham* and made recordings of them (Emin Mammadov, interview, 24 March 2015).

Ahmad Bakikhanov, mentioned in the description above, was indeed one *tar* player who designed the official *mugham* repertoire for institutions in the 1930s (Zohrabov 1991: 188). Some parts had to be truncated and others were re-named. However, there are rare recorings of Bakikhanov himself performing far more complex versions of *mugham*. Furthermore, his students who are still alive today have retained the unofficial forms of *mugham*. Regardless of the changes that Bakikhanov imposed, he continued to pass on alternate versions of *mugham* underground. Other lineage representatives such as Bahram Mansurov did the same. In fact, these examples prove that throughout the Soviet era there were two perpetuated styles of *mugham*: mainstream and subversive.

How did Azerbaijani musicians, especially those from higher classes of wealthy aristocrats, escape the massacre of cultural figures? For instance, Altstadt (2016) puzzles over the fate of Hajibeyov, who not only survived but enjoyed a prosperous career while his brother was in exile, active in Europe’s anti-Soviet groups. A common tale is that *Koroghlu* saved him.
The *tar* performers were protected by the connections they had to Hajibeyov and other Azerbaijani political figures. Musicians report:

The authorities wanted to shoot Hajibeyov. But he suddenly wrote *Koroghlu*, and when Stalin saw it he ordered to make him a party member. The Mansurovs just played the *tar*. Those in power did want to destroy the Mansurovs, however their connections helped (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 8 March 2015).

The Soviets came in the 1920s and took everything away. They left Bahram Mansurov outside, kicking him out of his own house. It was Nariman Narimanov [Bolshevik revolutionary, 1870-1925] who saved them. He had power and argued that these were musicians who had nothing to do with politics, and therefore the Mansurovs were saved. Otherwise, they would have all been killed (Emin Mammadov, interview, 19 February 2015).

Below, the contributions of Hajibeyov, Ahmad Bakikhanov, Bahram Mansurov, and Haji Mammadov shed light on three related processes that affected *mugham*: (a) *mugham* repertoire was condensed and systematized into a single version; (b) this form was based on elements of Western music; and (c) the *tar* was tempered.

3.4.1 Standardization

With the opening of the conservatory, the institutionalization of *mugham* necessitated the creation of a single curriculum. This model was also required to serve as a tool for the new composition school and was a way to impose a Eurocentric order on traditional music. One musician commented:

In Soviet Azerbaijan, the time for learning at the conservatory was restricted. How do you teach *mugham* in 45 minutes? By that time, we had such an expansive system of *mugham*! It did not fit with the new institutions. What to do? Let’s cut this and that, get rid of this and shorten that. Or let’s take this *mugham* and put it into this one as a shortened version. Let’s unite *mughams* based on one mode, systematize them. And what are we left with…? (Emin Mammadov, interview, 26 February 2015)
With much research and painstaking reworking of the entire modal system, Hajibeyov achieved a coherent organization of mugham modes, presented in detail in his book *The Basis of Azerbaijani Folk Music* (1945). Although his work was mainly designed for the composition school, it also pervaded the sphere of education for mugham performers. The incorporation of his model into the performers’ training reflected Hajibeyov’s desire to instil a theoretical understanding of mugham even among performing musicians.

Chelebiyev brilliantly traces the development of Hajibeyov’s theorizations of the Azerbaijani modes. Hajibeyov’s ideas, coupled with the evolution of the mugham curriculum for performers, reveal how the fluid and ungraspable mugham system gradually became fixed and homogenized. Two intertwined processes unfolded in parallel: the modes were theoretically organized by Hajibeyov and mugham performance of dəstgah was standardized. Importantly, Hajibeyov was trying to develop the modes, but he did this based on the genre of mugham dəstgah. The scholar adhered to “modes” (*lad*, Rus.) and “Azerbaijani folk music” (*Azerbaydzhanskaya narodnaya muzyka*, Rus.) since the latter themes were much safer and more popular with Soviet researchers. Indeed, the concept of mode made its way to indigenous Azerbaijani music theory through ideas of Russian music scholars in the early Soviet era. Prior to this, “mode” was absent in pre-Soviet documents: remnants of məclises are lists that include parts of dəstgahs. Below, the progress of Hajibeyov’s ideas about modes will be followed by the evolution of şur mugham in the curriculum for performers. A comparison of the two trajectories will shed light on the standardization of mugham in Soviet Azerbaijan.

In an almanac from 1919 called “Istiglal”, Hajibeyov published a short article called “About the music of Azerbaijani Turks.” This essay is nowhere mentioned in his later works.
because the almanac was dedicated to the one-year anniversary of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic. If discovered, Hajibeyov would have been accused of the wrong kind of nationalism and would have suffered the consequences. In this concealed article, Hajibeyov delineated the modal basis of Azerbaijani music for the first time. He listed the following modes which he called *lad* (mode, Rus.) and *gamma* (scale, Rus.): *rast, segah, çahargah*. He added other modes, grouping them together based on shared modal properties: (a) *şur, hicaz, bayati-kürd*; (b) *bayati-şiraz* and *müxalif*; and (c) *şiştər* and *hümayun*. He concluded by writing: “The deduction of scales [gamma, Rus.] that form the basis of our music would lead to the great development of our music” (Hajibeyov, quoted in Chelebiyev 2009: 123).

In another publication from 1929, Hajibeyov professed that there are nine independent modes on which all Azerbaijani music is based: *rast, şur, segah, çahargah, şüştər, zabul, şəhnaz, bayati-şiraz*, and *hümayun*. Ten years later, his observations changed yet again. He now argued that there are eight main modes – *rast, şur, segah, çahargah, şüştər, hümayun, zabul, bayati-isfahan* – and a few others that are secondary (Chelebiyev 2009: 120). Summarizing Hajibeyov’s theories, Chelebiyev reiterates that they were primarily about modes instead of *mughams* (Chelebiyev 2009: 122).

Hajibeyov’s final scheme in *Foundations* was comprised of seven primary modes distinguished by tetrachord intervals and ways in which the constituent tetrachords were connected to each other. *Rast, şur, segah, şüştər, çahargah, bayati-şiraz* and *hümayun* are the main Azerbaijani modes (Hajibeyov 1945: 9). For example, *şur* mode is based on three conjunct 1–½–1 (tone-semitone-tone) tetrachords, represented by Hajibeyov thus:
After providing the tetrachordal constitution of each mode, Hajibeyov instructed how to “compose melodies in the modes.” These melodies are created in consecutive “sections” of a mode, which Hajibeyov also referred to as the mode’s “şöbəs.” For example, below is the entire “composition based on şur mode” (Hajibeyov 1945: 60-61):

Figure 3.2 Hajibeyov’s “composition based on şur mode” (see following two pages…)


\textbf{maye}

Allegretto

Май-Шур

\textbf{zəmin-xara}

Эмин-Хара

\textbf{șur-șəhnaz}

Шур-Шахназ

\textbf{hicaz}

Хичаж
According to Hajibeyov, the “sections” or şöbə of şur mode are:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{mayə} \\
\text{zəmin-xara} \\
\text{şur-şəhnaz} \\
\text{hicaz} \\
\text{bayatı-kürd} \\
\text{səmayi-şəms} \\
\text{nişibi-fəraz}
\end{align*}
\]

As is evident, the main aim of Foundations was to theorize the modes in order to show how composers can create works based on them. The “composition based on şur mode” and şur mode are undeniably linked to şur mugham dəstgah and its şöbəs. However, this relationship between mode and mugham was not clarified, and perhaps deliberately avoided, by Hajibeyov in Foundations.

The systematization of modes for composition progressed in tandem with the evolution of performance of şur mugham dəstgah. To begin with, below is the structure of a dəstgah from pre-Soviet times for comparison.

1888 şur mugham dəstgah at Meshedi Melik Mansurov’s məclis (Mansurov, Eldar 1995: 11-2)

Figure 3.3 Şur mugham dəstgah at Mansurov’s məclis in 1888

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{şur} \\
\text{dəraməd} \\
\text{bayatı-türk} \\
\text{səmayi-şəms} \\
\text{şəhnaz} \\
\text{bayatı-kürd} \\
\text{hezare-Əraq} \\
\text{hezare-Azərbaycan} \\
\text{mübərrəqə} \\
\text{novruz-əcəm} \\
\text{əşiran} \\
\text{əbulçəp} \\
\text{bayatı-şərzəb}
\end{align*}
\]
Next is Şur mugham dəstgah as determined by Hajibeyov and his committee of performers (Jabbar Garyagdioglu, Gurban Primov, Mansur Mansurov, Shirin Akhundov) in 1925. This version was created for institutions where mugham was taught (Musazade 2012: 73):

Figure 3.4 Şur mugham dəstgah as determined by Hajibeyov and his committee of performers in 1925

dəraməd
məyə
bayatı-türk
şikəsteyi-fars
nişibi-fəraz
səməyə-şəms
hicaz
sarənc
qəməngiz
şəhnazi-şagg
şəhnazi-kürd
diləş ilə səlmək
busəlik
şur

In 1937, Mirza Mansur devised Şur mugham dəstgah for the curriculum, as advised by Hajibeyov (Musazade 2012: 74):

Figure 3.5 Şur dəstgah as devised by Mirza Mansur for the curriculum in 1937

cüdəi
gərayiili
hüseyni
Finally, şur mugham dəstgah as taught at the National Conservatory to this day is as follows (Musazade 2012: 77):

This final version of şur mugham dəstgah is the standard mainstream form performed by most musicians today. If we compare it with the first attempt to systematize şur in 1925 or with the dəstgah list from 1888 we see a striking disparity between pre-Soviet and Soviet creativity. The standardization of mugham performance took many years and was not a straightforward
process. The most important milestone that helped with this goal was Hajibeyov’s theories in *Foundations*. The affinity between şur mode for composers and şur dostgah for performers is more than evident. More examples below testify to this point.

Figure 3.7 Hajibeyov’s şur mode transposed to mayə on G

The reason why Hajibeyov’s version is presented with the mayə on D is because it is second in sequence after rast mode (whose mayə is on C). The diagram above features a transposition of the mode to G in order to compare it with mugham as performed. The chart below summarizes the principal sections in Hajibeyov’s şur mode and in the official form of şur mugham dostgah. The notes used in each part are listed, and the main tone is underlined. Both similarities and differences are noticeable and will be used below to draw conclusions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composed (transposed to mayə on G instead of D as in <em>Foundations</em>)</th>
<th>Performed (without microtones)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hicaz – G, A, B-flat, C, D, E-flat</td>
<td>bayatı-türk – A, B-flat, C, D, E-flat, F, G, A-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A number of issues arise when Hajibeyov’s modes are investigated. While it is obvious that he wrote about modes, it is not clear how mugham fitted into his scheme. Throughout Foundations, Hajibeyov continuously used the word lad (mode) and the phrase Azerbaydzhanskaya narodnaya muzyka (Azerbaijani folk music) instead of mugham. However, Hajibeyov’s extensive reliance on mugham elements is palpable. In fact, the way he organized and presented the modes was through the genre of mugham dostgah. He named the şoős of mugham dostgah (such as bayati-kürd in şur) as “parts of a mode” (otdel lada, Rus.) (Hajibeyov 1945: 8) although modes do not entail “parts.” Also, he wrote about modes as having a “mayə” or “tonic” (tonika, Rus.) (Hajibeyov 1945: 31), while this is a characteristic of the dostgah cycle. Interestingly, in other works of Hajibeyov and in the writings of his followers, the distinction between mode and mugham is clear (see chapter 1). For instance, Hajibeyov’s student Ismayilov discussed məqam as the mode and mugham as the actual genre or composition:

Although məqam and mugham concepts are similar, in Azerbaijani music theory these have been accepted as related but independent and having separate meanings. From this point of view, mugham is a multipart vocal-instrumental and instrumental music structured in improvisatory style. Məqam, on the other hand, means a mode, that is, the tones that consist of differently structured sounds with certain functions (Ismayilov 1984: 9).
This crucial point is avoided in *Foundations*, and one possible explanation could be that Hajibeyov wanted to implicitly encompass *mugham* in his standardization plan and thereby coordinate it with the Soviet demands, ultimately protecting this branch of traditional music. The reason why he could not explicitly theorize *mugham* is simply because his theories of modes did not perfectly match *mugham* as performed.

The identified discrepancy between theory and practice is more apparent in certain modes more than in others. The şöbə of *şur mugham dəstgah* are those also used in the *şur* as theorized. However, not all of them are present (e.g. *bayat-türk*, and *sarənc* are not included in the theorization) and they are not all arranged in a similar way (e.g. the different position of *hicaz*). Chelebiyev summarizes Hajibeyov’s system and stops to discuss *nəva*. He first quotes Vinogradov: “Unfortunately, U. Hajibeyov did not provide examples of *nəva* and mentioned nothing about structural properties of this, as he put it, ‘rarely performed mode’” (Vinogradov, quoted in Chelebiyev 2009: 115). Chelebiyev then lays out how *nəva* mode in Hajibeyov’s work and *nəva* in practice lack consistency (Chelebiyev 2009: 116-19).

These dissonances between theory and practice pertain only to tonal structure, but there are other musical parameters such as microtones and *əruz* metres that are areas of even deeper concern because of how neglected they were in Hajibeyov’s *Foundations*.

The organization of sections that comprise each mode is another sphere that leaves many questions unanswered. Many *guşə* that were present in pre-Soviet lists disappeared from the theoretical system and from the enmeshed mainstream performance practice. As a consequence, the flexibility in stringing *mughams* to each other to create the *dəstgah* journey was inhibited. In other words, the systematization of traditional music severely impacted *mugham* creativity.
Fewer guşə meant less interpretive and imaginative variation of musical material. Less variation ultimately meant less knowledge of how to creatively engage with music during performance.

However, even those guşə that were neglected and forbidden during the Soviet times were still being played by some masters. Often, these would be inserted into performances without being named (Eldar Miriyev, interview, 1 June 2015). Recordings of Bahram Mansurov and Ahmad Bakikhanov’s illustrate this case (see below). Thus, besides Hajibeyov’s official stances and theories, illicit versions that stemmed from pre-Soviet practices were maintained.

In fact, Hajibeyov’s changes must not only be excused but also applauded. Hajibeyov had no choice but to theorize and institutionalize mugham. Were it not for his attempts to theorize traditional modal music, mugham and the tar could have completely perished; or, changes may have been imposed in such a way that no alternative versions would survive underground and mugham would never undergo the recovery and reinvention that characterizes the post-Soviet context. Masters today agree, openly discussing why Hajibeyov changed mugham:

In şur, for example, guşə such as cüdai and haci dərvişi that are tied to əruz were erased. Hajibeyov saw that the Soviet Union was going against mugham. For example, məvarənnəhr guşə – about the Turkish government – would be opposed. So we couldn’t have this, because it was tied to Turkism (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 22 March 2015).

I think that the role of Uzeyir Hajibeyov is very great. For example, nəva is now forgotten. Hajibeyov could not retain it because of the political situation. But then why did he leave hüşeyni or bayatt-isfahan? Hajibeyov saw that nəva is too similar to the Iranian nəva. On the other hand, our şur is different from theirs, our rast is also different. So I think that he left those mughams which are our own! Uzeyir bey is a great man! (Taleh Garayev, interview, 29 May 2015)
3.4.2 Westernization

The national composition school in nineteenth-century Russia was founded based on the Western classical tradition. This process was replicated a century later when “backward” Soviet republics had to be civilized through the invention of local national musical languages. As a consequence, Azerbaijani music underwent Russification, which was de facto Westernization.

Terminology related to mugham in Soviet Azerbaijan was adopted from Western classical music. It included words such as “tonic”, “sonata-form”, “rondo”, “theme”, “crescendo”, “legato”, etc. The solfeggio system also made its way into the instruction of mugham carried out at official institutions. Today, this system is widely used even by the most conservative mugham performers. During my first encounters with local musicologists when I enrolled in courses to study mugham, I was amused at frequent comparisons between mugham dostgah and sonata form. The dostgahs were portrayed using a common structure of exposition-development-recapitulation, with the primary “theme” introduced in the mayə. I thought that this was a methodology crafted to enhance the understanding of a student coming from the West, but I discovered that the analogy is a common way of interpreting mugham among local music scholars. Musicologists in Azerbaijan often compare the dostgah to sonata form even today (e.g. Kyazimova 1997; Makhmudova 1997).

The tar had to be adjusted in order to assist in the process of Westernization. On the one hand, the innovations of Sadigjan from the nineteenth century that separated the Azerbaijani tar from the Iranian one – such as playing on the chest, use of sympathetic strings, etc. – were in agreement with the Soviet agenda. However, further changes were needed to align the instrument with Western notation. First, the mezzo-soprano clef (where the C-clef is placed on the second line of the stave) was selected for the tar. Abdulgassimov notes:
The intellectuals who opposed the tar thought ‘Azerbaijanian people had no own music,’ ‘our melodies were of Persian’ or ‘under the Persian influence’, etc. U. Hajibeyov and his supporters in the struggle always gave their explanation and won victory. Perhaps, taking into account the above mentioned reasons, U. Hajibeyov chose the key ‘mezzo-soprano’ for the tar in order to separate the Azerbaijanian tar teaching system from the Persian one. It should be noted that this key entirely corresponds to the range of the tar (Abdulgassimov 1990: 57).

Second, the *bas* string was tuned to “sol” from “doh” and the *kök* strings were reversed. These adjustments were implemented in the 1930s due to notation (Emin Mammadov, interview, 10 February 2015). The Mansurov *tar*, however, maintained the pre-Soviet form of these three mentioned strings. Third, the *tar* was tempered through the rearrangement of the frets. However, some microtones were retained. The latter case exemplifies how native musicians tried to make compromises and preserve aspects of the pre-Soviet system.

Performances were also collectivized to include a large number of instrumentalists and singers. For example, in 1931, Hajibeyov organized the first folk instruments orchestra that used written notation. It consisted of four groups: plectrum (*tar*: I-II-III), bowed strings (*kamança* I-II), wind (*balaban* I-II), and percussion (*daff*, *nagara*, and piano) (Abdulgassimov 1990: 83). The *tar* was the leading instrument in the orchestra. The repertoire included Westernized Azerbaijanian folk tunes and dances as well as compositions by Mozart, Schubert, and others. Thus, both Azerbaijanian traditional and European musics were performed.

The gradual modulation into Westernized *mugham* was greatly advanced by new courses implanted at official institutions in the early 1930s. The classes provided instruction for playing on the *tar* and *kamança* using solely notation. Hajibeyov taught the *tar* course himself. Next, instruction books on how to play *tar* and *kamança* from notation were published. For example, Seid Rustamov’s book for *tar* from 1937 was still used to teach me when I first took lessons in
Baku as part of my fieldwork. Scales and arpeggios became necessary exercises for students of tar; a custom that remains in effect to this day. As a result, an emphasis on instrumental virtuosity was introduced, and it quickly overshadowed the centrality of poetical texts and meanings. Indeed, as will be explained below, classical ghazal poetry was an especially problematic area to reconcile with the Soviet agenda for art. Thus, a shift away from previous meanings was crucial.

Learning Western compositions and notation, becoming familiar with the new Eurocentric theorization of the mugham system, the endorsement of “universal” and “ideal” Western classical music, all influenced how mugham was performed. It was only natural that performers began to alter mugham to incorporate Western sounds including metres, pitches, gestures, and virtuosic passages. Thus, Westernization, as standardization, affected creativity. Although some microtones were left on the neck of the tar, their use became less frequent because of the practice of playing with Western instruments and using notation. Metres of əruz in tar playing were also affected since (a) microtonal guşə that employed them were discouraged, and (b) the link to poetry was weakened. These changes were accompanied by a strict secularization of art that targeted Islamic aesthetics. Sounds, perceptions, and experiences of mugham changed.

While Westernization certainly left its imprint, many features were retained. Masters of conservative styles notified me during lessons that exercises such as scales do not help so much when it comes to playing mugham on the tar. Also, they still use microtones extensively and stress the importance of əruz, playing many of the guşə in prosodical metres that were taken out of the official Soviet curriculum. Thus, I agree with Huseynova’s observations:
…indisputably, Westernizing and modernizing tendencies in the field of traditional music posed a threat: they came very close to eliminating native agency, tradition, and individuality. Nonetheless, the integrity of traditional music remained, and Westernization and modernization contributed to the wide promotion of traditional music within native society and beyond (Huseynova 2016: 53).

Moreover, not all musicians view the changes of the 1930s in a negative light. Many echo Huseynova’s statement that Westernization allowed for Azerbaijani music to be known internationally, and for traditional instruments to play Western classical music. Many mugham performers praise Hajibeyov for saving mugham from utter destruction. Naroditskaya’s (2002: 196) conclusion is that the Westernization of Azerbaijani music reinforced by Soviet cultural ideology was due to internal forces, pointing to national awareness nourished by Soviet power. While the process of gaining national identity began much earlier (see chapter 1), I side with Naroditskaya’s point about Westernization being driven from the inside. It was native musicians who led the processes of change: their efforts to find a middle path – to modernize and to preserve – were crucial for the historical trajectory of mugham and its present state.

3.4.3 Temperament

Intervals and power have a close-knit relationship, as During (2005: 158) has observed. Disturbance in the political realm is likely to bring about change in the organization of musical pitches and modes, as exemplified in the republics of the USSR. In Azerbaijan, the 17-tone order of the octave was altered and brought closer to the chromatic system of Western classical music. The tar was tempered accordingly, with a different placement of the frets. However, this change was made in such a way to allow leeway for performances of mugham with microtones.
It is not clear who exactly was responsible for tempering the tar and how it took place. Some musicologists, such as Dzhani-zade, assert that it was Hajibeyov: “The dead-lock was partly broken by Uzeyir Hajibeyov and his followers, who made yet another reform of tar in combining the chromatic system of 12 degrees with the system of 17 degrees” (Dzhani-zade 1998: 70). Naroditskaya (2002: 41) similarly explains that Hajibeyov proposed to match the seventeen tones to the piano: seven simple sounds corresponding to the white keys, as well as five sharps and five flats as five black keys, with each black key comprised of two pitches. He suggested using the traditional 17-tone system when performing on Azerbaijani instruments or singing, and switching to the tempered chromatic scale when playing on European instruments. Some musicians insist that Azerbaijani music coincided with Western as early as the late nineteenth century. Thus, they claim that it was Sadigjan who started to adjust the frets and temper the tar.

However, there is much evidence that the temperament took place in the 1930s. For instance, there are numerous recordings of mugham from the early twentieth century that feature non-tempered instruments and sounds. These are kept at the State Sound Recording Archives of the Azerbaijan Republic. The microtones played are in the higher range of the tar where they are missing today. The same mughams rendered during the Soviet era employ different intervals and seem to be played with instruments that are tuned differently. Also, there formed a group of mugham performers in the 1930s who countered the changes made by Hajibeyov. Its members explicitly targeted temperament, which is why today’s musicologists refer to them as “fervent watchdogs of antiquity” [varks khraniteli stariny, Rus.] (Abasova and Kasimov 1970: 22). These individuals emphasized the incompatibility of equal temperament with Azerbaijani musical modal system. They also opposed written notation because it clashed with the 17-tone system of
the *tar* (Abasova and Kasimov 1970: 22). The formation of these opposing views at this time proves that changes in temperament were taking place then.

When I learned *şur dəstgah* from various teachers, I noted that some masters played using the microtonal frets, some only employed tempered intervals, and others used both depending on the circumstances. For example, adherents of conservative styles played *şur mayə* using the following non-tempered tones: one between A-flat and A instead of A, as well as one between A and B-flat instead of B-flat. The two microtones were abundant in the *mayə* because these masters used *gusə* that emphasized them. Those musicians that refrained from playing non-tempered tones substituted the two identified notes with A and B-flat. Finally, some teachers played both ways, indicating that the choice depends on the context, such as playing with or without a piano. When it comes to the higher range on the *tar* with only one microtonal fret, some masters added extra frets or deliberately played in between frets with their finger. Others claimed that when *şur* is played in *zil* there are no microtones, even if they performed them in the lower octave. One musician I interviewed explained:

Polina Dessiatnitchenko: is the microtone between A-flat and A which is played in *şur mayə* in the lower octave present in the higher octave?

Vugar Rzayev: it was there before, and during the Soviet times it was removed. But it can still be put there now.

PD: who cut it off?

VR: they say it was Hajibeyov. But some also say it was Sadigjan. This was done so that Europe would listen to us and understand our music. Now, *mugham* is even played on the piano, no microtones are played. However, some think this is a distortion of *mugham* (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 20 May 2015).

Taking into consideration the socio-political context, and sweeping processes of standardization and Westernization, the temperament is duly justified. First, the founding of
orchestras that incorporated both Azerbaijani and Western instruments necessitated the tuning of traditional instruments to tempered intervals. Second, there were many notations of mugham for the tar that intentionally omitted non-tempered notes (e.g. Mammadov 1962; Bakikhanov 1968). The modes as transcribed could not include accidentals other than sharps and flats. Attempts to notate microtones were not allowed from the 1930s. Theodore Levin (1994) similarly observes that the canonization of shashmaqam in Central Asia through publications and activities of Unus Rajabiy (1897-1976) – a figure similar to Hajibeyov – resulted in a frozen form of the music that does not align well with performed versions. Levin writes: “…neutral intervals have been disregarded in Soviet publications since these have been viewed by Soviet scholars as a link to the feudal court music spawned by the patronage of the Bukharan emir” (Levin 1984: i).

Scholars and musicians often specify two advantages of temperament: the advancement of the composition school and the framing of Azerbaijani music to become more accessible to Western audiences. As Huseynova writes:

Removing quarter tones accelerated and facilitated the development of composed music in Europe, and Hajibeyli foresaw the same outcome for his nation. This prediction is the key to understanding the true incentive of Hajibeyli’s eagerness for equal temperament: he was concerned about creating new musical spaces for his native music, rather than sacrificing its authentic rules to the ideological agendas of the Soviets (Huseynova 2016: 39).

Temperament was an important measure for “civilizing” art in many Soviet republics, including modal music in Central Asia. Still, individual musicians and events determined particular outcomes. For example, During notes that, unlike in Azerbaijan, the process is irreversible in certain republics of Central Asia because “…masters who acknowledge the existence of subtler intervals in the past, or who use them, are becoming rarer” (During 2005: 158). Pre-Soviet forms, microtones, and guşə of mugham were passed on in unofficial contexts,
especially when it comes to the Bakikhanov and Mansurov lineages. This could explain why in post-Soviet Azerbaijan, these versions resurfaced and are becoming more popular. Regardless of the underground activity, the official intervals also increasingly penetrated musicians’ ears. The mainstream style of playing *mugham* in Soviet Azerbaijan evolved to be more or less microtone-free. For instance, Dzhani-zade warns,

…we should rather be cautious towards new musicians using the chromatic *târ* who play *mūghām* today after having memorized it by written music. It concerns the new school of performers. Some of them became virtuoso *târ* players, as Haji Mammadov, Ahsan Dadashhev, Aliaga Guliyev, Kamil Ahmadov and others. The ancient classical school kept the 17 steps system of Sadygjan and remained closer to the vocal *dastgâh*. The last great specimen of that school was Bahrām Mansūrov (Dzhani-zade 1998: 70).

Microtones have become a site of contestation in present-day Azerbaijan, and this controversy will be thoroughly discussed in the following chapters.

3.5 Soviet *tar* lineages: Bahram Mansurov, Ahmad Bakikhanov, and Haji Mammadov

In Soviet Azerbaijan, three schools of *tar* playing were developed by Ahmad Bakikhanov, Bahram Mansurov, and Haji Mammadov. Ahmad Bakikhanov maintained a strictly conservative style from pre-Soviet times and was a superb knower. Perhaps this is why he was assigned to create the curriculum version of *mugham*. Accomplishing this task, Ahmad Bakikhanov simultaneously passed on the unabbreviated form of *mugham*. Bahram Mansurov, son of Suleyman Mansurov and grandson of Meshedi Melik Mansurov, synthesized the established pre-Soviet version of *mugham* with Soviet features. He invented many new techniques but was firmly rooted in the style of his lineage predecessors. Haji Mammadov was the most progressive among the three and exemplified the mainstream style and version of
mugham in Soviet Azerbaijan. His role was also crucial because he developed the standardized, popular school, and became the main representative to be imitated by succeeding performers.

3.5.1 Bahram Mansurov (1911-85)

Bahram Mansurov’s style was nurtured by the rich musical heritage of the mugham məclis tradition, hosted by his family members in the early twentieth century. The gatherings were responsible for the preservation of classicism in Mansurov’s playing (Imrani 2000: 7). He borrowed techniques of Mirza Mansur and Gurban Primov and mastered the pre-Soviet style of playing. Therefore, he knew older güşə and continued to play them privately in Soviet Azerbaijan. It is no coincidence that Alain Daniélou and Jacques Cloarec who came to Azerbaijan in 1974 chose to record Mansurov for UNESCO. They were intrigued by his idiosyncratic performance that differed vastly from the typical mainstream renditions of the other tar players. Elmira Abasova (1977: 27) notes about the increasingly frozen nature of mugham in Soviet Azerbaijan due to which imitation of the canonized form was becoming more and more common. She argues, however, that Mansurov was an exception because he was both immensely creative and knowledgeable in the mugham system. Thus, he was able to vary mugham melodies endlessly as well as employ very rare sections that many others did not know.

The specificity of Bahram Mansurov’s school is linked to mugham poetry. First, he had an opportunity to develop his style while accompanying the best xəndəşs such as the unmatched master of mugham Jabbar Gəryagdioglu, the renowned Seyyid Shushinsky and Zulfu Adigozelov. Second, his father, uncle, and grandfather were the main organizers of the Absheron mugham gatherings where poets and musicians collaborated to achieve harmony between music and ghazal text. Moreover, for most of his life, Mansurov was the leading tar player in mugham
The librettos were comprised of ghazals and it was required that the tar played as closely as possible to the singing. One musician described Bahram Mansurov’s style in contrast to the other principal lineages:

Mansurov’s style is closer to poetry. He accompanied so many xanəndə and even singers in opera. This went into the style. The phrases are in beyts and in əruz. The imitation of singing influenced his playing. Same with Gurban Primov. Ahmad Bakikhanov also has this, although he did not play in opera. But his phrases are also tied to the singing of poetry (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 11 December 2014).

The close link to poetry in Mansurov’s playing was responsible for the exceptional creativity he exhibited when performing mugham. Imrani reports that when interviewing Mansurov, he requested him to perform different dəstgah and improvise freely using variations and modulations. As a result, the mugham dəstgahs that he recorded contained as many as 96 parts (Imrani 2000: 55). He explained that there are certain parts that are always present and there are those that are sometimes included depending on the order and presence of the surrounding sections. When these optional parts are included, they necessitate certain other musical units, amounting to various versions of one dəstgah.

Mansurov supported Hajibeyov’s work and participated in national opera until the end of his life. His unique style was greatly indebted to his role as the leading instrumental accompanist in national Azerbaijani operas. There are many scenes in these operas that involve only the tar accompanying the xanəndə who is singing actual şöbə from mugham dəstgah cycles. Musicians even assert that the əruz metres of mugham have been retained in national opera. In addition, Mansurov’s successors today such as Vugar Rzayev and Emin Mammadov report that he used all kinds of microtonal pərdə and guşə when he played in opera. In his notes, in Arabic script, he writes about the progress of mugham due to the initiatives of Magomaev and Hajibeyov and the
resulting formation of an orchestra that played from notes (Mansurov, “Bahram Mansurov’s written notes”, 650.1.32: 10). He studied notation and performed as part of this orchestra comprised of folk instruments. However, he was more drawn towards improvisation, and because of this he left the orchestra (Abasova 1977:7).

Figure 3.8 below shows a complete şur dəstəgah performed by Bahram Mansurov. Rare guşə that are asserted by musicians to have been passed on in their original form from pre-Soviet times are underlined.

Figure 3.8 Bahram Mansurov’s şur (Musazade 2012: 74-5)

bərдаşt
məyə
gövhəri
cūdəi
gərəyi
hacı dərvişi
səlmək
busəlik
şər-aşub
səmayi-şəms
hicaz
hacı Yuni
daştı
mənovi
mehdi-zərrəbi
nəlevi-zənburi
gəbri
Baba Tahir
Azərbaycan
şəh Xətai
məvərənnəhr
dügah
zəmin-xara
sarənc
qəməngız
nişibi-fəraz
3.5.2 Ahmad Bakikhanov (1892-1973)

The father of Ahmad Bakikhanov, Mammadrzabey, was a lover of Azerbaijani traditional music who also held *mugham* məclisəs. In this milieu, Bakikhanov nourished his appreciation for *mugham* from the earliest years of his upbringing. He took lessons from Mirza Faraj and Mirza Mansur in Baku and, additionally, travelled to Iran where he was a pupil of Dervish Khan and other masters. Bakikhanov cultivated the deepest loyalty to tradition and continued to preserve pre-Soviet *mugham* form and style.

In 1927, Bakikhanov became acquainted with Hajibeyov when he began to work as a *tar* player on the radio. Seeing the depth of his knowledge, Hajibeyov invited Bakikhanov to teach at the conservatory. Bakikhanov’s contribution at this institution was paramount because he was highly influential in the formation of the *mugham* curriculum. Together with masters Jabbar Garyagdioglu, Seyyid Shushinsky, Bulbul, Zulfu Adigozelov, Gurban Primov, Mansur Mansurov, and Sasha Oganezashvili, Ahmad Bakikhanov participated in the debates led by Hajibeyov about the new system of *mugham* instruction. Avaz Rahmatov notes that it was precisely Bakikhanov who convinced Hajibeyov that the five microtonal frets on the *tar* are essential to *mugham* intonations and therefore must be retained (Rahmatov 1977: 14). Additionally, Rahmatov reports that since beginning to teach at the conservatory in 1930, Bakikhanov simplified the *mugham* system (Rahmatov 1977: 24). The standardized program retains its function and significance today.

When Bakikhanov was asked what he considers most important in the performance of *mugham*, he replied: the voice, the knowledge, and the exact rhythms, adding that all three aspects are interconnected (Rahmatov 1977: 25). Precision was the most pronounced characteristic of Bakikhanov’s style. Highly intricate *guşə* demanded exactitude, and his students
today stress that this precision is related to āruz. Similar to the Mansurov lineage, the connection to ghazal poetry was primary for Bakikhanov. His guşəs closely mirror beyts in terms of structure, technique, and pace. In fact, many of these rare pre-Soviet guşə have similar names and melodies in the Mansurov and Bakikhanov schools. One example is guşə şəlmək that concludes şur mayə.

Figure 3.9 Guşə şəlmək as performed in the Mansurov and Bakikhanov schools

Şəlmək in Mansurov school (without cadence)
Plectrum accuracy is another common feature of the Bakikhanov and Mansurov lineages that indicates their pre-Soviet origins. Eldar Miriyev is the main successor of the former lineage in post-Soviet Azerbaijan. He once said that the Bakikhanov style relies on “plectrum virtuosity” and thus “It is very difficult and intense!” (Eldar Miriyev, interview, 25 May 2015). On a number of occasions, he stressed that the popular style is hard because of speed, while Bakikhanov’s difficulty lies in the mizrab.

Whilst the similarities between Mansurov and Bakikhanov schools, Eldar Miriyev differentiated his style: “The Mansurov school has a different playing character than me…. Some of the playing is very unclear…. Also he uses the tremolo” (Eldar Miriyev, interview, 25 May 2015). The pronounced tremolo of Mansurov could be explained by his involvement in opera and the need for the tar to sound resonant and sustained, substituting the whole orchestra.
An entire şur dəstəgəh cycle performed by Bakikhanov is presented in figure 3.10 with those guşə retained from pre-Soviet times underlined.

Figure 3.10 Şur dəstəgəh by Ahmad Bakikhanov (Musazade 2012: 76):

Performances of şur by Mansurov and Bakikhanov contain guşə from pre-Soviet versions of şur, as well as modulations to mughams that are not part of the standardized curriculum. These sections are also present in the playing of the successors of these two lineages in the post-Soviet context, outlined in the next chapter.

3.5.3 Haji Mammadov (1920-81)

For many Azerbaijanis today, the sound of the tar is associated with songs and romances, both Azerbaijani and Western, which have been arranged for the tar and the piano. Haji Mammadov was a very important figure for the evolution of performing such pieces on the tar in
Soviet Azerbaijan. For example, when a solo piece for the tar is played, performers often insert a mugham section which is modally close to and suits the mood of the song. This tendency to play mugham in songs was started by Mammadov when he added kharij segah to his rendition of “Mother” by Jahangir Jahangirov (Abdulgassimov 1990: 88).

Mammadov played with stunning virtuosity and creativity. Discussing the tarzən’s playing of romances arranged for the tar, Abdulgassimov proclaims “his performing interpretation exactly corresponds to the idea and contents of the composition, it exceeds the limits of the composer’s style to a definite extent” (Abdulgassimov 1990: 86). Mammadov’s style diverged from the Mansurov and Bakikhanov schools because of its speed, irregularity of tempo, emotionality, and technique that was peppered with Western elements. Moreover, he shaped and promoted the mainstream canonized version of mugham. Although Mammadov was very liberal with his style, he still demonstrated vigilance for old traditions. For example, Abdulgassimov reports that he used microtonal mugham frets even when performing Westernized songs (Abdulgassimov 1990: 88).

3.6 Sovietizing mugham singing: language reforms and secularization

The changing attitudes to the Azerbaijani language and the ongoing reforms that marked the Soviet reign impinged upon the sphere of mugham singing. Specifically, due to the philosophical language and əruz structure of the ghazal poetry, this genre ended up being one that was most affected by the changes. Just as the Azerbaijani scale of 17 degrees was prohibited, and the tar was attacked because of its link to Iran, “The censorship on singing texts diminished the role of vocal mūghām-dastgāh, as singing in Persian was severely persecuted” (Dzhani-zade 1998: 70). The script for Azerbaijani changed from Arabic to Roman to Cyrillic. Also, a new
official vocabulary was introduced in which many Persian and Arabic words were purged, and even Turkic words were substituted with Russian words. The changes in alphabet and terminology affected əruz structure, an outcome that was only aggravated by the ban on religious interpretation of poetical meaning. As a consequence, the Sovietization of mugham singing went hand in hand with the standardization and Westernization of the mugham repertoire. The musical and textual parameters were distanced from each other from both sides.

3.6.1 Language reforms

The Azerbaijani language belongs to the Turkic language family and has also been strongly influenced by Arabic and Persian. Many Arabic and Persian words have become so entrenched in the language that many speakers have been using them while not being fully conscious of their origin. As Altstadt informs, “Arabic and Persian words often entered the Turkic lexicon because their referents had no precise equivalent, such as philosophical or religious terms having to do with Islamic thought, or artistic terms developed in Iranian high culture” (Altstadt 2016: 8). There is a particular abundance of these words in the classical ghazals sung in mugham, as well as in the naming of mugham parts. Despite this significance of non-Turkic terminology, from the mid-nineteenth century and especially during the Soviet rule, Arabic and Persian words were gradually being eradicated as the Azerbaijani language was simplified and unified.

The change in terminology took place in tandem with the alphabet replacements. Both transitions were linked in a recursive relationship, fortifying each other’s effectiveness towards a common goal. The Azerbaijani Turkic language was written using the Arabic script from the seventh century until the second decade of the twentieth century. With the first buds of
nationalism, the intelligentsia in pre-Soviet Azerbaijan made assertions that this script did not properly match a Turkic language. In 1921, a campaign was launched to switch to the Roman alphabet. Although this movement was initiated by the local elites, it was also applauded by the Bolsheviks who wanted to separate Azerbaijani people from their historical cultural past. The transition to Roman script became official and complete in 1924. Turkism was encouraged at this time and the main concern of the Soviet authorities was to halt the population’s access to pre-Soviet works with religious thought and bourgeois ideas of liberty and cultural autonomy. The pendulum swung within a decade and in the late 1930s the alphabet was changed to Cyrillic. Stalin enforced a Cyrillic alphabet ending the pro-Turkic proclivity that now seemed detrimental to the regime. In January 1940, the Cyrillic script became official in Azerbaijan and all the other Turkic republics. Moreover, each of these republics had to work out their own version of the Cyrillic alphabet. Deliberate differences were created in order to separate the Turkic peoples in the USSR from each other. Consequently, Azerbaijan was cut off from the other Soviet Turkic populations, from Turkey, and from Azerbaijani Turks in Iran. One professor of philology explained to me: “This is what Stalin did, for example ‘A’ was made into ‘O’ in Uzbek, so Azerbaijan in their language is written as ‘Ozerbaycan.’ This was done on purpose so that we would not be able to understand each other” (Taleh Garayev, interview, 29 May 2015). Only in 1994, a few years after Azerbaijan’s independence, the Roman alphabet was adopted again.

With the elimination of Persian and Arabic words that were part of the mugham system, standardization and simplification of the mugham repertoire was furthered. The güşə amply present in the mugham lists from pre-Soviet times disappeared in the official curriculum devised in the 1930s. Those few retained parts were selected because they coincided with Hajibeyov’s
theorization of mugham. Those which were discarded were simply unnecessary or had unfavourable meanings. One master explained:

During the Soviet times, the terminology of mugham was destroyed. For example, məvarənnəhr was a part of mugham bayatı-Gacar. Məvarənnəhr is a big Turkish governmental district, from the times of Timur. It was very developed – there was a government, as well as achievements in the domains of science and music. But the Soviet Union did not want us to know and remember our roots. This is why terminology was changed. Another example is ruhül-ərvah in dūgah mugham. This word has a very profound meaning tied to Islam. But the Soviet Union hated irfan, Sufism, Eastern sciences…. during the Soviet Union nobody was able to write about the real terminology, the meaning connected to religion and Sufism. But our music is entirely connected to that! (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 20 May 2014).

The two grave consequences of language reforms for mugham were the distortion of əruz and the narrowed interpretive possibilities related to Persian and Arabic terminology part of ghazal poetry. First, the increased use of Turkic words along with the Roman and then the Cyrillic scripts obfuscated clear representation of long and short vowels that made up the bəhr patterns of prosodical metres. Second, although Soviet art could be national in form, the imbued content had to be socialist. This content represented the General Culture to be apprehended and shared by all the Soviet entities. Socialist content had no place for the boundless layers of meanings connected to Islam in ghazal poetry. Therefore, classical ghazal poetry and its creators, such as Nasimi, were portrayed in writings as the first socialists. In addition, new poetry was demanded with appropriate themes and solely Turkic words. This was a difficult task due to established subject matter of the ghazal genre. The Arabic and Persian words were essential not only for əruz, but also because they triggered the interpretive and imaginative processes at the core of this poetical genre. A philologist discussed these issues with me:

With the onset of Soviet times, irfan receded. But əruz needs Arabic words or Persian words because they have the long and short vowels. But in Azerbaijani and Turkish there
are no long and short vowels. So the language changed, literature changed, and people no longer understand the words used in ghazals. This is why the Soviet-celebrated poet Aliaga Vahid did not use many Arabic and Persian words. But if there are none of these words, irfan is not there…. (Taleh Garayev, interview, 29 May 2015).

Hajibeyov and his disciple Ismayilov enacted a classification of Azerbaijani mugham, dividing all of its forms into “metred” (bəhrli) and “unmetred” (bəhərsiz). The former was used to refer to rəngs, əsnifs, and other rhythmical parts in a dəstgah. Unmetred was the designation chosen for main mugham sections that use ghazal poetry. Soviet musicologists from Russia parroted these views. While the mugham parts do not have a particular rhythm, they are based on prosodical metres and are, therefore, highly metrical. Thus, their categorization as “unmetred” raises questions. I contend that this classification reflects the broader attitudes that prevailed at the time against Persian and Arabic vocabularies. Similarly, əruz is an Arabic system and the erasure of this through the labeling of mugham as “unmetred” happened at the time when there was an incentive to rid Azerbaijani culture of its past links, especially the Persian and Arabic cultural dominions.

Local resistance towards official Soviet directives is apparent in this realm of mugham as well. Although Persian and Arabic words were being purged, many were still retained. Archival repositories contain private notebooks of musicians such as Bahram Mansurov who continued to write using Arabic characters. These notes contain names of mugham sections and ghazal poetry written in this script. Furthermore, ghazals with complex Persian and Arabic terminology continued to be created, exploring themes of Islamic gnosis. These works were not official nor were they published. However, they were passed on orally. Many of the poets of such ghazals lived in the Absheron suburban villages around Baku where the underground mugham culture thrived even in the most repressive Soviet times.
3.6.2 Secularization

Islam was severely targeted by the Soviet authorities. Mosques were dismantled and religious practices such as the şəbih forbidden. The call to prayer was only heard in remote areas, prerecorded and at lower volume. Stalin and Lenin replaced God as they were divinized by the masses that joined in a collective effort to create a utopia on Earth. Atheism had to be reflected and promoted through art; hence, the main ingredient of socialism was realism. Themes about God, the ineffable, and any form of spirituality were strictly taboo. Naroditskaya outlines genres of music from the most revered to the most inferior on the Soviet scale: classical music by Soviet and European composers; forms that merged Azerbaijani traditional music with Western; mugham; and Quranic recitation. In the Islamic world, almost the reverse of this is true (Naroditskaya 2002: 25).

Because the texts of ghazals are rooted in Islamic gnosis and descriptions of the Beloved that are ardent, explicit, and even erotic, performers in Soviet Azerbaijan had to exercise caution and select poetry that was more suitable to the ideological agenda. However, classical texts by Fuzuli or Nasimi continued to be sung. This historical fact seems astonishing at first, but it can be explained: once interpreted as proponents of socialism, the classical poets were claimed to be part of the Azerbaijani heritage so that other nationalities in the vicinity could not easily misappropriate them. Philologist Taleh Garayev explained:

During the Soviet period, poets of ghazals such as Haji Rza Serraf were not published. Only the really well-known ones like Fuzuli were published. Otherwise, Turkey would assert that Fuzuli is theirs. But those poets such as Serraf and others that were passed on secretly were not published since they were too religious and they were about irfan (Taleh Garayev, interview, 1 June 2015).
In order for the most acclaimed examples of classical poetry by Fuzuli, Nasimi, Khagani, and Shirvani to be preserved as “Azerbaijani”, the interpretation of them had to be framed differently. For example, Nasimi and Fuzuli were portrayed as anti-religious and socialist. Thus, Izaly Zemtsovsky’s argument that precisely the fixed poetic text averted the imposition of a new ideology with *mugham* in Soviet Azerbaijan (in Huseynova: 56) is contestable. While these texts continued to be sung, their underlying meanings tied to Islam were being banned and concealed. This was not difficult since *ghazal* poetry features different layers of meanings and the surface explanation of human love can always be substituted for themes that would be prohibited by the Soviet regime. When I was interviewing a famous *mugham* singer about this issue, he commented:

During the Soviet Union we had great classical literature scholars, *əruz* knowers, for example Hamid Arasly (1902-83) who published Fuzuli’s works. This was a very important duty. However, there was one serious detriment in the activity of all these renowned people. This was not their fault; it was the fault of the regime. For example, they all had to connect Fuzuli’s *ghazals* to beauty of a woman. But this is not how these genius people like Fuzuli were—they did not just write about physical beauty. I’m sorry for the inappropriate words – this is not about looking at a girl from the front and from the back and writing about it. No! These *ghazals* are a science. They are about Islamic law [Islam şəriət], they are a philosophy! But the writers during the Soviet time could not link it to God. They knew it but could not write it. The Soviet regime was atheist. This is why these scholars could not explain the *ghazals* of Fuzuli in all aspects (Azad Mustafayev, interview, 17 July 2015).

Aliaga Vahid (1895-1965) was one of the most acclaimed *ghazal* poets in Soviet Azerbaijan. He wrote *ghazals* that were almost devoid of non-Turkic words and meanings that such words are attached to. One scholar of literature characterized Aliaga Vahid’s poetry as beautiful but simple and one-dimensional. Most importantly, he added, the texts of his *ghazals* are lacking *irfan* which is the essential component of the genre. He exclaimed: “*Ghazal* must be
with *irfan*! And *mugham* too! Fuzuli was a representative of the road of *irfan*. Those who use Persian and Arabic words convey *irfan*, and those who do not, are secular!” (Taleh Garayev, interview, 18 July 2015)

In addition to secularizing *mugham* texts, *mugham* melodies that expressed themes of sadness and spirituality were similarly suppressed. These were parts of a *dəstgah* or full *dəstgahs* that used to be commonly performed in religious settings and rituals. One example is *dūgah*. This was a *mugham* often used for *azan*, or call to prayer. Because of this connection *dūgah* was purged in the 1930s (Nardaran knower, interview, 25 July 2015). Also, funerary religious rituals feature singing in *dūgah*, *zəmin-xara*, and *ruhül-ərvah* (Eldar Miriyev, interview, 10 June 2015) – *mughams* that became rare until completely disappearing in official contexts in Soviet Azerbaijan.

Artistic and cultural figures had to conform to the demands of the regime in order to avoid persecution. For example, Yusif Vazir Chamanzaminli (1887-1943) published an anthology of *ghazal* poetry that contained more spiritual and esoteric texts. As a result of his dissident activities, he was sent to Stalin’s political prison camp where he died in 1943 (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 7 June 2015). Despite the repression, people continued to practise Islam privately and inwardly. Likewise, the spirituality of experience tied to *mugham*’s sung texts could not be destroyed. Precisely in the suburban areas surrounding Baku, and in the case of singer Hajibaba Huseynov, the relationship between Islam, spirituality of *ghazals*, transcendent experience, and *mugham* was maintained and guarded.
3.7 Hajibaba Huseynov (1919-93)

Hajibaba Huseynov was the most beloved xanəndə of the Azerbaijani people, and remains so even after his death. I had an opportunity to listen to recordings of mugham with my informants – musicians and non-musicians, young and old, men and women – and witness the most cathartic and emotional reactions to performances of Hajibaba. There are three reasons why his style had such an influence on the listeners: immaculate pronunciation, accentuation of ghazal meanings, and creativity. Hajibaba neither possessed a voice with a broad range nor virtuosic technique in the higher register. Still, the extent of his imagination and expressivity when engaging with sung texts was overwhelming for the audiences. He was also known to select poetry that was not official and not published because of its religious nature. Moreover, he wrote ghazals himself or spontaneously changed lines of known ghazals, often crafting them to the occasion. All these skills amounted to a particular kind of experience induced in the audience that was unparalleled and that made him into the most cherished singer of his time. One tar player exclaimed with tears when listening to Hajibaba: “All the other singers – they are impoverished next to him! They just care about the surface: the form and timbre of their voice. But Hajibaba is something else! He sings as if he is making a carpet!” (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 21 April 2014)

Hajibaba had a very religious upbringing which served as a crucial factor in shaping his performance style. His mother was deeply religious and observed religious duties very strictly in secret due to the Soviet surveillance. Hajibaba’s father was also a believer and often took his son to partake in religious rituals. Consequently, Hajibaba learned the right pronunciation, as well as the meanings of words tied to Islam. Two knowers from Nardaran commented about this point when I interviewed them:
When Hajibaba was a child and just started to sing, Seyyid Shushinsky heard him and noticed how purely he pronounced the *ghazals*. He pronounced the texts in such a way so that every word was understood. Seyyid asked him “have you been to religious places and gatherings?” He answered that when he was young his father would take him to different mosques and that’s where he heard all the *mərsiyyə* readings. And then he used to sing them himself. And Seyyid said “oh, that is why you pronounce the words so well!” This is how Seyyid understood that Hajibaba had been to these kinds of places and knew how to sing *qəsida* and *mərsiyyə* (Nardaran knower, interview, 25 July 2015).

Those who sing *mərsiyyə* have to know what they are saying, have to understand it, know the story behind it. These singers have to know the melody and the words…. If you know the music and the words well, only then you will become like Hajibaba (Nardaran knower, interview, 25 July 2015).

One of Hajibaba’s students, Azad Mustafayev, told me the following story about his teacher that illustrates the significance of proper engagement with *ghazal* texts:

There is one *ghazal* with the *rədif* [repeating rhyme at the end of each *beyt*] “gecələr” (nights). Hajibaba was performing it once at a wedding and suddenly one drunk guy in the audience yelled in front of everyone: “hey, he is thinking about nights and romantic things!” Then Hajibaba had to stop and explain to people that this is not about those nights, but rather it is about the nights at Mecca, when we pray all night long. Hajibaba felt the need to educate the crowd! (Azad Mustafayev, interview, 11 July 2015)

Hajibaba started out as a *qaval* performer and he excelled at playing the percussive accompaniment of *mugham*. He then switched to singing but many claim that his experience as a *qaval* player helped him feel the metres of *mugham*, and convey the *ghazal* texts very effectively. He was a master of *əruz* metres as well: one of the few who knew and felt *əruz* and was able to creatively fit *ghazals* to music. One of my *tar* teachers who accompanied Hajibaba recounted:

Hajibaba’s performance is superior because of his erudition, pronunciation, knowledge of *mugham*, and understanding of the deepest meanings of *ghazals* – what is hidden…. When he sings, it is felt that he knows these meanings, it shows in his performance. He
knows Sufism and *irfan*. He studied a lot. He was friends with philologists and *əruz* scientists…. He is incomparable! (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 4 November 2014)

Hajibaba perfected his skills under the guidance of Zulfu Adigozelov, Khan Shushinsky, and Seyyid Shushinsky. He also studied with many dervishes who continued their activities in Soviet Azerbaijan, albeit underground. Furthermore, Hajibaba maintained strong links with musicians in Iran and Turkey. He often inserted Iranian and Turkish songs re-made by him as *təsnifs* into *mugham*. His training, connections, and style resemble closely the pre-Soviet traditions, showing that the regime could not rid *mugham* practices of that which is most essential to this music.

3.8 The underground conservatory: the role of Absheron towns

Islam survived on the fringes of Soviet Azerbaijan. Prayers and religious rituals were performed secretly at homes and even publicly, but in suburban areas away from the observing authorities. In those settings where the outlooks, practices, and texts linked to Islam endured, the unofficial sounds, perceptions, and experiences of *mugham* were also passed on. For this reason, the peripheral towns in the Absheron, such as Nardaran and Mashtaga, became known as the “unofficial conservatory” during the Soviet reign.

Tall brick walls enclose a lifestyle that is in stark opposition to the urban, Westernized, and metropolitan Baku. Away from prying eyes, these are suburban regions where Shia Islam is central and fundamental. For example, one would never see a woman without a covered head passing in the streets of Nardaran with their vivid paintings of the hijab and excerpts from the Quran decorating the towering walls that surround her. Many of these suburban towns are also destinations visited by thousands of devoted Muslims from Azerbaijan and abroad because they
are homes to sacred *pirs* (places of saints). For example, the beautiful Rahime Khanum mosque and a well-known *mədərsə* are both situated in Nardaran.

The vast majority of the population in these areas are known as *tats*, who were migrants from Iran in the late nineteenth century. In fact, leaders in these conservative communities were and are strongly linked to religious institutions south of Azerbaijan’s border. This is how, in the Soviet era, Azerbaijan’s ties to Iran persisted regardless of the difficult relations between the two countries. This connection is still very strong, and it is responsible for triggering many uprisings in post-Soviet Azerbaijan against the secular ruling party. Due to the strong ties to religion and Iranian culture, unofficial forms of *mugham* thrived in these towns. Huseynova clarifies that the link to Iran throughout the Soviet times helped “shield *mugham* from destructive impact of Soviet ideology” (Huseynova 2016: 14). For example, those *mughams* common in religious rituals that were banned by the Soviet regime continued to be performed privately in the more rural towns far from the urban centre.

The most important context for *mugham* in the Absheron region was the *mugham toy* (*mugham* wedding). Towns such as Nardaran and Mashtaga had networks of carnation “mafia” during the Soviet era because of which they were able to accumulate much wealth (Goltz 1998: 9-10). These flowers that were also sold as clove spices only grew in the warmer climate of the South Caucasus and were very valuable and in demand in the USSR. Thus, the suburban Azerbaijanis sold their precious goods in Russia for a very high price. Because of the substantial income, Nardaran and Mashtaga inhabitants were able to host lavish performances of *mugham*. These usually took place during someone’s wedding, although *məclises* with poets and musicians were also hosted for no particular occasion. When I interviewed elders in Nardaran, they proudly showed me videos of the most acclaimed *mugham* singers and instrumentalists sitting in rows
awaiting their turn to perform at local weddings. Indeed, not one, but many of the best xanəndoə were invited and paid a fortune.

The performances I was shown were breathtaking not only because of the performers’ skills but also because of the audience’s knowledge. Many ghazal poets and Islamic leaders are born and live in Absheron’s suburban religious towns. Dervish culture also prospers here. Bagirova underscores the input of dervish figures into the development of mugham: “This milieu helped to retain the repertoire, and classical traditions of mugham art in the first half of the twentieth century…. The classical traditions of mugham were maintained in the context of dervish culture” (Bagirova 2007: 158). The spirit that pervades these towns cultivates individuals who are considered as “knowers”. They would always be present at local mugham performances (e.g. Kerbalai Mirza Aga, Kerbalai Nabi – photos are available on nardaranpiri.com). The knowers offered their criticism and taught musicians about pronunciation, terminology, intonations, and creativity. Sometimes they were brutal and inexperienced performers would be kicked out on the spot. As one elder recounted to me, “The real exam for mugham performers was here in Nardaran. This is how they became professionals. If they pass then they can go on performing elsewhere. Otherwise, their reputation may be ruined” (Nardaran knower, interview, 25 July 25 2015).

The knowers considered themselves to be watchguards of the Absheron pre-Soviet mugham traditions. As discussed in the previous chapter, məclises in Absheron, prior to the Soviet rule, were focussed on the link between poetry and music as well as the resultant creativity. Similarly, the main criteria used by the knowers in Nardaran to judge performances were poetical metres, expression of meanings, and creativity. When the məclis traditions came to a halt in the Soviet times, the activity shifted to the suburban context. Although Hajibeyov called
musicians to the conservatory and stressed the importance of knowing the theory behind
*mugham*, criticizing those who just attend weddings, the *toy* traditions continued.

The weddings proceeded for many hours, led by a *şərpayı* (host). Women and men
celebrated in separate halls, but *mugham* was heard in both rooms. Women *xanəndo* were also
invited to sing in these strictly religious contexts. For instance, Rühaba Muradova used to come
to the women’s ceremony. Sara Gadimova even performed at the men’s weddings because her
exceptional talents were in high demand. Of course, she had to have the proper attire and a head
garment. Knowers asked for different *mugham* dostgahs, and often challenged the performers
with requests for difficult modulations between unrelated *mughams*.

In addition to interviewing knowers in Nardaran, I asked many musicians in Baku about
their experiences and thoughts with regards to the role of the Absheron towns in Soviet
Azerbaijan. All referred to places like Nardaran as the “unofficial conservatory.” Emin
Mammadov explained:

Nardaran was the first in terms of *mugham* knowledge. They hosted many weddings that
functioned as exams for *mugham* performers. The people there developed their
knowledge of *mugham* because they knew the literature very well. In addition, they are
from Iran and value classical music [*klassik musiqi*]. Therefore, having *mugham* tradition
in Nardaran has always been important there. During performances, they used to ask
master musicians what was being played then write down and study it. They knew
specific performances and styles and often requested them as a test: for example, sing
such and such *mugham* as so and so did. They also gave very intense criticism. The
younger generation was always present at these weddings sitting on the side and learning.
For musicians, this was the toughest test. Jabbar Garyagdioglu also went to Nardaran to
perform. He often used to say that he was “cooked” [here meaning raised] in the
Absheron towns. This is where he really mastered *mugham* (Emin Mammadov,
interview, 26 July 2015).

In a similar vein, one famous *xanəndo* said:

*Mugham* has been in those Absheron villages for ages and people were inviting good
*mugham* performers to their weddings. This is why the traditions remained strong there.
If there is a good audience that understands *mugham*, then the performers want to do a good job and learn different things. If the audience asks various questions and demands different knowledge, then performers also develop. Thus, in most Baku villages, there were *mugham* knowers throughout history…there were people in the past there who understood Persian language and this is why they could understand the meaning of *ghazals* and make comments about them. And of course, Islam was practised there a lot. There are genres such as *mərsiyyə* which are related to the throat and these were always performed in these towns. This way of singing is also linked to *mugham* (Tahir Amirov, interview, 9 July 2015).

Huseynova argues that while the Azerbaijani *mugham* suffered from ideological attacks, it survived and kept its integrity throughout the Soviet era because *mugham*’s verbal contents and overall philosophy were not distorted (Huseynova 2016: 56). During also notes the unusual perseverance of Azerbaijani *mugham* compared to musical traditions in Central Asia, writing: “In the domain of classical music, Azerbaijan offers the most resistance. Here the traditional style of performance has never changed: a singer with percussion, a tar lute and a kamanche fiddle” (During 2005: 155). He asserts that in Azerbaijan, the collectivization in music has only taken place in invented Westernized genres such as the symphonic *mugham* and the *mugham* opera. Even the microtones have been rediscovered in post-Soviet Azerbaijan, according to During, unlike in Central Asian republics. As shown above, the efforts of native musicians did contribute to the survival of Azerbaijani *mugham*. Many of my teachers did report that even those *guşə* that were taken out of the standardized curriculum of *mugham* were still privately taught. Additionally, the role of suburban towns – as milieux for creativity, spiritual experience, and centrality of *ghazal* poetry – was crucial for salvaging *mugham* during the USSR.
3.9 Khrushchev’s Thaw

The 1960s marked a new chapter in the history of *mugham* in Soviet Azerbaijan. After many years of disengagement from the historical roots of *mugham*, performers began to openly imitate Iranian singing and insert Turkish songs as *təsnifs* into the *dəstgah* cycle. One *tar* master said: “Yes, musicians around this time started to imitate Persian singing. They did it in order to differ from others. For example, this is why our current *mugham hümayun* is very similar to the one in Iran. Our musicians learned it in Tabriz and brought it here” (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 4 June 2015). This time also coincided with the popularity peak of Hajibaba Huseynov who strayed from the mainstream virtuosic style, and prioritized engagement with meanings and creativity. He was also expanding the parameters of *mugham* by using Turkish songs as *təsnifs*. Chelebiyev (2009: 19-28) stops to discuss this period of *mugham* history, explaining that the new generation was faced with masters of the golden age and had to outdo them by finding a new road. According to Chelebiyev, the younger performers had no other option because they could not play better than the masters of the previous generation.

The new propensities were also brought about by the political climate that formed when Nikita Khrushchev came to power and initiated the relaxation of censorship and open criticism of Stalinist purges. The period of his rule was known as the Thaw. The first sign of the Thaw in Azerbaijan was the change of the official language from Russian to Azerbaijani. Furthermore, in the 1960s, Azerbaijaniis finally made up the majority in the Azerbaijan’s party organization (Altstadt 1992: 168). Most importantly, there were local efforts aimed towards re-establishing historical identity and rehabilitating political and cultural figures who were discredited and killed in the 1920s and 1930s. For example, poet Huseyn Javid (1882-1941) was one victim of the Great Terror who was declared a “bourgeois nationalist”, “Pan-Islamist”, and “Pan-Turkist”, and
ended up dying in a Siberian camp. In the 1960s, he was rehabilitated and his plays were performed once again. The activities of Azerbaijanis to clarify historical identity were followed by emigration of Russians and other nationalities. Thus, according to Alstadt, “re-Turkization” took place in Azerbaijan (Altstadt 1992: 184).

The shifts in the political sphere correlated with the new trends in *mugham*. Exploration of previously-repressed ties to Persian classical music resurfaced. Also, the “re-Turkization” manifested itself in the incorporation of Turkish songs when performing *mugham*. Indeed, these proclivities gained momentum and matured in the post-Soviet context when musicians started to re-discover and re-invent *mugham* by adding extra frets to perform intonations from modal music of not only Iran, but also Turkey, Afghanistan, and even India (see chapter 4).

Conclusions

The creation of art that was national in form and socialist in content brought about a different kind of creativity in *mugham* performances. While the *mugham* repertoire was homogenized and theorized, the *tar* was tempered. The use of *guşə*, spontaneous modulations, and plectrum expressivity declined as the interpretive and imaginative activities related to *ghazal* texts were constrained. These changes signified a shift away from *ghazal* meanings in official repertoire and contexts. However, my fieldwork findings confirm the conclusions of other scholars that the Sovietization of creativity was not the only fate of *mugham*. Instead, there were two schools of Azerbaijani *mugham*: the composer’s and the performer’s (Abdulgasimov 1990: 105). These differed and the latter maintained its roots to pre-Soviet *mugham* underground. Consequently, the profound internal experiences associated with *mugham* could not be destroyed or repressed by the Soviet regime. Moreover, local musicians greatly benefitted from Soviet
institutions, adding virtuosity and professionalism to their art while maintaining what is most essential.
Chapter 4
Post-Soviet Nativism and Nationalism: Rediscovering Mugham Creativity

One who cannot dive cannot reach wisdom,
For a word is like a pearl in the oyster.

Fuzuli (1483-1556)

Fuzuli wrote in one of his ghazals that the Sufi path towards God is like diving deep to the bottom of an ocean and bringing out treasures in the form of the Divine Word. That’s dangerous. But now all they do is swim on the surface among seaweed and floating empty bottles.

(Tar master, proponent of the Mansurov lineage)

Mugham creativity is breaking new ground in post-Soviet Azerbaijan. As part of a highly complex cultural identity, traditional music is being developed in various directions, reflecting and shaping the intricate post-Soviet milieu. This broader socio-political context is comprised of an interest in pre-Soviet nationalism, influential Soviet legacy, Islamic revival, growing ties with neighbours Turkey, Iran, and the Arab world, as well as a progressive and pro-Western outlook. This rich recipe results in two main processes propelling mugham: nationalism and nativism.

Since Independence in 1991, mugham has acquired an important role in the process of nation-building. This symbolic significance was escalated with the Karabakh conflict when Armenian forces occupied Azerbaijani lands. Because mugham held historical prominence in the Karabakh region (see chapter 2), its promotion as national art intensified. Endorsed by the ruling
elites as the national emblem for the nascent republic, *mugham* has emerged as a phenomenon on international stages. The recognition of *mugham* as an intangible heritage of humanity by UNESCO in 2003 further served as a major incentive for its promotion, financed by the government of Azerbaijan. In addition to this agenda, local musicians, freed from Soviet aesthetics, have been keen to resurrect banned versions of *mugham*. Previously neglected styles, omitted *mugham* sections and entire cycles, as well as the forbidden themes of religion and mysticism have now resurfaced as points of inquiry. The nativistic movement in *mugham* is a proclivity that is gaining strength in post-Soviet contexts elsewhere as well. For example, Levin writes about Post-Soviet Uzbekistan as characterized by an opposition between Soviet cultural influences and pre-Soviet heritage (Levin 1993: 51). He investigates this musical context using a four-part model: nativism and Europeanization as two main trends propelled “from below” and “from above.” Similarly, there are two currents in post-Soviet *mugham*: nativism and nationalism that are driven by the musicians and the ruling elites. Whilst these are often contrasting, there are cases when they are reconciled through *mugham* creativity.

When it comes to nativism, musicians are united in a common endeavour to find the “pure” *mugham* that was purged during the Soviet era. In this sense, nativism stands for the collective efforts to return to indigenous ideas and practices, emphasizing the “pure” as opposed to outside influences. However, versions of that “purity” differ vastly. For some performers, *mugham* is viewed and performed as part of a broader pan-Islamic Eastern tradition. Other masters fervently defend a highly conservative, distinctly “Azerbaijani” version that they claim to have inherited from their lineages that date to pre-Soviet times. In addition, there are Westernized “universal” performances of *mugham* that are ramifications of the Soviet era and
are more appropriate manifestations of “national” art. Differences in the manner of playing *mugham* on the *tar* clearly reflect these three positions, and each will be explored below.

4. 1 Post-Soviet nativism and nationalism: Azerbaijan’s identity in flux

Beginning with Khrushchev’s Thaw, suppressed layers of Azerbaijani culture and history have been explored by those united in a quest to rediscover Azerbaijani identity. The de-Stalinization and rehabilitation of purge victims that started in 1956 provoked the local intelligentsia to redefine and ultimately claim back Azerbaijan’s national identity. Heydar Aliyev, the first secretary of the Azerbaijan Communist Party from 1969 to 1982, and the future president of independent Azerbaijan, furthered these incentives, supporting native arts and culture and expanding the rehabilitation of those who perished during the bloody years of Stalinist repressions (Altstadt 2016: 213). The 1980s marked the return of all folk music to local radio, the flourishing of Azerbaijani literature, and the study of history. Moreover, the growing tension between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Karabakh area greatly contributed to the urgency in defining Azerbaijan’s distinct national identity. With Independence, these national aims became an important strategy and gained momentum. For example, a return to the Roman alphabet was proposed in 1989, as many intellectuals spoke out against the dominant position of the Russian language. As Altstadt reports, “the Azerbaijani Turks use the antiquity of their history, language and literature as a weapon of self-defense, as proof they need no tutelage in self-government, economic management, education, or literature” (Altstadt 1992: xxiv).

The steady crescendo to reconstruct Azerbaijani identity involved both research and innovation, while also being susceptible to other factors such as a pro-Western orientation and an Islamic revival. As Svante Cornell describes, “Azerbaijan is like a laboratory, in the process of
developing a unique blend of its own traditions, with the western and Islamic cultures mixed in” (Cornell 2011: 263). Some understand Azerbaijani identity to be comprised of Turkism, Islam, what remains from the Soviet period, and capitalism, while others speak of the influence of the Turkish, Arab, Russian, and Persian cultures (Tokluoglu 2005: 732). The development of mugham mirrors and shapes these varied interpretations, becoming an important symbol of the complex and fluid post-Soviet identity. In this chapter, the multiplicity of ideas and directions that determine Azerbaijani identity and mugham will be looked at as phenomena of nativism and nationalism.

While there are overlaps between mugham activities that are nativist and nationalist, there are also important differences. The definition of nativism as “Any conscious, organized attempt on the part of a society’s members to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of its culture” (Linton 1943: 230) fits the efforts of mugham masters who adopt and fervently defend particular visions of what “pure” mugham should be. Nematallah Fazeli (2006) identifies three differences between nationalism and nativism that also apply in the case of post-Soviet mugham. Nativism, as opposed to nationalism, (a) rejects modernization and Westernization (b) recognizes heterogeneity of a culture and the capabilities of ethnic minorities, and (c) is a cultural phenomenon rather than a political ideology (Fazeli 2006: 15). Elaborating on the last point, Fazeli writes: “Nativist thinkers try to restore and rediscover their indigenous knowledge and technology, but nationalists aim to make a powerful nation-state” (Fazeli 2016: 15). Nativist mugham has grassroots origins perpetuated by musicians who often speak against Westernization that affected mugham in the Soviet era. Although the government finances nativist projects related to mugham, the “national” version of traditional music is much more attuned to Soviet aesthetics. Furthermore, those musicians who seek a “purified” form of mugham are interested in
the relationship between *mugham* and Islam, and many condemn the Western lifestyle and worldview as incompatible with “true” *mugham*. On the contrary, pro-Western elites are not entirely comfortable with such prioritization of religion.

Despite these contrasts, many musicians manoeuvre between the nativist and national stances adapting their styles to suit both. Creativity is an important tool in this case. Also, there are commonalities between nativist and nationalist tendencies such as the significance of sung texts. The *xanondə* voice serves as the primary symbol of the occupied Karabakh land, hence playing a crucial role in the official ideology of nationalism about a single united ethnicity and territory. Nativist musicians, for their part, engage in discourses about sung poetry because they are keen to develop the harmony between music and text that used to be the hallmark of pre-Soviet *mugham*. The importance of sung texts in *mugham*, therefore, is a primary concern for many musicians.

Scholarship on *mugham* by Azerbaijani researchers is influenced by both nativist and nationalist themes. The latter is more prominent due to the official nature of the scholarly endeavour and because it is difficult for local academics to disentangle their work from meta-narratives that were created in the Soviet times. However, although many topics feature research on the Westernized versions of *mugham*, many are also about what constitutes “authentic” *mugham* and facets of *mugham* that have been forbidden during the Soviet rule. As Huseynova rightly notes, “Research on the historical past of Azerbaijani music, including the role of religion, neglected genres, and forgotten musical instruments, is now central to the activities of native scholars” (Huseynova 2016: 252). As a consequence, many debates among scholars and musicians are especially intense at this time because so many versions of what is “pure” and what has been purged or forgotten during Soviet Azerbaijan have emerged. For example, some
scholars (Imrani 2000; Musazade 2012) inquire into the early twentieth-century maclis tradition in order to recover the correct naming or musical structure of certain mugham parts. While these attempts are merited and deserving of separate detailed research, the focus on performance is more insightful because creativity offers musicians a bolder and simultaneously safer critique of official discourses and ideologies from the past.

This chapter is centred on the development of mugham creativity considering identity dynamics in the post-Soviet context. It is my contention that an investigation of creativity in performance is a lens on the decolonial subjectivities of performers. This creativity is a form of agency for individual musicians engaged in an eloquent dialogue with existing discourses and traditions via musical symbols. In other words, creativity is their response to the changing and complicated political climate, to official ideologies about mugham as national art, and to the turbulent history to which the Azerbaijani people and their music have been subjected.

4.2 Nativism and mugham: Islamic revival

Islamic revival in post-Soviet Azerbaijan underpins ideas about and experiences of mugham. For example, irfan and tasawwuf are two words frequently used today by musicians. The words signify Islamic gnosis and Sufism, respectively. While irfan is intertwined with tasawwuf, there are important differences. The emphasis with irfan is on knowledge and contemplation (tafakkür) while tasawwuf is about practice and ritual. In addition to specific notions of irfan and tasawwuf, many performers associate mugham with an overall form of Islam. The interpretation of the relationship between different aspects of Islam and mugham that is pervasive in post-Soviet Azerbaijan is consistent with the socio-political context. Freed from the secularized and frozen
condition of Soviet art, musicians are invested in defining the sacred dimension of *mugham* that was previously denied to them in official contexts.

The knowledge about the Islamic sciences that is circulating and affecting *mugham* performance is fuelled by the new availability of sources and by the information that was preserved in the Soviet era. When Azerbaijan was part of the USSR, religion withdrew into private spaces. Although access to religious knowledge was denied, inner experience of Islam was maintained because the central relationship in Islam is between the individual and God (Heyat 2008: 363). Muslims always found a replacement for the closed mosques in their ordinary houses (Yunusov 2004: 152). Above all, the role of conservative suburban towns in the preservation of Islam was critical. Here, sacred knowledge, including the spiritual dimension of *mugham*, was passed on underground (see chapter 3). Musicians today speak openly about their ties and networks to sources of Islamic knowledge during the Soviet rule in the religious communities such as Naradaran. In fact, this is how many validate their ideas about and expertise of *mugham*.

The Islamic revival and its relevance for *mugham* are mainly phenomena of nativism. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it was firmly decided that Azerbaijan would be a strictly secular state despite the distancing from the atheist policies of the Soviet Union and public demonstration of adherence to Islam by some leaders in power. For example, former President Heydar Aliyev swore his presidential oath on the Constitution as well as the Quran and made sure to celebrate officially almost every important Muslim holiday (Bedford 2008: 194). However, towards the end of the 1990s, official registration for religious groups was already put into place and the government was beginning to control religious activity within the country, fearing its development into a source of opposition. The regulation of religious activity became
especially acute after 1997 with the introduction of laws that limited the autonomy of religious organizations (Bedford 2008: 194). As Sofie Bedford explains, “Except for a brief respite during glasnost and at the beginning of independence, the trend in Azerbaijan seems to have been a return to Soviet style state-controlled religion with a network of state institutions keeping track of believers” (Bedford 2008: 206).

Regardless of this close observation and suspicion towards Islam, the religion’s centrality for the people has been constant. The endurance of Islam and its revival after Independence were due to actions and commitments of the people. Moreover, the Azerbaijanis have been rebelling against the laws imposed on religious activities, as exemplified by the disturbances in Nardaran in 2002 on these grounds. In other words, Islam has turned oppositional and there is a deep mistrust of “official religion” among the people (Bedford 2008: 195). Some Azerbaijanis assert that the Islamic worldview clashes with the pro-Western outlook of the ruling elites. Many *mugham* musicians partake in these views and feelings.

The popularity of Islam in post-Soviet Azerbaijan is nurtured by religious movements from abroad – mainly Iran, the Arab world, and Turkey. With liberation from the Soviet Union in 1991, the government adopted an open-door free policy towards the Islamicization agenda of surrounding countries. Therefore, restoration of mosques, facilitation of trips to Mecca, and other similar projects were started with the help of outsider agents. For instance, many *mollas* arrived in Azerbaijan from Iran to help restore religious life in the country (Yunusov 2004: 178). This external influence is evident in and reinforced through *mugham* because the performance style is evolving to be not only increasingly tied to religion but also to the surrounding Eastern world and its branches of modal music associated with Islam.
Multiple parameters of *mugham* are impacted by the nativist proximity to Islam, including the pronunciation of *ghazal* poetry, *əruz*, and microtones. Additionally, nativist efforts champion the spiritual experience that is linked to Eastern modal music. Azerbaijani musicians are usually referring to *təsəvvüf* or *irfan* as the mystical realm of *mugham*. For example, those masters who are more conservative and represent pre-Soviet lineages perpetuate these discourses because of the significance of *ghazals*, *əruz*, *guş* names, technique, and states of creativity that are, according to them, all tied to mysticism. In general, many *mugham* performers associate *mugham* with an overall form of Islam. One of my teachers asserted that *mugham* is the shared Muslim way of thinking across the world, among Arabs, Persians, Turks, Tajiks, Uzbeks, etc. The developing relationship between *mugham* and Islam will be investigated in the context of one *məclis* project I organized in Baku during my fieldwork, as well as the *toy* traditions in post-Soviet Azerbaijan. Next, I will discuss two distinct nativist forms of *mugham* – “Eastern” and “Azerbaijani” – and corresponding creativity on the *tar*.

4.3 *Mugham Məclisi* project

We were running over time, but none of the audience members seemed to notice. The floor was taken by a professor of linguistics who was talking in an impassioned tone, punctuated by wide and sharp gesticulations:

The fusion of *əruz* and music makes real *mugham*! Like Vugar was demonstrating! But that young guy who sang *şur* he made all these mistakes! I taught at your university! Have you listened to Alim’s performance? He does it right and you get such enjoyment from listening! You must not perform long vowels as short, and vice versa. It is all about timing. If you don’t sing in the right time, it will not overlap with the music being played. That is why *ghazal*’s timing and the music’s timing overlaps. This is the real art! You see how Vugar talked about *mugham*’s *irfan*! Thanks to our Independence in 1991, we can
talk about such things! This is the real meaning of mugham! We have always heard Bahram Mansurov’s performance, and how much irfan there is! (Taleh Garayev, Mugham Məclisi, 13 February 2015)

His mood was sparked by the speech of the main speaker, tar player Vugar Rzayev, one of the few successors left of the Mansurov lineage. Vugar had said just a few minutes earlier:

*Mugham* takes a person away, it pulls in, you don’t know where, it is an unseen world [qeyb almə]. *Mugham* has to be like that. And same with ghazal. If there are simple words and simple ghazals, then there won’t be any irfan and the listener will not listen. Then the performance ends up being schematic, not creative. Instead, *mugham* should take you away to another world for 20-30 minutes, where you go and see different things that you do not understand but you enjoy it. This is how it is in Sufism [təsavvüf] of divine philosophers. They would say ghazals and go into trance [özünü tərk eləmək]. To go to such a world where there are no materialistic things, no worldly things…the reason why the *ney* sings so sadly. It is a small pipe with a hole, and there is emptiness inside it. And you feel that it longs for something, for the day it will unite. This is *irfan* and we should teach that today….

I don’t want to tire you, but I want to talk about the young players here today. Today’s playing school is not enough for *irfan*, it is not meaningful playing. Listen to Gurban Primov, Ahmad Bakikhanov, Bahram Mansurov. What technique there is! And there is also *irfan* there! Today’s playing is not *irfan*, it is fun [dincəlmək] [demonstrates by playing Western scales on the *tar*]. I hope in the conservatory they would start teaching such courses on Bakikhanov school, and Mansurov, and then Haji Mammadov and Server Ibrahimov school. First try to imitate them and then with time you would get closer to it and feel it (Vugar Rzayev, Mugham Məclisi, 13 February 2015).

This was the first gathering of “*Mugham Məclisi*”; a project dedicated to reviving the pre-Soviet *məclis* tradition. A couple of students from ADA University and I organized *məclis* events in the winter and spring of 2015 and received funding from an organization named the Youth Foundation under the President of Azerbaijan. Our aim was to invite students from music institutions to perform in front of *mugham* masters, knowers, poets, linguists, and religious scholars who would offer their feedback. We picked a venue in the Old City of Baku – the museum house of Azerbaijan’s most admired painter Tahir Salahov. This first *məclis* was
focused solely on șur. We invited two trios from the best music schools in Baku: Asaf Zeynalli Music College and the National Conservatory. They performed full șur dəstgah. The audience was comprised of other music students, fans of mugham, and masters who were expert performers, poets, linguists, some of whom we invited from Nardaran. The room was large enough to fit about 80 people, who sat surrounded by national carpets and paintings with Azerbaijani landscapes, immersed in the meditative ambiance of the intimate performances.

Vugar Rzayev was the tar master we chose to deliver a talk about șur and provide criticism after the performances.

The project was created to fill a lacuna: provide a context where students would be exposed to knowledge they do not normally receive in public music institutions. This is why we invited masters who advocated for the non-mainstream versions of mugham, showing the student performers perspectives that are alternatives to the institutional curriculum. After the events, students admitted that the information presented was eye-opening and few complained about the fact that their teachers were not there to defend them.

Many discourses about mugham that characterize post-Soviet Azerbaijan surfaced here in a rather effervescent manner. For example, the need for irfan and toswwif in performance were emphasized by Vugar and other connoisseurs in the audience. These, according to the experts who were present, are lacking in the mainstream performance style due to reasons such as disregard of əruz by both vocalists and instrumentalists, poor pronunciation, simple and secular ghazals, and lack of harmony between trio members. The main message in the məclus discussion was that meanings of ghazals with philosophical themes need to be properly conveyed in mugham, leading to an otherworldly experience.
The məclis ended with a spontaneous performance of segah məgham dəstgah by the masters themselves. This powerful performance was truly moving, evident in the audience reactions. Most inspiring were the skilful treatment of poetry by the xanəndə, the unconventional modulations between məghams that did not seem to be planned, and the impressive Mansurov technique by Vugar who was performing on the tar. The mutual inspiration among trio members was palpable. After listening to a beyt that was sung with utmost clarity and brilliant ornamentation, the tar player would play a sentence creatively enhancing the gestures and techniques of the Mansurov school with his own idiosyncratic movements. Hearing this, the xanəndə would get inspired further and continue to enthral the tar player in a recursive manner. The catalyst in this performance was this continuous build up sparked by the singer and the tar player together. The kamança player was a student from one of the invited trios and thus was limited to just holding a drone sound or directly copying small fragments played by the tarzən.

4.4 Weddings and məclises in the Absheron region

As I spent more time in Azerbaijan I began to hear a lot of comments from masters, similar to this one:

Traditionally, there have been məgham weddings, especially in Karabakh and Baku. There can be two types of groups of musicians: (a) a trio and (b) a large clarinet group that includes a clarinet, balaban, synthesizer, nagara, garmon, and a singer of mainly dance songs. They perform and entertain the guests. They used to also play one dəstgah, but this is very rare today. No one wants to hear that and people just want to dance. But before they used to listen to the whole dəstgah (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 28 March 2014).
This pessimistic view is not completely consistent with my experiences: I have been to a few weddings in Baku that featured substantial *mugham* performances. Certain weddings do feature *mugham* as the climax of the whole wedding celebration, as Naroditskaya also reports (Naroditskaya 2002: 32). The resurgence of a kind of spirituality associated with *mugham* is palpable in weddings taking place even in the most urban centres. For example, I have met knowers of *mugham* living in Baku that are experts in the philosophical dimension of this music and who still continue to base events in their lives such as weddings around *mugham*.

Weddings in the suburban villages surrounding Baku differ strikingly, and not just in terms of music. These regions are known for their conservative Muslim outlook and adherence to a compatible lifestyle, as was described in the previous chapter. The Islamic revival that followed liberation from Soviet Union intensified this conservatism. As before, weddings take place earlier in the day, prohibit consumption of alcohol, and maintain separate spaces for women and men. Moreover, in these villages today, as in the Soviet times, *mugham* is most cherished and is fundamental in a wedding setting.

However, as compared to the Soviet context, the tradition of *mugham* weddings in suburban areas around the capital is in decline due to economic reasons. I interviewed many masters and knowers about this:

…this *mugham* wedding tradition is a disappearing tradition now. And it is because these places became very poor…this is the political situation now. They still have *mugham* weddings and they know most about *mugham* and really value *mugham*, but these events are very rare and they only invite one xanəndə whereas before they had many attend and sing. They used to have money from selling carnation flowers and clove spices (Nardaran knower, interview, 17 July 2015).

Before, back then, we [people of Nardaran] had greenhouses and we would grow carnations and sell them. This was our main source of income. They went to Russia. Now after Independence we do not sell them as the Russians found other sources. We don’t have this business and we don’t have money. To bring a xanəndə here they ask for 1000
manat. But we don’t have such money. Therefore they all went away. And our poor young generation now does not see the real mugham. These guys in the video [showing Soviet weddings in Nardaran] would bring 100,000 roubles from St. Petersburg. These old guys had products in their yard and also made good money. So this is why now we can’t afford to bring many xanəndo. However, dervishes do not ask for that much and that is why we bring them now instead to conclude our wedding ceremonies (Nardaran knower, interview, 25 July 2015).

After the establishment of independent Azerbaijan in 1991, dervish weddings did come into fashion. While dervishes sing to mugham modes, they do not perform dostgah with təsnifs and all the other necessary parts. They also use different texts, and their style of singing differs due to lack of ornamentation and a different kind of creativity. Furthermore, the use of instruments from the mugham trio is usually prohibited. However, Naroditskaya writes that she discovered a recording of a dervish wedding in which a woman participated and instruments of the standard trio were present (Naroditskaya 2002: 22).

Despite the weakening of the mugham wedding tradition, some knowers in Nardaran spoke with optimism:

Now in our village, there is a religious poet Mehrali. There was a meyxana competition and he was a member of jury there. Also, there is Taleh. These are poets, they know much. Nabi is another person who is a tar player. And Qadir who was a student of Haji Mammadov…. Even Hajibaba would be looking at our Nardaran knowers when he performed here because they knew so much. We now have in our village men who know poetry very well such as Mehrali, Taleh. In three days there will be a møclis here and we will be discussing mugham and poetry (Nardaran knower, interview, 25 July 2015).

As evident, the møclis tradition continues in the Absheron regions. Wearing Muslim attire and sitting quietly taking notes and making recordings, I had an opportunity to attend a few of these gatherings. There were masters of poetry as well as performers of mugham who listened to a young trio from Baku, offering them advice. Most of the conversation centred on the ghazal poetry and its meanings. References to sacred texts which were then linked to everyday Muslim
sensibilities were as layers peeled off one after another, revealing the world of *mugham* philosophy. The knowers also performed themselves, either playing *mugham* or reciting poetry. Such opportunities for *mugham* students to attend *məclis*es with masters and knowers from Absheron’s suburban towns are few and far between. Most pupils do not make an attempt to surpass their official training in Baku (see below) and are too young to have extensive connections that would facilitate such visits for them.

4.5 “Eastern” and “Azerbaijani” *mugham* on the *tar*

As I was doing fieldwork, interviewing and taking lessons with *mugham* musicians, I often heard them exclaim about their national heritage: “Azerbaijan – this is the East!” (*Azərbaycan – Şərqdir!*) or “The East – it is a thing of intricacy!” (*Vostok – eto delo tonkoe!*, Rus.). There are many discourses about local art as “Eastern.” This is a kind of nativism characterized by a sense of the Self belonging to the wider Oriental tradition. I believe such discourses are rooted in the revival of Islam in post-Soviet Azerbaijan, as well as increasing contact with Muslim neighbours – Turkey, Iran, and the Arab world – which was curtailed in Soviet times. The growing overriding factor of Muslimness in identity formation among Azerbaijanis coincides with the pursuit of a single aesthetics of Islam when it comes to *mugham* music. It is the link to religion, shared with Azerbaijan’s Muslim neighbours, which shapes views of *mugham* as “Eastern”, while differences in language and ethnicity are eclipsed. Many masters also asserted that I must become Muslim in order to understand *mugham* – clearly demarcating the identity of their Self different to me: a representative simultaneously of the Western and ex-Soviet world.
The identification of *mugham* as Eastern is also a remnant of the Soviet era. The Asian republics of the USSR were exoticized and inferiorized by the Centre as “backward”, justifying the agenda to civilize and bring them closer to “universal” European culture. In the absence of Russia’s domination today, the self-identification as Eastern does not reify this hierarchy. Instead, assertions of belonging to the East can be seen as ways of empowering a nation’s identity and signalling that there is no need for change in the form of Westernization.

Furthermore, calling attention to the “Eastern” nature of *mugham* makes sense considering the significant Western presence in post-Soviet Azerbaijan and implicated outlooks towards “exotic” Azerbaijan in the Western imagination. Musicians have increasingly come into contact with the exoticization of their music by outsiders. However, because of the centrality of Islam that is overtaking *mugham* creativity today, I contend that *mugham* as “Eastern” is not a superficial “Othering” of the Self in order to profit from such a representation. Instead, it is nativism stemming from a search for common Islamic aesthetics for *mugham* and a decolonial desire to allege an “Eastern” identity.

One of the first places I visited when I started fieldwork was the State Museum of Musical Culture of Azerbaijan. By sheer serendipity, I walked into a rehearsal of the State Ensemble of Ancient Musical Instruments of Azerbaijan that was taking place at the museum. I was truly astounded by the exoticism in the sounds that were coming at me. Here were all kinds of instruments from Central Asia, Turkey, and India, playing alongside those common in Azerbaijan. As part of the main conservatory in Baku, a new research centre was opened in 1992 with the aim of recovering ancient musical instruments in Azerbaijan. As a result instruments such as *qolça qopuz, barbet, şirvan tênburu, rud, rübab, çoğur, çəng, nüzxa* were restored. These
efforts led to the formation of the ensemble of ancient instruments. The ensemble began to perform, becoming a government sponsored ensemble in 1995.

In conversations, musicians frequently draw parallels between *mugham* and other modal musics. In performance, new musical gestures or styles of playing are incorporated into *mugham*, including those of modal music from Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, India, and others. This is especially palpable in *tar* performances today because musicians add extra frets in order to play more microtones from modal systems found in the vicinity. They voice concerns about the temperament of the instrument in the 1930s, and the dissociation of *mugham* from its roots in the shared “Eastern” music system.

*Mugham* performers I interviewed listen to so-called “oriental” music on Youtube and learn to insert unusual tones and gestures into *mugham* performances. These performers are heavily invested in the creativity that the extra frets can afford. Many times I have met my teachers’ other students who brought their fretted *tars*, and when I asked them why they enjoy altering *mugham* by adding extra *pordo* their simple answer was that they get paid more when they perform this way at weddings and in restaurants. I also interviewed a rising star of *mugham* performance on the *tar* who appends many microtonal frets to his instrument. In an excited speech, he told me about his new revolutionary idea to begin playing *mugham* on a *tar* that is devoid of any frets. He said that this really surpasses all the limitations of the current system and allows for the right experience and creativity while performing.

There are those who find much deeper meanings in the use of extra frets. One musician at the National Conservatory designed a *tar* with additional frets. He asserted that the “real” *mugham* can be performed only on his *tar*, which has 49 steps: the first octave with 28 frets and the second one with 21 because of a lack of space on the neck. He changed *mugham* accordingly,
with different sections using a much larger variety of microtones than in standard practice. When I asked him about the importance of microtones he explained that they create a necessary spiritual feeling. Following this response, I asked why microtones are linked to this kind of experience. He answered by reading the Quran in Arabic but with very poor pronunciation at first and then with a proper, musical one. Microtones, he said, are like letters in the Quran. This is why the presence of microtones is similar to reading the sacred texts with correct letters and sounds, which in turn creates a spiritual state, and heals the body. When I inquired into his opinion about musicians who tempered and Sovietized the tar in the 1930s, he praised them, saying that these changes actually saved mugham from being completely purged. He also mentioned that the return to the proper mugham system through additional frets was today’s divine mission. His proof that these ideas are correct is his communication with dead musicians from the other side who changed the tar in the 1930s. Perhaps the ghosts of the past are functioning as vehicles towards historical revision?

The issue of tar’s microtones was already being raised in the 1980s and 1990s. An article by music scholar Babayev from the journal Qobustan discussed the activity and changes that arose with regards to the tar and its temperament in the 1990s. The article is called “Where is the tar of Sadigjan?” In it Babayev stresses the miniscule divisions, ornaments, and intonations as crucial for national sound, thereby underlining the importance of microtones in Azerbaijani mughams that were de-emphasized in the Soviet context in the 1930s when the music was Westernized. The author defends the activity of Hajibeyov to create equal temperament for the instrument because the goal was the development of composition school in Azerbaijan. Mugham here is classified as “Eastern”, and the author highlights the loss of microtones by comparing mugham to modal music in Iraq and writing that when listening to masters in Iraq play their
national music it becomes clear what kind of nuances *mugham* had lost. He continues: “Of course, Azerbaijani musicians play with much more virtuosity, but this is not what is necessary in *mugham*. Instead, the depth and national colours are needed. This has to do with the *poirdo* that were lost in the 1930s” (Babayev 1992: 47). Indeed he calls this loss “huge” and “painful” in the article. He ends by writing: “our task is to preserve Sadigjan’s *tar*. For this, our masters and acoustic masters must cooperate” (Babayev 1992: 47).

Ethnomusicologist During brings up the topic of microtones in post-Soviet Azerbaijan. He asserts that after Azerbaijan’s independence, neutral intervals have been rediscovered by young musicians (During 2005: 145). However, this is not the case in most of the Central Asian republics where modal music was similarly Westernized and instruments tempered (e.g. Tajikistan, Uzbekistan). During writes:

…the old intervals have resurfaced with the independence of Azerbaijan, a nation that always had a strong ethnic and cultural identity. Those artists born after the Soviet reform and completely impregnated with the new intonations reject the old pre-Soviet intervals (the three-quarter tone in particular), which some young players are using once again, as “Iranian.” All that is needed to find the truth of the matter is to doubt the dogma of the conservatories and to listen to old recordings before the Soviet period, in which most of the modes were played in Iranian-Arab intervals. A return to the older style began some ten years ago (During 2005: 158).

While During’s remarks are well-founded, he does not address an important point: the invention of frets that were not there even in pre-Soviet times but are rather borrowed from modal systems in the vicinity. In other words, although some musicians’ efforts to reintroduce pre-Soviet microtones are genuine, the majority are employing sounds that were never Azerbaijani in the first place.

The current wave of nativism in post-Soviet Azerbaijan is definitely expanding the horizons of creativity. *Mugham* art, however, involves rules stemming from the overriding
superiority of the established system. As such, there are conservative musicians (usually they identify themselves as *konservator* in Russian) who passionately advocate schools of *mugham* that originated in pre-Soviet Azerbaijan. These are masters with much esteem who represent particular lineages and guard the *mugham* knowledge they have inherited. The conservatists react very negatively to the new tendency to orientalise *mugham* and the effects this has on creativity.

When I asked about the extra frets that are now added to the *tar*, these masters exclaimed:

> They do not even use the microtonal tones we already have on the *tar* but start to adjoin new ones! Now they play in Arabic style, or Persian style. But in classical *mugham*, this is not allowed. Masters must never do such things! (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 25 May 2014)

> Before our musicians imitated Iranian music, today they imitate Turkish one. But they do not really know what they are doing! (Emin Mammadov, interview, 28 February 2015)

However, while keen to keep *mugham* within previous boundaries, conservative musicians promote the same tendency towards “nativism” as the others. This is the second kind of nativism that advocates a distinctly Azerbaijani version of *mugham* instead of a more general Eastern form. These masters capitalize on the pre-Soviet origin of their respective lineages and make claims to know what pure *mugham* was before Soviet intervention. For instance, they champion the use of microtonal frets that are already there on the *tar* but which have been de-emphasized in the Soviet context. They are keen to recover smaller sections of *mugham* or entire cycles which have been omitted from the Soviet curriculum and, consequently, from performance practice. Prosodical *əruz* metres, proper declamation and understanding of ghazal poetry, a more meditative and less virtuosic manner of performance are other aspects part of this version of nativism that prevails today.
A recent post that triggered a heated debate on Facebook grabbed my attention. The post was started by one of my teachers who is an ardent conservatist. He wrote that today, players and xəndə are using Arab and Persian pərdə a lot, but when it comes to the cadential ending for each gusə and şöbə, they resort to the Azerbaijani versions. He condemned this practice and advised that musicians should keep to the national way of playing mugham and not imitate others. He then provided a provocative allegory, comparing the aforementioned imitations to an elderly, wise man dressed in punk clothes with half of his head shaved and tattooed. Some replied with applause and agreement, while others brought up names of famous mugham musicians who are part of the orientalising current but whose performances are praised by international audiences. Thus, while the awareness of possible negative effects of “Eastern” mugham exists, Azerbaijanis are still caught in the flux of defining what exactly is properly “native” and what is not.

Considering the long time lapse between today and the pre-Soviet period and the degree of changes that mugham was subjected to, the identification of “true” mugham is certainly not an easy task. However, based on fieldwork and archival data, I believe that the representatives of Mansurov and Bakikhanov lineages do know versions of mugham that are more or less historically valid. They learned orally from their forebears, which allowed for more unofficial information to be passed on in intimate or underground settings. Moreover, they have benefitted through access to old recordings and written documents, some of which are not even found in Azerbaijan’s archives.

Below is a chart showing şur dostgah as performed in the conservatory and by representatives of the Bakikhanov and Mansurov lineages as they taught it to me. The sections in bold font are those that comprise the standardized şur dostgah. These parts in bold font are
aligned here in order to show how the Bakikhanov and Mansurov versions contain many guşə in-between the parts of the institutionalized şur dəstgah cycle. Masters assert that these rare guşə have been passed on from pre-Soviet times in their original form. Investigating pre-Soviet lists (Mansurov, “Rules about Mugham Şöbə”, 650.1.19; Mansurov, “Bahram Mansurov’s Written Notes on Mugham Şöbə”, 650.1.40), I have underlined those guşə which do indeed reappear today among successors of the two conservative lineages. Moreover, the conservatist versions incorporate guşə that serve as unconventional transitions into other mughams not part of the official curriculum. When we had finished learning şur dəstgah, Emin Mammadov exclaimed that we had managed to include full extra mughams such as bayati-kürd and dǔgah in addition to those present in standard şur dəstgah. Emin noted that this is how şur dəstgah was played at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Table 4.1 Şur dəstgah components in the canonized version and as performed by representatives of the Bakikhanov and Mansurov lineages today

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standardized şur</th>
<th>Bakikhanov şur</th>
<th>Mansurov şur</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>məya</strong> (5 cümlə)</td>
<td><strong>məya</strong> (3 cümlə)</td>
<td><strong>məya</strong> (3 cümlə)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>molla nəzi</td>
<td>tızək</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>siyahı-ruh</td>
<td>cüdəi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cüdəi</td>
<td>gövhər</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>həcə dərvişi</td>
<td>gərləli</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Əbu-Əta</td>
<td>həcə dərvişi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>səlmək</td>
<td>busəlik</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>şur-şəhnaz</td>
<td>səlmək</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>şəhr-aşub</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dəst-kərə</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>şəhənəz-šəhənəz</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>şəhənəz-xara</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>şəhənəz-xara</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mızrəbi-gülər</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>şur-şəhnəz</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mızrəbi-kərvənə</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bayati-türk</td>
<td>bayati-türk</td>
<td>bayati-türk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>şikəsteyi-fars müberriqə</td>
<td>şikəsteyi-fars müberriqə</td>
<td>şikəsteyi-fars müberriqə</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aşiran</td>
<td>aşiran</td>
<td>aşiran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>somayi-şəms</td>
<td>somayi-şəms</td>
<td>somayi-şəms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hicaz</td>
<td>hicaz</td>
<td>hicaz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>şah Xətai</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sarənc</td>
<td>sarənc</td>
<td>sarənc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Šbu-Əta rahab</td>
<td>Šbu-Əta</td>
<td>Šbu-Əta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baba Tahir nişibi-şəraz</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>busəlik</th>
<th>busəlik</th>
<th>zil-şəhnaz əngi-söör şəddi-şəhnaz novruz-xara dilkəş daşti kərkəuki kürdü</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>asia-gus qoşa-mizrab əbulqəp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>nişibi-şəraz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>qoşa mizrab hicaz-ərəbi ləhmi-ərəbi hacı Yuni bayati-kürd covhəri mehdi-zərrəbi nalevi-zənbər mənəvi pəhləvi gəliyi əlbəri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Baba Tahir Azərbaycan şah Xətai məşənnəhər düğəh ruhül-ərvah zəmin-xara sarənc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 192 -
For comparison, here is the beginning of Şur dostgah (from bərdəst until bayati-türk) by one mugham performer who is invested in an Eastern version, having gathered various guşə in Iran and Turkey. I noted that some of the guşə he played had a very similar melodic outline to rare guşə in the Bakikhanov and Mansurov versions, however they were named differently.

Conservative musicians contend that there is a distinctly Azerbaijani form of mugham. They admit the close link between Azerbaijani and Iranian music in pre-Soviet times, but they maintain that there is a divergence between the two systems that was delineated especially in the pre-Soviet maclises. They also acknowledge that what they play today is an altered version of mugham of their representative school, since they have added their own creativity and style to it.
Nevertheless, their renditions belong to their lineages, and the music (not the details of their idiosyncratic styles) is what it used to be before Soviet domination. These masters contrast their playing with the lack of “school” in the mainstream *mugham.* For example, they express this view in the following statements: “There are three schools: Mansurov, Bakikhanov, Haji Mammadov. What is played now on the television? It is not a school, it is a mix of many different styles, but no particular correct one” (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 9 March 2014).

While Mansurov and Bakikhanov adherents separate themselves from the popular manner of *tar* performance, they also recognize each other as knowers and masters above others. They often admit that few conservative musicians other than them possess similar profound knowledge about *mugham.*

When it comes to the frets, these musicians are against additional microtones. However, they do employ the microtonal frets already there on the standard *tar* with much more frequency. The use of rare guşə incorporates these sounds to a great extent. The microtones, in these cases, become main tones of the music and not merely decorative.

Figure 4.2 Rare guşə *cüdai* performed by representatives of the Mansurov and Bakikhanov schools

*Cüdai* in Bakikhanov school (without cadence)
One common prominent point of discussion among conservative musicians has to do with principles of əruz. This discourse serves as a point of criticism of current performance in which “real” principles of əruz had been lost. This also derives from guşə that these musicians use because these sections are always highly metred, and sometimes masters even identify particular əruz metres associated with a guşə. For example, the same guşə cüdai notated above was correlated by masters with rəmol metre in the following way:

Figure 4.3 Guşə cüdai with rəmol metre

Cüdai in Bakikhanov school
Thus, the style of tar playing features units that are said to be pre-Soviet because they exemplify harmony between music and poetry. As such, ciūdai illustrated above is structured in two halves that mirror two complementary misras in a beyt. The rest of the musical fabric also maintains a steady pulse, devoid of emotional pauses, accelerated virtuosic passages, and other forms of dramatic displays expressed in irregularities of musical temporality, characteristic of popular performance style. Creativity is the sine qua non of mugham performed by these masters: they assert that adhering closely to “pure” mugham and staying with its boundaries opens up possibilities for musical innovation. This point will be taken up in later chapters.
Conservativists with whom I learned *tar* often mentioned the role of Islamic mysticism when it comes to the form of *dəstgah*, technique of playing, or specific *guşə*. Below are excerpts from conversations about these elements of *mugham*:

*Mugham* was not this extensive. It was developed into *dəstgah* through Sufism. Before there were just sections like *şöbə mayə*, and then in about the sixteenth century, *dəstgah* form was being structured…. *Mugham* started to be expanded, because when Sufis danced and went into trance, they spoke. Here was *əruz*. And the *guşə* were created like this. In the lower and in the higher register. There was an altered state of consciousness and closeness to God. At this time different variations were created and *mugham* was developing (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 20 May 2015).

This is *əlif mizrab* [technique of playing with the plectrum when all the strings are sounded from highest to lowest with one movement and very full sound]. Many say this means “olive sound” or “butter” because one has to sound the strings with strength and tenderness at the same time. This is mostly a technique of Bahram Mansurov and Gurban Primov. But the real meaning is related to the sacred letter *Əlif* which is the form of God. The shape of the letter and the technique are similar. And this is what it means. Once you know the real meaning then you play differently and express the real essence of *mugham* (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 4 December 2014).

The mystical experience that characterizes nativist *mugham* performances results in a richer domain of meanings for interpretation and imagination. The effect of these processes on creativity will be covered in the second part of the dissertation.

4.6 *Mugham* as national art

Vugar began his speech at our “*Mugham Məclisi*” event by thanking Azerbaijan’s president Ilham Aliyev and the first lady Mehriban Aliyeva for their immense effort towards restoration of *mugham*:

Today we are very lucky that *mugham* has been developing thanks to our well-respected President and the First Lady. This is due to the policies of our national leader Heydar
Aliyev’s from the late 1970s. He decided to preserve the national treasures, one of which was mugham. After this, the mugham festivals, TV programs, events about mugham started to be organized, and then UNESCO recognized mugham and tar playing as one of the world’s heritages (Vugar Rzayev, Mugham Məclisi, 13 February 2015).

A long list of new initiatives exemplifies the impetus to showcase mugham by those in power; these include the International Mugham Centre building, Space of Mugham symposia, competitions for young mugham singers, projects Voice of Karabakh, Bahramname, and others. One major achievement that was part of the ruling elite’s mission for mugham was the building of the International Mugham Centre of Azerbaijan in 2008, right on the beautiful, marble-paved waterfront known as Baku Boulevard. The design of the building is based on the tar, which is the obvious overall shape when looking down from a bird’s-eye view. This establishment profited from the sponsorship of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, also led by Azerbaijan’s First Lady. The opportunity for the government to finance the promotion of its country’s culture and art has been created by the second oil boom that began in mid-1990s in Azerbaijan. The lavish expenditure on the advancement of mugham is explained by the critical role mugham plays in the construction of Azerbaijan’s post-Soviet national identity.

Mugham contributes to the nation building in three main ways: as a symbol of the united nation with a pro-Western outlook, as heritage of the Armenian-occupied Karabakh region, and as legacy of the USSR dominion. Scholars have identified the principal ideology of the government to be “Azerbaijanism”, created by the Aliyevs in order to unite all the ethnicities in the nation and thereby prevent separatist movements (Tokluoglu 2005: 725). The creation of homogenized “nationalities” that took place in the Soviet Union has been bequeathed and maintained by today’s ruling elites. National symbols such as mugham function as tools to sustain the ideology of nationalism, thereby averting attempts to rebel by groups that have been
marginalized, such as the Talish or Lezgins in Azerbaijan. Overall, the influence of Soviet
culture is portrayed as positive and is central to the ideology of nationalism. Thus, Soviet
changes imposed on the culture of Azerbaijan are perpetuated and are never disputed officially.
The promulgation of a united nation is also an urgent remedy for the Karabakh crisis, working to
address the territorial schism and the reality of the lost Karabakh lands. This is why “the
Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is central to any discussion of the development of the Azerbaijani
national movement and national identity” (Tokluoglu 2005: 725).

4.7 The Karabakh crisis

The occupation of Karabakh by Armenians in the post-Soviet world and the subsequent
refugee crisis coincided with new soaring heights of mugham popularity, especially as promoted
by the government. Historically, Shusha – the centre of Karabakh – has been known for its rich
mugham traditions, starting from Sadigian’s remodelling of the tar and the famous idiosyncratic
style of xanəmdə art fostered in this region (see chapter 2). In post-Soviet Azerbaijan, there are
many projects, musicians, and ideas dedicated to fortifying the link between mugham and
Karabakh. More specifically, this connection is one between the xanəmdə voice and Karabakh.
The historical prominence of mugham singing in Shusha and the vicinity is brought to the fore as
evidence to reclaim Karabakh as a rightful territory of Azerbaijan. As Huseynova notes:

Even while living far from their roots, Garabagh singers strive to preserve the original
musical and poetic content of their repertoire. The indigenous mugham heritage of
Garabagh is now the focus of many musical and research activities, as is often the case
when music speaks symbolically on behalf of the nation about a difficult moment in its
history (Huseynova 2016: 243).
There are two main discourses that have risen in this setting of the Karabakh conflict. First, the *mugham* tradition in Karabakh serves as justification for that land being the property of Azerbaijani and not Armenians. It is true that historically *mugham* in Karabakh had been mostly developed and represented by Azerbaijaniis. For instance, there have not been any Armenian *xanəndə* simply because of the language barrier. Second, the mountainous landscape of Karabakh is linked to a particular kind of *xanəndə* singing – one that has a wide range, brilliant virtuosity, and especially beautiful expressivity in the high register.

The existence of different regional *mugham* styles in pre-Soviet Karabakh, Shirvan, and Absheron areas is downplayed as musicians promote the idea of an undivided Azerbaijan and a unified *mugham*. In the time of political fracture, they stress that there is one *mugham*. One distinguished *xanəndə* argued:

*Mugham* is one thing, it is same. But in the past there were different *məclises* held regionally. And because there were different accents, there were differences in *boğaz*. So if there is one *mugham* sung in all three regions, *mugham* will be the same but rendered differently because of different *boğaz*. Speaking of me, I was born in Baku and brought up here, my teacher is from Buzovna [Absheron village] as well. However, my roots are from Karabakh. …So for me there is just one *mugham*. I love Azerbaijan, I do not want it to be divided into regions (Tahir Amirov, interview, 9 July 2015).

A presentation and performance of an acclaimed project “The Voice of Karabakh” recently took place at the extravagant and newly built Heydar Aliyev Centre. This endeavour featured Azerbaijani and international performers: Alim Qasimov (*xanəndə*), Rain Sultanov (saxophone), Shahin Novrasli (piano), Yasuhide Mori (acoustic bass), Linnea Olsson (cello), Yasef Eyvazov (oud), Peter Nilsson (drums), and Irakli Koiava (percussion). These artists worked to fuse *mugham* with Western jazz and other popular genres, all recorded on two CDs.
The tracks were named after occupied regions in Karabakh such as Khojaly, Shusha, Fuzuli, Jabrayil, and others.

The Voice of Karabakh project incorporated the voice of Alim Qasimov as the only traditional element of *mugham*. Sitting cross-legged on a national carpet, rotating his upper body as if in a trance-like state, Alim sang a spiritual *ghazal* of Abulgasim Nebati (1812-73); a *ghazal* that is difficult and avoided by current singers due to its philosophical content and terminology. This *ghazal* begins with the following few *beyts* (Huseyni 2004: 71):

Eylə məstən bilməzəm kim, mey nədir, mina nədir!
Gül nədir, bübül nədir, sünbül nədir, såhra nədir!

Od tutub canım şərasər yandı, amma bilmədim,
Dil nədir, dılbar nədir, başımda bu sevda nədir?

Bilmədim ömrümə heç bir küfrü iyman hənsidir,
Əhməd-Məhmud kimdir, Musiyü İsa nədir?

Şahbazi-övci-vəhdət, vahidü həyyü qədim,
Xaliqi-ərzü səma ol fərdü bihəmtə nədir?

*Intoxicated, I cannot comprehend what is the wine, what is the sky!*  
*What is the flower, what is the nightingale, what is the wheat, what is the desert!*

*My body burned from head to toe, but I could not discern,*  
*What is the heart, who is Beloved, what is this love on my mind?*

*In my life, I did not know where is blasphemy and where is faith,*  
*Who is Prophet Mohammad, who are Moses and Jesus?*

*The Lord of Union, the ancient and the only One,*  
*Who is that superior One, Creator of the sky and the Earth?*

Nebati’s *ghazal* is abundant in Persian and Arabic words rooted in the Islamic sciences, and induces a spiritual state for those who understand its deeper meanings. Curiously, the instruments accompanying Alim are both Western and Eastern, and there is nothing except the
singer from the standard Azerbaijani *mugham* trio. In this case, the symbol of Karabakh is specifically the *mugham* voice.

Many Azerbaijanis are fans of a festival that is a competition for aspiring young *xanəndo* performers. This event takes place every two years and goes on for several months, twice weekly at the Mugham Centre from where it is aired live on state-sponsored TV channel AzTV. It is also funded by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation. In 2015, when I had a chance to attend the sessions, most of the finalist singers were refugees from Karabakh and the link between *xanəndo* voice and this region was continuously emphasized during the festival.

*Mugham’s* symbolic significance for the Karabakh territory is an essential part of the official ideology of nationalism. Yet, the attention on the *xanəndo* voice is shared with nativists and many accomplished masters discuss the need to bring back the depth of meanings associated with *ghazal* poetry that have been obscured in Soviet Azerbaijan. The consequent development of interpretation and its effect on creativity are important themes of the following chapters.
4.8 Westernization and the Soviet legacy

The increased Western presence in the country and the pro-Western attitude that the elites have adopted reverberate throughout the local cultural sphere. Moreover, this agenda complements the ongoing perpetuation of Soviet establishments such as the theorization and Westernization of *mugham*. Nevertheless, this trajectory coexists with nativism, resulting in a rich variety of styles and versions of Azerbaijani traditional music. As such, Huseynova reports that “At present, Azerbaijani music mirrors the state policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which aims to bring all accomplishments of Western civilization into Azerbaijan while maintaining traditional cultural values” (Huseynova 2016: 237).

The Mugham Centre hosts both traditional and Westernized forms of Azerbaijani music. For example, during the “Space of Mugham” International Festival which takes place every two years and is also funded by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, one can witness performances of a new *dastgah* each day of the week. Famous musicians dressed in national attire embark audiences on a *mugham* journey through a whole *dastgah*. This is one of the rare time-place circumstances when *mugham* is not shortened and a full *dastgah* can last more than an hour. In addition to *mugham* performances at the Mugham Centre, other genres such as jazz and composed works are performed. Thus, one can get a glimpse of the Westernized genres that merge *mugham* with jazz, rock, and even other traditional musics across cultures. While composed works can be occasionally witnessed at the Mugham Centre or the Heydar Aliyev Centre, they are usually performed at the Azerbaijan State Academic Opera and Azerbaijan State Philharmonic Hall. The former commonly shows Hajibeyov’s and other Soviet composers’ operas and ballets that are based on *mugham*, while the latter exhibits symphonic and chamber pieces from Soviet times or those that have been newly composed.
Education is one domain in which there is “retention of the same, out-dated methods of instruction used in Soviet times” (Cornell 2011: 256). The present-day *mugham* curriculum and methodology at official institutions are both legacies of the Soviet era. While showing influence of standardization, Westernization, temperament, and secularization of the Soviet times, certain elements suggest that the Soviet changes were not utterly sweeping.

I interviewed a friend who was a third-year student at the National Conservatory, studying the art of *xanəndə*. Unlike *tar* lessons, *xanəndə* classes are not individual. This is the traditional way, and how it always had been before. In the past, young *xanəndə* did not have any technology to aid them, and they gathered all together and learned as a team because their teacher would sing a *cumlo* or *güşə* only once. Today, teachers have recordings of *dostgah* cycles and they pass it to students through Bluetooth, or other methods of digital transfer. Another option is for the teacher to sing a *dostgah* while students make recordings. *Xanəndə* students do not have to learn notation, nor do they have to sing Western compositions.

When learning *ghazals* as part of a *dostgah*, students usually write them out. If a student already has a copy of the *ghazal*, he or she can also pass it to others to copy. This is because there is one standard version of a *dostgah* with the same *ghazals* and the students are not taught how to fit *ghazals* of their choice to various *mughams*. In class, young *xanəndəs* sing what they learn from the recordings and the teacher corrects, while also providing new and alternate decorations. *Xanəndə* instructors also point out wrong words and cases of bad pronunciation. Sometimes, more difficult words such as those in Persian and Arabic are defined. However, teachers do not always explain what the words mean. *Əruz* is not taught, but it is already there when learning a *ghazal* since it is inherent in the metres. The philosophy of *mugham* is not taught either. For example, the journey to *zil* is presented as one of courage and teachers encourage
students to let go of fears when singing in the high register. But the structure and the philosophical meaning behind a *döstgah* are not explained.

*Qaval* is taken to lessons, and basic explanations about how to use it are delivered by teachers. For instance, the right way of holding the instrument and the various techniques of playing are taught. After this, the students learn specific rhythms associated with *təsnifs* and *zərb-mughams*. Other than the *qaval*, the only instrument in class is the *tar*. In fact, *tar* is the main instrument for these lessons. Sometimes teachers might ask *xanəndo* students to sing without the instrument when there is a problem with melodic ornamentations. At other times, only the *tarzən* might be asked to play in order to show *xanəndo* pupils certain gestures and techniques, and they must imitate these from the instrument. For example, microtones and decorations are learned as such because when they are played on the instrument they are much clearer. *Tar* teachers sometimes supplement instructions of the *xanəndo* master and also explain to the students how to sing correctly. Often, students learn how to perform with the *tar*, how to focus on the *tar* and listen to the *tar* – in effect, they learn to become one whole with the instrument.

Official instruction for playing on the *tar* shows more traces of Soviet intervention. As I was learning *mugham* on the *tar* in Azerbaijan, my insistence on skipping Western compositions and scales was largely ignored as my teachers continued to organize concerts that featured both *mugham* and compositions such as those by Schubert and Mozart. This is the customary approach to teaching *tar*. *Tar* students must have two teachers – one who passes on *mugham* and another who teaches notes and composed works. Both musical systems must be mastered. As such, beginner *tar* players start by learning notes, and busy themselves playing Western scales and arpeggios. As I was taking lessons and learning the scales, my “notes” teacher would refuse
to teach me simple Western scales orally because there is a strict rule of always relying on notation. *Mugham*, on the other hand, is taught orally. The standard *dastgah* system based on Hajibeyov’s theories is memorized by students. In advanced levels, *tar* players attend *xanəndo* classes and learn to accompany them as would be customary in a trio performance.

Masters that are adept at notation are called “notnik” (note musician) and often create re-arrangements of renowned Western classical compositions for *tar*, piano, and other instruments of choice. One of my teachers who belongs to this category remarked:

> All students must learn *tar* by playing *mugham* and notated Western pieces. This is a requirement! *Tar* is our national and universal [vsemirnyj] instrument! Besides, when you play Western songs and exercises, they all pull you even closer towards *mugham* (Rovshen Gasimov, interview, 17 October 2014).

These masters often speak about *mugham* and especially the *tar* as “universal”, and they are proud of their ability to merge Western music with *mugham* or play Western compositions on the *tar*. If these masters teach *mugham*, they usually present the standardized version of *dastgah* cycles from Soviet curriculum or a shortened form.

Even at the most advanced institutions, such as the National Conservatory, only the school of Haji Mammadov is taught. However, there are masters who are disciples of Mansurov and Bakikhanov, but they guard their knowledge instead of sharing it with students. Furthermore, most students are not interested in the conservative schools of playing; and, the masters are simply not encouraged to teach *mugham* that is beyond the standardized version part of the curriculum. Emin Mammadov explained:

> I taught one of my students our Mansurov *mahur hindi* and after he played it at the exam, all the professors stood up and thanked me. But then they made him write a request to change his teacher. This is because when my students go to exams, the professors cannot ask them anything. For example, in the curriculum, there are 7-8 parts for each *mugham*
*dostgah*, but I teach 25 parts and they ended up knowing more than the other teachers. (Emin Mammadov, interview, 19 February 2015).

At the same time that nativism was taking over *tar* performance style, there were those musicians who wanted to further Westernize the *tar* instead. The disintegration of the USSR was a time of turbulence and change. The cultural identity of Azerbaijan, as well as new directions that defined *mugham* and Azerbaijani music as a whole, were not stable and were continuously being contested. Therefore, many discussions about Hajibeyov’s reconstructed *tar* and desire to make changes and create a new *tar* flared up. Fortunately, the *tar* had not been Westernized further in post-Soviet Azerbaijan. However the tradition of playing Western compositions on the *tar* remains strong and does receive support from above. Consequently, many *mugham* performers add awe-inspiring virtuosic feats into *mugham*: it is not uncommon to hear chords and fast scalar passages since this is part of the broad music vocabulary to which *tar* players are exposed. In other words, the Westernization of *mugham* continues to impact creativity. This adds another important dimension to the already complex musical context in post-Soviet Azerbaijan.

4.9 Decolonial creativity

The chances of seeing a *mugham* performance when randomly turning on the TV in Azerbaijan are quite high. *Mugham* musicians are usually invited to give talks, play, and sing on different shows. There are also programs specifically dedicated to *mugham* and Azerbaijani culture, and there are many movies being made about lives of famous performers. Today, one can hear great variety in *mugham* performance style on TV, and many boundaries are being crossed that would not have been allowed in Soviet Azerbaijan. For example, there are versions
of *mugham* that are exceedingly shortened, many Westernized genres such as those merging pop music with *mugham*, and even Easternized forms of *mugham*. In other words, nativism and nationalism co-exist in post-Soviet Azerbaijan where the Islamic revival, Westernization, nationalism, and the continuation of Soviet ideologies all form today’s complex milieu. However, it is important to realize that musicians are not mere tokens of this context. Instead, through *mugham* creativity, musicians respond to this context and enact their decolonizing power.

There are many cases of musicians organizing projects that are approved and financed by the government while also promoting a nativist agenda. One example is provided by Huseynova in chapter ten of her book (2016) where she writes about a collaborative project in 2007 between Yo-Yo Ma, the Silk Road Ensemble, Alim Qasimov and Fergana Qasimova. The Azerbaijani artists involved are stars of *mugham* today and are also representatives of nativism that can be summarized as “Eastern.” They worked together to create a chamber version of *Leyli and Majnun*. Qasimov re-envisioned the opera with a new focus on the Sufi philosophy behind the story of the opera; a topic that would not be permitted by the Soviet regime.

*Bahramname* was an undertaking from 2005 dedicated to Bahram Mansurov. It was organized by his sons, one of whom is a conservative *tar* player and a proponent of the Mansurov lineage. He argued that it is precisely pre-Soviet “pure” *mugham* that may be fused with Western music, as exemplified by their project *Bahramname*:

True *mugham* must be performed with the *əruz* metres of our *ghazal* poetry. This is why it can be merged with other music…this is how we came up with an idea to synthesize pop, jazz, and rock music with our real *mugham*…. So we decided to have improvisation, some canonical parts of *mugham*, rock and, in addition to all this, the *tar*. But the *tar* here is primary. It plays pure *mugham* with *əruz*, and on this everything else is built. This is our *mugham* from the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century (Emin Mammadov, interview, 2 August 2015).
At first glance, Westernized performances seem to be a bequest of the Soviet era when *mugham* was theorized using the Western classical system, notated, and fused with opera, fantasies, ballets, and symphonies. However, in this project, the recovery of and demonstration of pre-Soviet “pure” *mugham* was felt to be optimal for a synthesis with Western music. Thus, a quest for a nativist form finds its way even into some of the most Westernized versions of *mugham*.

While Westernization is a path that is ratified and beneficial for *mugham* musicians and their creative endeavours, I found that nativism is a proclivity that has more weight. Whatever form of *mugham* is chosen to be presented, the musicians’ performances are profound expressions of their agency. An inquiry into creativity in the moment of performance is what Madina Tlostanova and Walter Mignolo identify as “shifting the geography of reasoning from the enunciated (or object/area to be described and explained) to the enunciator (the subject doing the description and explanation)” (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2012: 10). There is a sentiment of grassroots resistance among musicians as they redefine *mugham*’s musical and experiential parameters. Even when they incorporate Western instruments or genres into *mugham*, they continue to seek “purity” and authenticity, questioning the Soviet colonialist transformations of *mugham* and thereby trying to correct them. Thus, although the post-Soviet context in the former USSR republic can be described as neo-colonialist (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2012: 109), there are activities and sounds of native inhabitants that are definite means of decolonial agency.
Conclusions

Distinctive ways of playing *mugham* associated with various lineages, as well as proclivities towards nativism and Westernization, all lead to heated debates and arguments between musicians today. Various techniques, *gusə*, *ghazal* content, become victims in this era of definition and flux. There are also many discrepancies and debates about microtones, even among the conservatists. In the presence of the conflicting trends and views, musicians demonstrate incredible flexibility while at the same time defending their own styles and opinions. During writes about a similar situation among musicians in Central Asia:

The phenomenon of the orchestras is simply a question of power, perhaps a tradition of power. The majority of musicians are able to pass from one genre to another, from an official performance to a festive or convivial context such as the toi (wedding) or the gap where a very different aesthetic rules. Many Central Asian musicians thus play a double game which they do not really win, but do not lose either (During 2005: 153).

In post-Soviet Azerbaijan, a conservatist musician who is part of the Mansurov lineage will teach a very standard version of *şur* at the Conservatory, or alter the manner of performance when playing at a *məclis* in Nardaran versus a wedding in Baku.

The multiplicity of discourses and aspects of performance which have become dominant in post-Soviet Azerbaijan have intensified interpretation during performance, thereby opening up possibilities for creativity. Ideas about spiritual experience of *mugham* and “universal” sound of the *tar*, preference for more mystical *ghazal* poetry, added microtones, use of “Eastern” gestures or pre-Soviet *mugham* styles, have all expanded horizons of being in the moment of performance: musical, interpretative, and experiential. As a result, musicians have more tools with which to weave the time-space realm of *mugham* and thereby engage through music with discourses about identity, history, and Islamic aesthetics. These elements of performance are a
way to engage in imagining the Beyond and trigger the creative impulse towards the edges of the standardized musical system. Whether progressive or conservative, musicians have more sounds and techniques available for imaginative variation. Also, sacred themes and connotations of ghazal poetry have gained significance and trigger the imagination of performers into the ontological and musical beyond. How and why this takes place is the focus of the next part of the dissertation.
Chapter 5
Articulating Creativity:
Native Terminology for Mugham Creativity

Terms and phrases used among mugham musicians reveal that creativity can be approached from different angles; creativity is expressed musically, understood objectively, and experienced subjectively. The first of these includes types of creativities that are manifested sonically such as variation, modulation, invention of new guşə, etc. Each of these sonic phenomena can be demonstrated with musical examples and has a corresponding term in the Azerbaijani language. Next, there are general characteristics of creativity such as spontaneity that mugham musicians identify and discuss. Finally, mugham creativity involves experiences that are talked about but in such a way as to emphasize the inability of language to capture what really goes on. Therefore, there are types of musical structures, as well as conceptions about and experiences of creativity, respectively. How these three dimensions of mugham are articulated by Azerbaijani musicians is the main focus of this chapter. While relying on native terminology, I also attempt to contextualize the discourses based on the socio-political circumstances dominant in post-Soviet Azerbaijan.
5.1 Creativity versus improvisation

Creativity is complex in Azerbaijani mugham. A performance involves variation, extension, ornamentation, exhibition of one’s idiosyncratic style, modulation, and incorporation of non-mugham genres and styles. Most of these features are performed spontaneously, and therefore mugham performance can be identified as being “improvisatory.” When discussing their art, mugham performers do sometimes use the word improvizatsiya (improvisation, Rus.). According to tar performer Rovshen Gasimov, for example, musicians commonly say “improvisation” and there are shared phrases such as “improv ver” (literally “give improvisation”, meaning imperatively “improvise!”) which are used even in the conservative Absheron villages. However, I have also noted that mugham players identify different processes of creativity in the native language rather than as “improvisation” when discussing their art with each other. This proclivity may be part of nativism that is taking place in post-Soviet Azerbaijan.

As argued by some Azerbaijani musicians, the latter half of the twentieth century is when “improvisation” had been implanted into the vocabulary related to mugham. It is highly probable that this observation is valid because this period marked the birth of Azerbaijani mugham-jazz. As a consequence, the concept of improvisation first arose among jazz musicians. When I asked one tar performer whether Bahram Mansurov used to say “improvisation”, he replied: “I don’t think Bahram Mansurov used such a term. At that time, only people who played jazz like Vagif Mustafazade would improvise and use this term” (Arif Mutallibov, interview, 4 December 2015). Similarly, Vugar Rzayev, one of the main successors and students of Bahram Mansurov school, affirmed that his master did not use the word “improvisation.” Indeed, Bahram Mansurov almost never talked about improvisatory processes, and whenever creativity of mugham was mentioned, he spoke about it in very rudimentary and evasive ways. Once Vugar asked him:
“Bahram müəllim [teacher], you have taught me bayatı-şiraz, and you have shown me so much, but at weddings you play such things which I have never seen!” The teacher answered with a riddle: “When I perform, it comes and then it goes. The one you capture is yours. But once it escapes, it becomes mine!” (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 16 October 2015)

Some musicians who do use the word “improvisation” often link it to music which is newly created. When mugham is performed, variation of memorized material (the model) is the prevalent activity. “Improvisation” is contrasted to this because it is about highly innovative activity. As such, “improvisation” is thought to be a term for music beyond the model. Such music does occur during mugham performances. There are instances when unprecedented sentences, parts of sentences, or modulatory links are played spontaneously and yet paradoxically they remain in conformity with the unspoken rules of mugham. This kind of creativity is regarded as mysterious and performers who are creators of such unique music are called “mürəkkəb istədədli”, meaning “talented in a complicated way.”

Masters challenge the term improvisation because it brushes aside the paramount significance of tradition. Chelebiyev (2009: 57) asserts that a nuanced definition of improvisation in mugham is required. According to him, improvisation is freedom, but only within certain rules, and therefore it is always based on tradition. For example, a mugham student seeks his or her own unique “intonations” but acceptable creativity can only happen after approximately 15 years of studies. If a student attempts to alter mugham creatively before this period, there is much observance from his masters (Chelebiyev 2009: 58).

I have noticed that “improvisation” as a term also creates discomfort and confusion for many musicians in the sense that, according to them, it fails to capture the “true” processes that take place. Many musicians admit its problematic applicability as a “Western” word. There are
discourses surrounding this “Western” term that disclose the post-Soviet nativist perception of mugham as a specifically “Eastern” phenomenon that requires its own unique discursive approaches. The consciousness of this incompatibility between “improvisation” and mugham creativity is likely to have been formulated with the efforts to recover Azerbaijani identity and cleanse it of Soviet influence that began in the Khrushchev era and culminated after the Independence. For instance, some musicians are against the use of “improvisation” for mugham since it does not indicate the interrelated processes of “interpretation” (taʃəkkür) (interpretatsiya, Rus.) and “intuition” (intuisiya) (intuitsiya, Rus.) which take place. Vugar Rzayev asserted that “improvisation” is not suitable because, for the most part, mugham performance entails variation within the limits of the canonized system, and sometimes one is also taken beyond the boundaries on the spur of the moment. Perhaps owing to the word’s unsuitability, my teachers did not use it frequently during lessons; they only began to mention it when I first started asking about it. Otherwise, they referred to different kinds of improvisatory processes in their own indigenous terminology such as barmaq, xırdalıq, etc., discussed in detail below. In other words, using one umbrella term “improvisation” is deemed to be incorrect because it is not reflective of the complexity of creativity.

To conceive and identify a phenomenon of improvisation requires the existence of its opposite: composition. Because of a Western preoccupation with composition as a symbol of progress and culture, improvisation has been a necessary polar opposite associated with the East. Nooshin echoes this point in her work on the Iranian radif, writing about how “…discourses of musical creativity have been invoked in the construction of self/Other boundaries, thereby serving an agenda of essentialized difference…” (Nooshin 2015: 9). She continues by writing that one of the most naturalized self/Other dualities had been crafted by dividing creativity into
“composition” and “improvisation.” Martin Stokes (2002: 169) argues along similar lines that the discipline of ethnomusicology made possible the study of the “inferior” musics set apart from the “mainstream” and “universal” Western art investigated in musicological inquiries. While the study of the Other’s music and creativity was the necessary inverse of the music of the Self, this research had been sparse and obviously very biased. Nettl mentions that improvisation has been regarded “as the music of the improvident…. Improvisation as the music of people who don’t plan ahead and don’t have elementary musical technology: can this be the white musical world’s way of expressing a racist ideology?” (Nettl 1998: 6-7) Ethnomusicologist Stephen Blum contributes to this post-colonial concern and warns that today “improvisation” still remains a marked term opposed to two unmarked words “composition” and “performance.” Even when improvisation is defined as “composition during performance” or “composition in real time” it is precisely defined as different from the two unmarked words (Blum 2009: 239). Therefore, the issue at stake is not dealt with; it is only exacerbated further. Considering these cautions, I have chosen to approach creativity primarily based on a close look at local terminology.

Prior to Sovietization, there was no need for such a term as “improvisation” or such a stance about mugham as improvisatory because creativity is what brings this music into existence. A singular term such as “improvisation” is not relevant in mugham: there are different ways of structuring music and naming them accordingly. Indeed, improvisation as creativity and spontaneity is an element which is so intrinsic to mugham that it is not taught, nor is it defined as a separate phenomenon. In fact, mugham as an experience and as a process is improvisation. This is precisely why, I believe, the concept of improvisation did not exist and was not used until Soviet times. There are no primary sources in the pre-Soviet and early Soviet years that mention “improvisation.” With the establishment of Soviet aesthetics and the superiority of European
classical repertoire, composition came to the fore and brought awareness to the improvisational nature of mugham. This is why this improvisational quality, becoming the inferior antipode, was corrected through the theorization of mugham and the founding of the composition school. As stated in chapter 3, mugham performers who opposed conservatory training were reprimanded by Hajibeyov for their inability to distinguish the difference between any two modes, lacking an understanding of theory. These kinds of views already implied the dichotomy of improvisation and composition, along with its hierarchy.

5.2 Mugham təfəkküri and vəhy

*Mugham təfəkküri* which translates from Azerbaijani to “mugham thinking” is one expression used by musicians to describe their creative activity. This combination of words refers to the process of mugham creation; the process which is primarily that of creativity. Therefore, I have noted many musicians and non-musicians employ mugham təfəkküri to mean creative activity that takes place and that is comprised of two interrelated components: variation and invention. One mugham scholar and distinguished *tar* player argued that “improvisation” is not a suitable word for mugham creativity; more precise terminology is mugham təfəkküri and related təfəkkür partlayışı (explosion of thinking) or təxəyyüül partlayışı (explosion of imagination). Below is his elaboration on what these terms mean:

In mugham there is the canon, and within its limits there is something like variation. While one is playing the canon, an explosion could happen due to enthusiasm, and then intuition is in charge. After, the musician comes back to the canon and it is the mind which is in charge…. At first a person studies mugham for many years, 20 or 25 years. In the context of performing…he gets his own insights. Where do they come from? For example, he may have studied with different teachers, here and there, and suddenly within the limits of this, a musical sentence is created out of nowhere! This is a
momentous explosion. There are instances of creativity beyond the canon, and this is not at all like variation. Suddenly, there is an explosion outside and beyond the boundaries. This is an explosion of thinking! Of course this does not go on for 20 minutes, it is just some seconds, or a minute...and then goes back to the canon. This helps the development of mugham, continuation of mugham. Also it cannot happen all the time. Only when there is inspiration, something completely different can be played. But all that has been learned before helps the musician, and something new then can be created (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 16 October 2015).

The same informant added that while the “explosion of thinking” and “explosion of imagination” transpire both in solo and trio performances of mugham, words of sung ghazal poetry are an important catalyst. This statement was repeated by other masters pointing to the fact that playing in a trio serves as a more fertile ground for creativity. However, the presence of poetry is also there in solo instrumental playing. This is why Naroditskaya explains: “Even though a solo instrumental dostgah contains no references to a specific text, the poetic content and imagery of vocal mugham influences the organization and dynamics of instrumental pieces” (Naroditskaya 2002: 80). Many tar players with whom I studied, especially those belonging to conservative lineages, underscore that their playing retains many elements of ghazal poetry such as əruz metres. It is because of this proximity, they stress, that creativity on the tar is stimulated. In addition, I have encountered assertions that the momentous explosion is related purely to the brain, as musicians declared: “Not the fingers, but the brain is in charge of this!” As evident, interpretation is at the core of “mugham thinking.”

Vəhy is another term that is closely related with the state of enhanced creativity by numerous musicians. It translates from Azerbaijani to “revelation”, and more frequently it is used as a phrase “vəhy qəlib”, meaning “the coming of revelation.” This expression is analogous to təfəkkür partlayışı and təxəyyü l partlayışı because it refers to extreme and momentous creativity that causes “new” music. However, religious studies scholars I interviewed such as
Vasim Mammadaliyev from the theology department at the Baku State University do point out that it is incorrect for musicians to use vəhy: this is a condition that is only given to Prophets. Although poets or musicians can be recognized to be divinely inspired in the moment of performance, their experience is that of inspiration or ilham which can never be the same as vəhy. Ilham is accepted by musicians as the property tapped into during creativity, but it is not commonly referenced and does not have a prominent place in the performers’ vocabulary. On the contrary, the use of the term vəhy is typical among musicians, and I discovered that it was even popular during Soviet times. The improper use of this term in Soviet Azerbaijan probably arose due to the secularization of certain words that took place at that time. Manaf Madatov, distinguished tar player, talked about vəhy in the following manner:

Vəhy is when you are playing and something comes to you, something new…. Someone plays well and they say “ona vəhy qəlib!” [he/she went into revelation]. I cannot tell you for sure whether this can be translated as “improvisation”, maybe this is more like imagination [fantaziya, Rus.]. It is like…do you know the word qəlib [mold]? It is like a form, and in mugham we have for example vilayeti qəlib, şəhnaz qəlib… it is şöbə but it is in qəlib, so it means boundaries. But despite the boundaries, mugham is improvisation, it is imagination (Manaf Madatov, interview, 7 December 2015).

Evidently, Manaf Madatov does not associate the sacred with this term and instead accentuates that while there are boundaries in mugham, the priority lies in imagination. The realization of the incorrect use of vəhy for mugham creativity is likely to be more recognized due to the post-Soviet context when religious thought re-entered the discourses of musicians and corrections started to be made. One musician from the Mansurov school explained:

In the Quran, there are things which we do not know, and will not know. Only the Prophets know these things, those who know the irfan. Vəhy is in the Quran. Vəhy is one thing, ilham is another. People are elevated towards God with inspiration. This is ilham, it means inspiration. The poets too, they also feel ilham. God gives them the gift of inspiration so that they can praise Him. But vəhy is a completely different thing.
These are the words of Allah. They are much closer to God. The Quran is vəhy (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 21 August 2014).

Importantly, mugham təfəkkür, vəhy, təfəkkür partlayışı, and təxəyyül partlayışı do not describe what the phenomenon of creativity is as a physical sonic manifestation, but rather the state that is involved. These emic explanations about experience place emphasis on the “new”, imagination or intuition, and ghazal poetry. These three facets are interrelated, as will be shown in chapter 7.

5.3 Musical structures of creativity

In addition to terminology related to experience, there are words coined for particular musical structures as manifestations of creativity, as well as perceptions about how creativity should be.

Crafting an idiosyncratic style is a vital part of being a mugham performer. Musicians use their unique manners of performance to continuously recreate the available canonized material. When there is a particular musical gesture played idiosyncratically, it is referred to as the specific performer’s barmaq (finger). Usually the instrumentalist’s name precedes the word barmaq. For instance “Rovshen barmağı” with the latter word in possessive case literally means “the finger of Rovshen.” One of my tar teachers discussed this designation with examples: “Let’s say there is a sentence which Ahsan Dadashev created, and when someone plays it after, they say this is ‘Ahsan barmağı.’ Or Sarvar Ibrahimov does a kind of shtrikh [“touch”, meaning a distinct and patterned technique, Rus.] and then it is called ‘Server barmağı.’” Rovshen Gasimov commented likewise: “yes, there is such a thing as barmaq, for example someone can say ‘Rovshen
Gasimovin barmağı’ and this means məxsus ifa [special way of playing]. I can play çahargah, şur, segah, in my own way and style and it would be recognized as my barmaq” (Rovshen Gasimov, interview, 27 October 2015). The individual style of xanəndə masters is referred to as nafəs (breath) or ləhcə (accent). These are equivalent to the instrumentalist’s barmaq.

Gəzişmə is a particular patterned technique that is played while freely covering steps of a relevant mode section. This word translates from Azerbaijani to “walking” and is closely tied with another commonly used Russian word shtrikh which means a “touch.” While shtrikh is a patterned technique one chooses, gəzişmə is the “walking around” on the notes using a specific shtrikh. There are many different shtrikh and some are particular to schools and lineages. Highly complicated and intriguing techniques involve underlying mechanics that are difficult to figure out since they feature very refined plectrum movements. Many of these are very virtuosic and some incorporate complex combinations of strings on the tar. Therefore, representatives of lineages choose to guard the shtrikh in secret, only passing them on to selected students who invest much time and patience when learning them. Sometimes these techniques can also be used for modulation between modes.

According to Chelebiyev, the only equivalent of mugham improvisation is gəzişmə but this creativity is also surely governed by its own rules. Chelebiyev defines gəzişmə as “singing or playing around supporting tones of a mode within assigned boundaries.” Thus, “where to go” and “how to go” are also defined (Chelebiyev 2009: 59). However, the gəzişmə allow for much flexibility and as one musician explained: “everyone can do it differently. It can be 5 or 30 minutes. It is a shtrikh, for example playing without a plectrum or playing using high sympathetic strings....” (Arif Mutallibov, interview, 4 December 2015). Rovshen Gasimov
defined əzismə as such: “this is one type of improvisation, you go here and there. The other type which is very close to this one is called xirdaliq.”

Xirdaliq (smallness) is indeed similar to əzismə because it is also a kind of creativity which is decorative and associated with a specific school or musician. It applies to both instrumentalists’ and singers’ creativity, while əzismə and shtrikh are primarily for tar and kamança technique. Xirdaliq means playing in miniscule and fast decorative units of sound while moving around the tones of a mugham. In other words, xirdaliq appertains to walking around one or a few particular tones with embellishing gestures in a similar manner to əzismə. One tar player remarked: “‘Xirdaliq’ also exists among singers in the very minor decorations. And instrumentalists which play compositions use it…. Rovshen Gasimov does most xirdaliq…. This is true art! His melismas and decorations are so refined and small. Oh, the mirvari [pearls] that he plays in ‘Qərənfil’ [Carnation, name of composition]!” (Arif Mutallibov, interview, 4 December 2015). Emin Mammadov further clarified: “Xirdaliq also happens among singers. It is also called nəfəs [breath]…. This is when they sing without words…. Xirdaliq is like the decorations…..” (Emin Mammadov, interview, 6 June 2015). Some musicians pointed out the similarity between barmaq and xirdaliq because the miniscule ornamentations are performed in the specific style of a performer.

The words barmaq, nəfəs, əzismə, shtrikh, and xirdaliq are related to the creation of musical units of different size and complexity: guşə, cümə, and avaz. The invention of new guşə is the most esteemed, and mugham performers who can successfully do it are called guşəxan in Azerbaijani, while the process of guşə creation is called guşəxanlıq (Chelebiyev 2009: 72). These unprecedented guşə can be memorized by others as they are being performed spontaneously. Following this, they can be passed down orally through generations with the
name of the original performer. Chelebiyev writes, “The barmaqs of renowned tar players Mirza Sadig, Gurban Primov, Mirza Mansur, Ahmad Bakikhanov, Bahram Mansurov, and nafəs of xanəndo Alesker Shekili, Jabbar Garyagdioglu, Seyyid Shushinsky, Zulfu Adigozelov and many other masters are widely known among mugham musicians” (Chelebiyev 2009: 73).

Modulation is essential to mugham. Historical records show that in pre-Soviet times, modulation was the main stunt of any performance (see chapter 2). There is archival data that shows numerous versions of the same dostgah with şəbə and guşə sections strung together in imaginative ways. It seems as if the possibilities to modulate from one mode to another were nearly infinite! Spontaneous transitions between modes still take place in today’s performances, albeit infrequently because the required sophisticated level of mugham knowledge has been partly lost due to institutionalization and canonization of mugham in Soviet Azerbaijan. This is why unusual modulation is regarded with much reverence and value, especially in settings such as the Absheron villages among knowers of mugham. The important point to make for now is that what we would call modulation is not usually referred to as modulyatsiya (modulation, Rus.) and is talked about most often using local mugham terminology. Simply, modulation is called keçid which means “a way to go” or “a way to pass” in Azerbaijani. For example, one can say “şurdan segaha keçid” meaning “a way from şur to segah.”

There are also more definitive terms in Azerbaijani such as intiqal and rədifəzləq related to modulation which are used rarely and not known by many. Rədifəzləq is the ability to extemporize new transitions between mughams, thereby coming up with different paths and versions of a dostgah. In other words, it is the ability that results in logical links between the various şəbə, thereby widening the dostgah. A mugham master who can skilfully move between
two mughams that are not closely related in terms of mode is called rədiffaz or rədiff ustasti, meaning master of rədiff (Chelebiyev 2009: 187).

Intiqal is similar and its validity as a term is supported by other ethnomusicological findings that bring to light historical treatises about modulation in which this word appears. For example, scholar Qutb al-Din al-Shirazi (1236-1311) wrote, “one should know that these groups (jumū’) and branch-modes (shoʻab) are related to one another and that, in talḥin, passing (enteqāl) from any (group or branch-mode) to a related one is a way to increase (the music’s) splendour (rownaq) and freshness (tarāvat)” (Wright, quoted in Blum 1998: 31). One of my tar teachers who probably found a way to access information about Qutb al-Din–especially given the post-Soviet availability of sources and prominent inclination to study documents and seek “pure” meaning of mugham – defended the use of this “correct” term intiqal for modulation:

This is a completely different thing [from improvisation]. It is called intiqal but some musicians say modulation if they do not know the correct word. It means change: switching from one mode to another. There are such guşə which help to modulate. And this modulation has a name based on these guşə. For example in mugham bayati-şiraz, playing part bayati-īsfahan, you can play nüxüft. This is a hidden modulation and it goes to dašti of bayati-kürd, you can play there a bit, whatever guşə or şöbə you want, and then with another guşə obulçəp you can go back (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 16 October 2015).

In the occurrence of intiqal, as stated above, the modulatory link between modes is a mugham sentence with its own name. The name of this musical sentence becomes the name of the particular modulation. For example, in order to go from bayati-īsfahan to bayati-kürd, a section called nüxüft can be played. Consequently, this transition is referred to as nüxüft.

In order to highlight the importance of native terminology for modulation, Chelebiyev states:
It is obvious that keçid in mugham and modulation in the classical major-minor system are related phenomena. The end result of a keçid, similar to modulation, is the achievement of alteration of steps from one mode to another. However, experience shows that equating keçid with modulation, or discussing keçid using laws of harmony, not only complicates our understanding of what keçid is but also gives rise to numerous questions that cannot be answered. This is why I chose to forego using conceptions such as melodic modulation or mode modulation, which can be used in certain scenarios. Instead, I made an attempt to show what keçid is in its genuine form – in the form that it appears in mugham (Chelebiyev 2009: 219).

5.4 Characteristics of creativity

In addition to words that signify and differentiate creativity based on diverse musical structures – such as barmaq, qəzismə, shtrikh, xirdaliq, intiqal, keçid, rədfsəzləq – there are also interesting phrases that offer a glimpse into the way Azerbaijani musicians understand the process of performing mugham. These ideas are not necessarily reflected in particular musical forms but they nevertheless underpin the way music is organized. In other words, there are types of processes embodied in music and there are characteristics of creativity that musicians count as criteria of a successful performance.

All performers identify “bədəhətən”, meaning “impromptu”, as an essential characteristic of mugham. It is explained as “spontaneous playing.” One mugham performer asserted that bədəhətən can be used to describe any good musician, independent of genre. It was especially common to hear this word in connection with meyxana, Azerbaijani folk rap battles. For example, this is how Emin Mammadov discussed bədəhətən:

*Bədəhətən* was used earlier, in the beginning of twentieth century. For example zabul was being sung and suddenly inspiration came and musicians entered this excitement and sang something new. This is avaz, boğaz [terms for improvised sections of mugham singers] and right away this newly-created segment was named. Something came to the singer suddenly, and was sung. I knew one singer, Rəfig Aliyev, and we decided to play
together *mugham* while we were just sitting in a room at the conservatory. Suddenly our *mugham* developed so much! He was a student of Nariman Aliyev! I was in shock. We performed such a giant *mugham!* I said, “what the hell did you sing? Let’s go record it!” And he answered me “do you think I remember what I sang? It just came to me!” … Today this word *bədəhətən* is used mostly for *meyxana*. We don’t use it very often among our *mugham* musicians, but it does appear sometimes (Emin Mammadov, interview, 4 November 2015).

There are phrases in Azerbaijani that had been formulated in the Absheron villages where *mugham* had been sustained and developed during the Soviet era. Often, musicians who were asked to elucidate these sayings claimed that they had been created by one of their relatives in the village from which they come. With their inventive allegories, these idioms prove to be very insightful in terms of important performance parameters. For example, one such saying is: “*muğamdan muğama keçmək lazımdır ki, isti-soyuğu bilinməsin***”, meaning “one must transition from one *mugham* to another not as from hot to cold.” *Mugham* knowers explained that this phrase is about both standardized and spontaneous links between *mugham* modes that should all be done gradually. One *mugham* specialist classified this as a *xalq* (folk) saying and said: “It means ‘*yad hallar olmaz*’ [foreign decorative sounds are not allowed], where *hal* means *xırdalıq*” (Rovshen Gasimov, interview, 3 November 2015). In other words, the creative performance of a bridge between two *mugham* modes must be properly done without introducing alien patterns or tones. During modulation, the new mode can be prepared and incorporated carelessly by including notes or gestures that sound foreign to the preceding mode.

“*Ona nərdivan getirin***” meaning “bring him/her a ladder” is another recognized statement used when modulation is not performed successfully. Many musicians recounted their own stories featuring this phrase, such as:

I was performing with a *xanəndə* and we played *şur*. After *sarənc* the singer could not return back to *şur*. He was in Govsana village and this happened, and my uncle then said
“bring this köpək oğlu [son of a bitch] a ladder” Or for example, from dilkəş one could not return back to rast (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 16 October 2015).

Another musician retold a similar event:

Yes, this phrase is used for talentless singers. One time I was with a xanəndə in Nardaran and he sang șikəstəyi-fars and did not know how to come back to şur. The kamança player and I had to help him and slowly lead him back. This phrase is used for such cases (Emin Mammadov, interview, 4 November 2015).

Interestingly, one informant made sense of this metaphor in terms of the larger ascending form of a dostgah. He said: “Performing şur, for example, the xanəndə rises and rises and goes from hıcaz to sarənc but then cannot return back to şur! This is when this phrase is used’” (Rovshen Gasimov, interview, 3 November 2015).

“Muğəmin qol-qabırğasını sındırdı” translated from Azerbaijani as “mugham’s hands and ribs have been broken” was often noted to be about modulation as well. There is an interesting autobiographical note about composer Magomaev (quoted in Chelebiyev 2009: 185) regarding the premiere of his opera Shah Ismail in 1919. There were mugham masters present and they complained that in his compositions the transitions between mughams are not correct. As a result, they told him that he broke the ribs of mugham. This phrase was also used when referring to inadequate performances in general. For example, one tar player said “this phrase is for poor singing of mugham. Sometimes they say this for ghazals as well, when pronunciation is bad or əruz is not honored” (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 16 October 2015).
5.5 Terminology in the post-Soviet context

Many *mugham* musicians today, especially those concerned with nativism, engage with ancient treatises that address the topic of Islamic aesthetics or with published commentaries about such treatises. These sources of information have been revived in the post-Soviet context after having been officially banned for many years. I believe that words such as *tafakkür* and *txəyyül* that entered the vocabulary of musicians, as well as debates about the misuse of *vəhy* for *mugham* creativity, are the result of the availability of classical texts on Islamic aesthetics, and a renewed interest in them. For example, *tafakkür* as interpretation and *txəyyül* as imagination were concepts investigated by the highly influential Persian philosopher and mystic Al-Ghazali (1058-1111). Musicians explore his ideas as they seek to understand and recover the “true” spiritual experience connected with *mugham* creativity. The complexity of the experiential dimension necessitates the reliance on sophisticated theory and terminology, unlike the words used for the technique such as *gəzismo, barmaq, nəfəs*, etc.

In his article “The Politics of Aesthetics in the Muslim Middle East” Stokes (2015: 97) calls attention to the viability and importance of scriptural Islam in contemporary debate and discussion. *Mugham* performance is inseparable from the shared historical Muslim textual tradition and the various writings of Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali, Safi al-Din al-Urmawi, and others inform the discourses of musicians in post-Soviet Azrbaijan. Thus, it is important to place the universal and classical Islamic aesthetics in dialogue with the particular contextualized practices in order to further our understanding of creativity as part of the Islamic arts. A nuanced historical and political consideration of Islamic aesthetics for the discourses of *mugham* musicians is outside the scope of this dissertation. However, the fact that the common textual tradition plays a
central role for *mugham* creativity in the post-Soviet scene must be highlighted in order to traverse into a synchronic investigation of performance.

Conclusions

The indigenous Azerbaijani vocabulary for *mugham* creativity introduced above deals with different parameters of music making: types such as *intiqal, gəzismə, xirdalıq,* and *barmaq,* characteristics such as *bədəhistən,* and states that are involved such as *vəhy, mugham təfəkkürü,* *təfəkkür partlayışı,* and *təxəyyül partlayışı.* To further our understanding of how *mugham* is created in the moment of performance, it is now important to classify improvisatory processes and provide concrete musical examples both from lessons and existing recorded performances. For clarity, the reader should have some familiarity with the structure and components of the *dəstgah,* the main genre of *mugham* (see Chapter 1). After we delve into the kinds of creativity that happen in *mugham* based on the differences in concrete musical structures, the focus will shift to an in-depth exploration of states and experiences of creativity.
Chapter 6
Performing Creativity:
Musical Possibilities Within and Beyond the *Mugham* Model

*One of my tar lessons with Rovshen Gasimov took an unusual turn when he suddenly asked me to play part of the mugham repertoire that I had been learning with another tar master at the time. After I played two sentences of the beginning of zabul segah, Rovshen stopped me, took my tar and began to play the same two sentences, albeit in his own way. He closed his eyes and disappeared in the sounds that were pouring out of the instrument: unique ornaments and techniques that were interlacing, developing, extending, twisting, speaking the sensual and tender notes that characterize this particular mugham. The playing that I witnessed then was highly idiosyncratic with added inventive gestures and sounds that were not part of the version I had been learning with another teacher. Then he stopped, opened his eyes, and said only: “Mugham is a story.”*

Every *mugham* performer strives to make *mugham* into his or her own story. Many years are spent religiously memorizing the *mugham* repertoire and awaiting its eventual metamorphosis into one’s own style of expression. Taking lessons with numerous *tar* teachers and *mugham* singers, as well as analyzing existing recordings, I have classified the tools of creativity used to tell the story of *mugham* as such: (a) variation of learned musical material, (b) crafting of a distinctive style, (c) invention of entirely new phrases and sentences, and (d) modulation. These manifestations of creativity are summarized in the chart below and each will be explored in turn in this chapter. Two important themes emerge with this investigation of creativity that will be taken up in the final phenomenological analysis in chapter 7: the sung texts as a vital element in the creative processes; and the possibility of creativity beyond the
standardized system when the flight of the imagination leads the journey of *mugham* to undiscovered musical realms.

Figure 6.1 Model and creativity of *mugham*

---

**Model**
(Totality of the *mugham* system comprised of the canonized form as well as versions from alternative lineages)

Memorized by *mugham* students

**Creativity in performance**

- (a) Variation (part of the learned model)
- (b) Idiosyncratic style
- (c) New *cümle* or *guşə* (can be incorporated into the model)
- (d) Unconventional modulation

---

6.1 The model versus beyond the model

The customary use of the term “model” by ethnomusicologists writing about creativity in musical traditions akin to *mugham* such as Persian classical music is suitable for our discussion as well. For example, Nettl determines three different ways that the *radif* is used as a model in Persian performance that resemble the above classification: repetition of the *radif* with minor variation of the canonic material; alternation of direct quotation with improvised segments within
the boundaries of the *radif* structure; and modulating among *döstgahs* and altering the canonic order (Nettl 1998: 14). Similarly, the *mugham* model is the transmitted system that is used as a point of departure for the performer’s creativity, varied in its degree of originality. In fact, as will be shown below, the model that is memorized by students contains within it the means to surpass it.

*Mugham* musicians use the word “canon” (*qanun*; *kanon*, Rus.) to identify the learned *mugham* repertoire. This word most often denotes the institutionalized Soviet form and excludes *mugham* passed on in lineages such as those of Mansurov and Bakikhanov. Thus, dealing with creativity, “model” is more appropriate because it encompasses versions of *mugham* passed down in all lineages. There are more extended and complex forms as compared with the institutionalized canon but they also function as models that are treated creatively in performance. Comprised of their own sets of *guşə* and *şöbə*, the models of conservative lineages demand heightened creativity as well.

While many kinds of creativity discussed below deal with manipulation of learned material through variational activity, there are also ways to create beyond the model, and *mugham* musicians do recognize this division of creativity into within and beyond the learned system. The way the latter takes place is not straightforward and escapes the rationalization of musicians themselves. However, there are unmistakable mandatory features that must always be present and retained from the model, regardless of the degree of creativity. These tenets seem to be part of performers’ tacit knowledge, internalized while the model is being mastered.

The principal unwritten rule is the necessary presence of key *cümə* and *guşə* with most of them in their correct order, even if a performer creates new musical units. Furthermore, invented segments must end with cadences that are part of the model, and must employ the
mugham pardès with the correct degree of proportion and emphasis. The proper range that characterizes each mugham section must be used. Also, depending on the register and place in the doṣtghah, only certain kinds of embellishments may be used (Chelebiyev 2009: 154). It is very important that the created sentences and phrases have the right internal structure. For example, the cümlo must be comprised of shorter avaz with divisions and pauses in between. While these pauses may not be performed, they do exist as divisions but are more “in the mind” and require “mugham thinking”, as explained by some masters. The awareness of these breaks and how to maintain them is learned during the oral transmission of mugham when the teacher transmits mugham precisely in these smallest units. Regarding the new guşə, the two cümlo that comprise them should be linked to each other in a “question-answer” relationship (Chelebiyev 2009: 65-6).

Lastly, there is a certain “feeling” to a mugham that must be expressed when new fragments or modulations are added.

Tacit cognizance of these elements determines what creativity can be counted as appropriately “new.” As a consequence, only masters who have a profound grasp of the model are recognized by all musicians as performers who can violate the established order and in a sense renew it through the invention of modulatory links, cümlo, or guşə. Furthermore, this explains why only particular contexts are deemed acceptable for heightened creativity. These are maclises and traditional weddings with audience members who are knowers of mugham and who have the authority to judge creativity.
6.2 Variation

How is mugham played? There is a philosophy there, so the mind must be ahead, and one must travel down there, to the below, but with the mind. And then boom! And one gets inspiration.... Bam! And one goes into a trance! But this is very unexpected and momentary. And this can only happen when one knows mugham very well, all the musical sentences and all the variations for one step.

(Mugham master)

Variation of learned material is the overriding form of creativity in mugham. Short musical gestures, cadences, or whole sentences can be spontaneously interchanged and modified. Complete mugham parts known as şöbə can also be varied through modulation, altering the modal course of a dəstgah. The transition between mughams is a separate kind of form that will be dealt with in another section on modulation.

The technique of variation is so ingrained in the process of performing that there is no separate word that musicians use to identify variation as a type of creativity. Instead, it can be subsumed under the term mugham təfəkkürü. Vugar Rzayev discussed creativity, stressing the importance of memorizing the classical repertoire which then results in the ability to extemporaneously connect and alternate between different musical segments. He reiterated that one can only do this after mastering the mugham model. Once while teaching me şur mayə, and after playing the first cümə, Vugar talked about variation as the core of mugham performance:

This cümə already formed as such. This depends on your psychological state. Suddenly one section and another section can be linked there. It goes there by itself. One day you will also be able to do this. This is called mugham thinking…it is the same as the linking of syllables to form new words. It happens after accumulation, then formation…. (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 18 March 2015).
With the word “accumulation” \textit{(nakaplivat’ya, Rus.)}, Vugar referred to musical material gathered when learning \textit{mugham} from teachers and recordings. Subsequently, “formation” \textit{(formirovat’ya, Rus.)} is creation of music from all the available variations. This happens within certain rules, but what they are and how they work are left unexplained.

Nooshin (2015) encountered the same circumstance with creativity in Iranian \textit{radif}. While there are laws that govern the organization of musical structures and large-scale form, these are not discussed during lessons. Instead, after many different versions are learned and embodied, a musician automatically engages in “controlled variation” (Nooshin 2015: 115). Thomas Turino’s concept “formulaic variation” is comparable: “in the formulaic approach, one’s collection of formulas, plus the basic model actually constitute the piece, so that with time and a sizable repertoire of paradigmatic moves, the basic piece will vary substantially from one performance to the next” (Turino 2009: 105). However, we must note that there is a difference between variation of exact memorized versions and variation with a degree of invention when the learned material begins to be creatively altered, extended, shortened, combined, etc. Therefore we must ask how creativity shifts gear from becoming pure variation of what has been “accumulated” to variation that is imaginative. Perhaps, as Nooshin suggests, the learned system already contains within it the seeds for inventive variation: through learning the \textit{radif} and other experiences “students internalize both specific material (motifs or melodies, for instance) and, crucially, compositional principles or techniques for developing that material” (Nooshin 2015: 125). In order to probe this question further as it relates to Azerbaijani \textit{mugham}, we shall discuss the learning process and investigate musical examples.

Students of \textit{mugham} allocate much time and effort to learning the repertoire of this modal system. One \textit{dastgah} form can be memorized in various versions belonging to different teachers
and lineages. In elementary school a simplified form is taught, and following this, at the level of middle school and the conservatory, students grasp the same dostghah but in its extended and complex form. Sometimes, while studying mugham at higher levels, students have more than one mugham teacher simultaneously. As such, one dostghah is usually transmitted by different teachers throughout the maturation of one’s musicianship. Even after one becomes a professional musician, enrichment of learned repertoire continues. Performers may decide to take a few lessons from a new ustad or consult old recordings.

In addition to absorption of material through musical training, mugham structures are gathered from all around: concerts, weddings, recordings, other students, etc. Rovshen Gasimov figuratively compared the crystallization of his own style with the “buying” (almaq) of musical elements, gestures, and styles at a “bazaar” of available sources:

When they begin to learn mugham, tar players usually have a few teachers. I also had several teachers. I paid attention to all of my teachers. I watched. I wanted to get their styles, mizrab-playing, mugham intonations, correct conveyance, the right and clear goals…. But also, for me, the biggest teacher was the people [xalq]. I grew up in Karabakh. When I was a child, there were weddings in Karabakh that took place in the special wedding tents and I used to peek and watch, getting into trouble eventually. I even took a knife and cut through a piece of a tent to watch and listen to mugham. The sound of the tar mesmerized me. I had my first tar teacher after a long time since then. Before getting instruction from a teacher, my main instructor for mugham was the people. And even when I got older and was learning in the fourth grade, for example, there was a boy from fifth grade who knew some mugham, and I used to memorize right away what he showed me. He had an influence on me. I used to run home right away in order to try out on the tar what he showed me. And repetition creates something new. Mugham was like a bazaar, like this and like that, they were the sellers and I was the buyer. I want to tell you in simple language what it was: I bought these things. I bought them and then I added to them creations from my own world of mugham (Rovshen Gasimov, interview, 16 December 2014).

The desire to accumulate material in order to expand the possibilities of variation can be gleaned from the value placed on compiling recordings. All mugham musicians – from students
to teachers to star-performers – collect recordings. Full *dəstgah* performances, shorter excerpts of different *mughams*, or separate *təsnifs* and *rəngs* are gathered. These can be copies of official recordings available on cassettes or CDs or tracks that were professionally recorded and subsequently catalogued at various repositories and archives such as the *Mugam Radio* or the State Sound Recording Archives of the Azerbaijan Republic. Some musicians have connections that provide access to copies of these recordings and they often share these with their students and other performers.

There are also recordings that are not official as they were done firsthand at an original milieu of performance that took place underground such as a *mugham* wedding or *mugham* *məclis*. These are recordings with maximum worth because of the featured high level of creativity. They are circulated primarily among musicians and not institutions. Having a tremendous value, musicians do not easily share these and only give copies to a few of their most devoted students or engage in trading such recordings for others of the same worth. Some of these recordings remain in possession of the one musician who owns them for his or her entire lifetime. Afterwards, they are passed on to a few chosen students or remain in the hands of family members or lineage successors.

The unofficial recordings that are most treasured belong to esteemed masters and knowers. These individuals may have been the primary makers when they attended weddings or gatherings, or they may have acquired these due to their recognized expertise and vast networks in the Absheron suburban towns. As mentioned earlier, *mugham* weddings and *məclises* in Soviet Azerbaijan were attended by a number of distinguished performers. They brought machinery for making audio recordings and captured their own performances along with those of others. When visiting *mugham* masters, I was often astonished when they led me to the most
hidden and faraway places in their homes to divulge with immense pride their colossal
collections of mugham recordings.

Musicians listen to recordings in their collections and study them with much detail
because they serve as models for inspiration and sources of knowledge. For example, some
masters explain that the success of certain mugham stars is due to access to rare recordings. I
have heard stories about older masters who own grand collections and take younger promising
musicians under their wing to develop them into renowned performers through a close study of
the available recordings.

Masters publicly boast about their compilations and it is known among mugham
musicians which rare performances are in whose collection. These are treasured, guarded, and
flaunted on occasion to strengthen the authority of their owners.

The esteem musicians garnered for accumulating extensive musical collections – and
their resulting skill at creating variations of this material – was also reflected in the way tar
players talked about their lineages. It was always emphasized that one’s particular school is
especially rich and diverse allowing for greater spontaneous choice during a performance. For
example, Emin Mammadov stressed the importance of variation in the Mansurov style:

Bahram Mansurov’s mugham is completely different. This road – the classical mugham –
it is not easy. He played mugham in many different versions, not the same thing over and
over again as it is played today. Once as I was playing at the opera house, one singer
came up to me afterwards and said, “Emin müəllim [teacher], where did you make a
mistake? With two singers you played the same part differently.” He did not understand
that for each singer, there is a particular way, a particular version of the same part that
must be played since the tar player must be adjusting to the xanonda. In our mugham,
improvisation is very extensive, but in their [popular] mugham, it is not. (Emin
Mammadov, interview, 19 February 2015).
Emin repeated this point continuously during lessons as he frequently made remarks such as: “Bahram used to play all kinds of variations and he would play differently each time. Poor students!” (Emin Mammadov, interview, 26 February 2015) He joked that even back in the day, Bahram’s apprentices had to carry humungous recorders to make sure that they captured all of his variations available for study.

As mentioned above, the creativity that involves switching and adjusting musical fragments pertains to (a) cadences (b) parts of cümlə and guşə, and (c) complete cümlə and guşə. Our exploration of variation continues with concrete musical examples of these three cases from various tar lineages.

Many musicians assert that cadences – the concluding parts of each musical cümlə or guşə – are most susceptible to variation. At the same time, cadences are already established. Therefore, while being able to select alternate versions of cadences, performers are much more hesitant to change the internal structure of a cadence. As Vugar said: “Cadences can be varied, but the cadences themselves should not change, they are canons. Sometimes there can be a new cadence, but these are usually learned from some other master” (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 16 October 2015). In contrast, certain musicians did alter cadences internally by peppering them with short virtuosic gestures. These musicians mostly belonged to non-conservative lineages such as the school of Haji Mammadov.

Variation among cadences is crucial for all mugham musicians. Those performers who repeat the same cadential material from one performance to the next are viewed as unskilled. When I asked Eldar Miriyev about alteration of cadences, he said “Yes, this is how it is demanded! You must not repeat things. This means you do not have enough knowledge!” (Eldar Miriyev, interview, 8 June 2015).
Şur mugham, as taught to me by Eldar Miriyev, featured abundant cadential material to select from. In fact, every sentence of mayə şur had a different cadence. Below are all the various cadences Eldar Miriyev taught in the same mayə şöbə of şur.
In a similar vein, Emin Mammadov showed different versions of cadences and instructed me to choose among them according to my mood. For instance, he showed these two endings for *hicaz* in *şur*, adding that I have to continuously vary them from one to another:
Figure 6.3 Cadences used in *hicaz șöbə*

Cadence 1

Cadence 2

Variational activity also abounds within the body of musical sentences. Indeed, during many of my lessons, I had to show my teachers what they played for me during the last lesson and what I had meticulously memorized; this is because they had forgotten the exact structure of the music and were playing something completely different owing to variations within same sentences.

Extension is an important element in these examples. At more advanced levels of training, such as the conservatory level, masters teach not only the fundamental canonized version but also additional elaborations and decorations. The latter are also part of the canon but they might or might not be inserted into the core structure. In the more popular style of *mugham*, the use of these decorative and often virtuosic insertions is much more prevalent and encouraged. For example, while teaching *çahargah*, Rovshen Gasimov taught me the very basic form, but he also from time to time showed me various smaller decorations. He said that these are also part of the canon, but they are taught after students become proficient at the fundamental version. I asked him who composed the specific embellishing gestures and he said that they have always been there.
It is common for alteration to occur not within musical phrases but among them. *Cümlə* or *guşə* in their entirety can be omitted, inserted, and interchanged, especially in trio performances. However, there are also more fundamental sentences that cannot be removed and must be in a particular order. For example, the string of musical units in *şur mayə* as played in the official curriculum is more rigid, and those sentences that begin each *şöbə* must always be part of one’s performance. Yet, more opportunity for voluntary addition or exclusion of *guşə* exists in conservative Mansurov and Bakikhanov schools, as explained by one master:

For example in *şur*, first we play *bərdəšt*: we can either do *bərdəšt nəva* or *şur bərdəšt*, but we play *əmiri, şöbə nəva*, this is *bərdəšt of nəva*. Then we come back to *şur*, and we can play *gövhəri, cüdai, həci dərvişi, gerəlli*. Or we play without some of these: once *gerəlli*, but the other time, *gövhəri* with *cüdai* together, and another time we play *tızək* (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 16 October 2015).

How can this ethnographic data help us answering essential questions about creativity of variation? It seems that there are definite aspects which are varied without any new changes added to musical material. For example complete cadences or *guşə* units of older lineages can and should be interchanged, but without any transformation made to the music. At the same time, musical innovation through variation does occur within sentences through slight modifications or interjections. Because students first acquire simplified models of *mugham*, and then learn many variations of how this model can be elaborated, they do begin to *sense* techniques for re-working, altering, and complicating the material.

According to *mugham* musicians, continuous engagement in variation gives fluidity and flexibility and in this state of indefiniteness, something novel is delineated. Vugar elucidated that while variation of learned material – an activity associated with the mind – dominates the creative process, it can be interrupted by sudden explosions of thought (*tafəkkür partlayışı*) and
explosions of imagination (taxyyül partlayışı) experienced intuitively. Variation is akin to a path that leads a musician beyond that variation towards something new. The following sections shift into the terrain of creativity beyond the model, such as finding one's individual style of performance and discovering new musical sentences and modulatory links.

6.3 Idiosyncratic style

I cannot teach you how to play like me! You have to learn yourself by watching…. I don't know if you will believe me or not, but I did not learn from anybody how to play like this…. Since coming to Baku, the teacher who allured me most was Haji Mammadov. In 1966, he created a studio and enrolled 3-4 young tar players including me and he instructed us…. Then I landed a job at the Philharmonic Orchestra as part of an ensemble led by Eliaga Guliyev. I played there, and then in 1974 I became a soloist there…. Then I started to distinguish myself and demonstrate on the tar what others didn’t have: notated concerts for the tar such as the one by Ahsan Dadashov. Afterwards, I thought that this was not enough. I also wanted chamber concerts for the tar…. I saw that Haji Mammadov shows himself musically and stands out, and what about me? I started to search, here and there, and then my own style developed…. It formed from God, from God everything is revealed…. And so I tried like this: I respected everybody, but I tried most of all to be myself. But this is very hard work; you give your whole life to this. And your life belongs to the tar, only to the tar.

(Rovshen Gasimov, interview, 16 December 2014)

For every mugham musician, creating an idiosyncratic and recognizable style of performance is of utmost importance. I classify this as another kind of creativity based on its meaningfulness as such for musicians, the specific terminology used, and its musical manifestation. First, a unique style is something that is individually created by each performer. Therefore, it is a form of musical novelty. Whilst one’s style is almost always deeply rooted in the style of one’s teachers and main lineage, the addition of something personal is regarded with much more reverence than an austere commitment to past conventions. Second, an individual mode of performance is one’s understanding and interpretation of the existing tradition: a one-of-
a-kind contribution to the model. Third, while performing, musicians use these idiosyncratic styles to continuously re-create musical material. In other words, all kinds of creativity are done through a musician’s own performance manner. The idiosyncratic style is the main tool for all creativity processes.

The aspects that shape one’s style are essentially ornamentations of the basic model. However, these are not to be perceived as mere embellishments that are extra additions, separate from the model. On the contrary, the specificities and details of one’s unique style are considered by musicians to be more important than the model itself. In fact, ornament is a vital feature in Persian classical music (Caron and Safvate 1966; Yarshater 1974). Yarshater explains that the guşə “…are not exactly melodies, but rather melodic materials, bare skeletons and frameworks, which only through ornaments blossom out as attractive and moving melodies” (Yarshater 1974: 75). This centrality of ornament, as Lois Ibsen al Faruqi argues, stems from principles of Islamic aesthetics as a whole:

Rather than taking nature itself or natural phenomena as his theme – or as his vehicle for expression – and then decorating them with beautifying addendum, the Arab artist has made his goal that of expressing himself through the manipulation of abstract and stylized motifs…. Ornamentation for the Arab artist, therefore, is not an addendum, a superfluous or extractable element in his art. It is the very material from which his infinite patterns are made (al Faruqi 1978: 18).

An instrumentalist’s unique style is called yol (road/way), barmaq (finger), or hal (moment). Yol refers to an overall distinctive musical “path”, while barmaq and hal identify particular musical gestures that are part of one’s musical style in addition to the unique style overall. For example “Bahram Mansurovun barmağı” or “Bahram Mansurovun halı” is described as that which is precisely Bahram Mansurov’s. “It is just what is his!” musicians proclaimed when I questioned them what these concepts mean. Among mugham singers, the equivalents of
instrumentalists’ barmaq are terms nəfəs (breath), ləhəcə (accent), and boğaz (throat). Yol and hal apply both to instrumentalists and singers.

Some performers pointed out that barmaq also signifies complete musical phrases created by a musician. Because these are played in one’s distinctive manner of performance, they become symbols of an instrumentalist’s playing. To be more specific, barmaq in this case can only stand for a full cümə or part of a cümə, but not guşə. For instance, Ahsan Dadashev created the concluding cümə of şur mayə and everybody knows this and calls this section “Ahsan barmağı” or “Ahsan halı.” The creation of sentences is the topic of a separate section below, and at this point we are mainly concerned with the idiosyncrasy of a style overall.

Xırdalıq and shtrikh are part of an instrumentalist’s unique mode of performance. Xırdalıq means decorative gestures in Azerbaijani. Most musicians create their own ways and patterns for decorating tones. To clarify, the manner in which a musician performs ornamental figures is part of his or her distinctive style. Xırdalıq is a commonly used word among singers as well. Rovshen Gasimov especially does much xırdalıq using very particular plectrum movements that only he uses.

The use of shtrikh (touch, Rus.) is also definitive of a musician’s barmaq. Compared to xırdalıq, shtrikh pertains to more solidified and predetermined techniques for embellishing tones that are often used in a pattern or sequence. Using a particular shtrikh, a musician “walks” around the tones of a mode used in the specific part of a dəstgah. In this case, creativity happens not with the shtrikh – since these are fixed patterns and remain unchanged – but rather with tones that are used to “walk” around (this is also known as gəzismə). This is comparable to somebody’s unique gait as a fixed element, but the direction of the movement is somewhat less determined. Gəzismə therefore can be done in order to showcase a musician’s unique manner of
playing or a particular lineage which he or she represents. For example, the school of Bahram Mansurov is known for its richness of shtrikh types.

Some of the more musically sophisticated shtrikh of specific schools are taught to students as secrets to be guarded. Moreover, these special techniques are not taught to all students; only a few of the most talented, genuinely interested, and trustworthy students are selected by a master to receive such privileged information. For instance, one intriguing shtrikh called xəрак mizrab involves a subtle and hidden manipulation of the bridge on the tar with the right hand that makes the instrument produce sounds akin to those produced by the saz, another Azerbaijani instrument. Qoşa mizrab – played in the third cümə of hicaz in şur – was elucidated by Emin Mammadov as three very quick strokes from below-from above-from below (alt-üст-alt). The signs for alt and üст as established in Rustamov’s book are V and II respectively.

Figure 6.4 Qoşa mizrab shtrikh from the Mansurov school (without cadence)

Many performers imitate this pattern incorrectly because they do not know its underlying logistics, according to Emin.

There are three main lineages when it comes to playing Azerbaijani mugham on the tar represented by Bahram Mansurov, Ahmad Bakikhanov, and Haji Mammadov, as described in
detail in chapter 3. While all contemporary tar styles are rooted in one or more of these three main schools, the mainstream style of playing mugham, adopted by the majority of musicians, is based on the more recent lineage of Haji Mammadov. There are many aspects of performance that differentiate these three styles. Obvious differences lie in the distinct use of the mizrab. Mansurov played with rich and continuous tremolo; Bakikhanov pulled the string while striking boldly with the plectrum upwards and downwards, creating vibrato effects; Mammadov played very quickly and minimized the amplitude of his tremolo and plectrum strokes in order to promote speed and virtuosity. Although a musician’s individual contribution towards the creation of a “new” style is important, some maintain and even emphasize the resemblance of their yol to their main lineage. Certainly, verbally and musically through their styles, many musicians draw attention to who their main teachers were. They situate themselves within their respective lineage and often talk about its superiority over others.

While taking lessons with different teachers, students consciously and subconsciously pick up different shtrikh and decorative gestures in addition to memorizing the overall skeleton structure of mugham music. As a result, with the passing of time, one’s style slowly develops based on the barmaqs of one’s teachers that become customary to the ear. Once, during one of my lessons with Rovshen, we were reviewing a sentence that I had learned in my previous lesson, and I suddenly decided to play it in a slightly different way, adding my own ornaments. Hearing this, Rovshen exclaimed: “Ah, now you have your own idiosyncratic ornaments! Students acquire these as they learn to play and then they slowly begin to use these decorative figures while improvising” (Rovshen Gasimov, interview, 28 March 2014).

However, the musical imitation by an apprentice of his or her master’s barmaq is not the same as the mysterious and sudden blossoming of one’s unique style. The latter happens when
one transcends the style of one’s teacher and invents a peculiar musical delivery of the canon, recognizable by everyone else as unique. This phenomenon is left without much explanation; either the Divine is mentioned as the cause, or it is finding the true voice of one’s heart. Also, many musicians remarked that in order to understand such things I first needed to become Muslim.

In order to provide a detailed analysis of barmaq creativity in relation to the lineage that formed it, I provide notations of şur bərdəst as performed by Bahram Mansurov, and his successors Vugar Rzayev and Emin Mammadov.

Figure 6.5 Şur bərdəst as played by Bahram Mansurov and his successors

Bahram Mansurov
Emin Mammadov

Vugar Rzayev
Having provided musical examples that illustrate how the same initial parts of *sur* are played by successors of the Mansurov lineage, we can attempt to trace the development of the latter musicians’ *yol*. What are some factors that shape one’s idiosyncratic style and determine the degree of uniqueness and deviation from one’s school? How and why is this achieved and what does it mean to the musicians themselves?

First of all, the examples show the considerable indebtedness to the lineage of one’s principal teacher. Many musicians admit that even that which at first seems highly original, upon closer inspection, turns out to be heavily influenced by what was previously learned. As such, one *tar* player who follows the Haji Mammadov school pondered my question about what is unique in his style for some time before answering:

> This is a difficult question, something I cannot say about myself, but somebody should say about me instead. But when it comes to accompanying the *xanandə*, there are certain *shtrikh* which I created…. When I myself am playing and I come up with a certain *shtrikh*, after I analyze it, I see that it is still influenced by Haji. Although the way I play is a bit different, it still comes from him…. I just do not always realize this (Manaf Madatov, interview, 7 December 2015).

Another common feature that can be deduced is that the “new” in each style has more to do with small-scale additions and revisions while the overall skeletal structure is retained. Musicians indicate this occurrence as well. For example, Eldar Miriyev stressed during our lessons that in his performance the *style* is his but the *music* is Bakikhanov’s. What he adds are
his inventive plectrum tricks and elements that he either picked up from the playing of other performers or invented himself.

There are also important contrasts when it comes to how idiosyncratic styles formed. These depend on whether one’s lineage is conservative or popular. There are three common features of the Mansurov and Bakikhanov conservative lineages that influence the formation of their followers’ styles: more variational activity, the link to poetry, and the demand for precise musical duplication.

First, a wide range of *shtrikh* that employ plectrum gestures in creative ways and numerous versions for the same sections of a musical sentence are dominant in older lineages. These characteristics provide much opportunity for variation and imagination, thus resulting in a more distinctive and richer development of successors’ styles of performing. As such, although the conservative musicians stress “pure” or “authentic” *mugham* more than others, their lineage provides them with many tools to engage creatively with the model. When Vugar was teaching me *şur dəraməd*, he specifically noted that his own style formed because of the creativity offered by the techniques of the Mansurov lineage: “This is not Bahram Mansurov style, this is my style, today there is no such playing anywhere…the sound is completely different…this is wealth: playing in unisons while the other strings are used!” (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 16 May 2014) Such features of the Mansurov style as playing in unisons are tools that the successors adopt for their creativity.

Second, both Mansurov and Bakikhanov schools are connected to *ghażal* poetry through *guşa*, plectrum expression, pace, and use of *əruz* metres. Because these aspects elevate and enhance the conveyance of the text, they bring its meanings into focus. As poetry becomes the superior element in a performance, inspiration and creativity are intensified. Finding one’s
unique style means that this connection to poetry must be maintained to be used when performing. This is how Emin Mammadov talked about irregular downward or upward patterns of the plectrum that he uses:

Mansurov style is within boundaries [çərcivəndə]. This even applies to repetitions of the same note at the end of cadences and even tremolos, as both are played within a rhythm/pulse that coincides with the poetry. In our style, every mizrab is important. Sometimes there are irregular üst-alt-üst-üst-alt-alt [üst is for downward stroke, alt for upwards] gestures and these have to be performed precisely because the üst is for a softer place in the əruz (Emin Mammadov, interview, 15 October 2015).

Students have to be meticulous when learning as every single mizrab and the timing of all gestures has to be specific and correct. This is explained by the fact that the playing is linked to əruz. Emin Mammadov often gave warnings such as: “our style of playing is such that every mizrab has a meaning. If a slight thing is different, the effect is lost” (Ekhan Mansurov, interview, 23 May 2015). However, the emphasis on poetry simultaneously triggers intense creativity because of the prominence of the meanings conveyed. Almost paradoxically, the exactitude and presence of more boundaries in the conservative lineages brings about more choices and opportunities for creating what is beyond these rules. It is almost as if the vast musical vocabulary of mugham that is given to a student is so varied and rich that profound creativity becomes unavoidable.

Because the popular style excludes the criteria above, the way in which unique styles are born also differs accordingly. For instance, owing to a lack of tools for variation provided to students, idiosyncratic yol are less unique. Indeed, renditions of şur in popular style by different masters are not very individual. In addition, disassociation from poetry means that styles develop to be more virtuosic in terms of speed and permit incorporation of elements foreign to mugham, such as jazzy chords. Lack of precision stemming from a lack of underlying əruz structures
causes a less continuous pace, unpredictable pauses, and disrupted flow. It is not that creativity is less constrained in the mainstream style; the matter is that creativity is just not as defined.

While creativity is not as boundless in the popular style, it is still important. Moreover, although the Haji Mammadov school dominates among present-day performers, many of them also employ features of older lineages. For example, Manaf Madatov studied with Malik Guliyev, who was a pupil of Rovshen Gasimov. Thus, Manaf identified himself within the Haji Mammadov school, asserting also that this is the lineage that is responsible for the creation of the popular manner of playing mugham on the tar. Nevertheless, Manaf also uses the gestures and shtrikh of Bahram Mansurov. He explained that playing mugham is impossible without these conservative elements, however rarely they may be used by some performers.

Interestingly, there are unusual cases of musicians who, after being taught in the popular vein, found inspiration to develop very unique styles. One such tar performer is Farhat Ahmedov. When I interviewed him about his manner of playing, he said:

Through mugham, each performer must show his or her own heart. This cannot be taught. I do not play the paths of my teachers; I have my idiosyncratic style, my own plectrum method. My style formed as I just played by myself. I learned the entire mugham repertoire, and I was only 22 when it first began to form (Farhat Ahmedov, interview, 7 December 2015).

Afterwards, as he demonstrated şur on his tar, he cried out:

This is my own barmaq, these are my own melismas! I don’t know how, I just play with my heart, I play from my self [Mon ürəyimə çələrim, özumdən çələrim]. And how my teachers taught me? I forgot already! Don’t play like this, it is standard [shows popular way of beginning şur-şəhnaz]. Do not do this! (Farhat Ahmedov, interview, 7 December 2015).
Musicians with idiosyncratic styles that are farthest from the mainstream – such as Farhat Ahmedov or proponents of older styles – claim that they still have to teach the popular Haji Mammadov mugham school at institutions because this version is the one that had been chosen to be canonized for instruction.

6.4 Creation of unique cümlə and guşə

_Arif Mutallibov_: within the frames of mugham, whole new sentences can be created. I once came up with a sentence in şur, and when I played it for my teacher Server Ibrahimov, he began to cry. He said: “this is not mine, it is yours.” And he cried.

_Polina Dessiatnitchenko_: why did he cry?

_AM_: I think from happiness – that there is a student he leaves behind who can create mugham.

_PD_: this was a guşə?

_AM_: yes, but smaller cümlə can also be created like that.

_PD_: I remember that when you were teaching me şur, you didn’t play for me this guşə that is your own. You said it was more like your secret...

_AM_: well yes, maybe at a concert I will use it myself. It must be heard from me.

_PD_: so you remember it always?

_AM_: yes.

(Arif Mutallibov, interview, 4 December 2015)

As we progress through the sections of this chapter, we delve deeper into creativity in its most extreme manifestation, called _təxəkkür partlayışı_ (explosion of thinking) and _təxəyyüül partlayışı_ (explosion of imagination). As discussed above, these are moments experienced spontaneously and as part of _mugham təxəkkürü_ (mugham thinking) when the mind transcends the model. As such, variation of learned musical material can be interrupted by a sudden
“explosion outside and beyond the boundaries” when the intuition of the musician takes over and something “new” and “completely different” is played. This takes place when there is enthusiasm and inspiration known as *coşə gəlmək* or “to boil up” and “to become impassioned.” Musicians report that specifically *cümlə* or larger *guşə* are created at such instances during performance. Moreover, this kind of creativity seems to be most valued because it is believed to help the development of *mugham* as the invented musical structures eventually become part of the transmitted system.

Instrumentalists’ creation of musical units in the form of *cümlə* and *guşə* is usually the result of imitation and inspiration linked to the singing of the *xanəndə*. Indeed, when interviewed, all *tar* players asserted that the singing of *ghazals* they accompany is responsible for newly created musical excerpts that can range from short musical utterances to full sentences. In addition to shorter phrases, *cümlə*, musicians come up with complete and separable *guşə*, also referred to as “philosophical ideas” (*fəlsəfi fiğir*). *Guşə*, unlike *cümlə*, are analogous to poetical *beyt* units of a *ghazal* and often have their own names.

The invention of musical units stimulated by *ghazal* poetry is discussed in a similar way by different musicians:

The voice of the *xanəndə*, the manner of singing, knowledge of accents and the words really inspires. In such cases, the *tar* player can even play something and not be able to remember it. I recall one time at a wedding, we played *Karabakh şikastəsi*, and independent of me, it happened as if I was not playing anymore but someone else was playing instead of me! And we played such sentences that afterwards I could not remember. This was precisely inspired by the way that the *xanəndə* was singing (Arif Mutallibov, interview, 4 December 2015).

Sometimes when I hear the *xanəndə*’s words, I play and I cry along with him! This is from pride! Look at how beautiful these words are! I forget about my playing, I am just playing. And then afterwards when I listen to what I have played, I realize that this was influenced by the words being sung, it was because of the words (Manaf Madatov, 7 December, 2015).
Vugar Rzayev echoed these responses: “when I play on the \textit{tar}, I listen to the \textit{xanəndə} and suddenly I come up with something new, it is an explosion of thinking in the moment [\textit{anın təfəkkür partlayışı}], it is in the moment” (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 15 October 2015). On numerous occasions, Vugar confirmed that when playing as part of a trio he often begins creating smaller musical gestures upon hearing how the \textit{xanəndə} musically executes \textit{ghazal} poetry.

Instrumentalists can engage in direct imitation of the singer and this results in new phrases. Such musical quotations by \textit{tar} performers are inserted spontaneously and are not part of the transmitted \textit{mugham} system. Describing this occurrence, Abdulgassimov writes that “while the khanandeh is singing the tar improvises the intonational phrases and the gusheh in an imitating manner” and there may be an “emulation” in the form of “question-answer” between the \textit{tar} player and the singer (Abdulgassimov 1990: 90).

Besides straightforward or close imitation of the singing, there are cases of instrumentalists’ unique \textit{cımlə} and \textit{guşə} fragments, dissimilar from the \textit{xanəndə}’s melodies. In this case, both \textit{ghazal} meanings and poetical \textit{əruz} metres are the main sources of inspiration for \textit{tar} players.

For example, Farhat Ahmedov is a \textit{tar} player with a highly individual manner of performance: each time he plays \textit{mugham}, he spontaneously and continuously creates unique musical sentences. The reason behind his distinct and innovative style is the affinity between his playing and the singing that he accompanies. Instead of impressing with speed, he astonishes with expressivity. This is how Farhat himself responded to this point:

I listen to different poetical metres [\textit{bəhr}] of \textit{ghazals} and this goes inside me and then I speak with my fingers what it all means. I also accentuate particular notes that are sung. I
feel the rhythmic metres of a ghazal and I use it. I try to go into this rhythm and then play like that to influence the audience (Farhat Ahmedov, interview, 7 December 2015).

The proclivity to formulate original musical units is especially pronounced in the Mansurov and Bakikhanov schools. There are characteristics of conservative lineages such as the presence of established guşə, əruz poetical metres, constant metrical pulse, and refined plectrum virtuosity that expose the connection between the instrumentalist`s playing and mugham poetry. This affinity creates the necessary ground for heightened creativity and “new” music to take place. Masters who adhere to these older styles agree on this point, stressing that the poetry must be enhanced and elevated through the playing and consequently trigger the creation of cümlə and guşə. When I asked Eldar Miriyev whether he had his own cümlə or guşə, he answered:

You know, the performer, for example Ahmad Bakikhanov, played like this [plays guşə səlmək in Bakikhanov`s style] but I play like this [plays his own version], it is how I feel, it is my composition! But it is possible to have something completely new, these are my feelings! It is when the xanənda sings, when I listen to him or her, I create something. This is mugham improvisation. But one must have experience for this (Eldar Miriyev, interview, 1 June 2015).

As evident in this quote, Eldar first referred to playing in his idiosyncratic style as a kind of creativity, but then continued to speak about the significance of sung text for the genesis of “something completely new.”

In fact, all musicians who are followers of the Mansurov and Bakikhanov traditions emphasized əruz as a source for instrumentalist’s creativity. However, it was never made explicit how this occurs, and when asked, musicians proclaimed that the poetical metres are felt and intuited. Therefore, it seems that sensing əruz, and not necessarily knowing it, is responsible for this kind of creativity. This circumstance was discussed by Vugar:
In āruz, there are short and long vowels, and extra long vowels. The short vowels cannot be changed by the long ones…. I can sing and lengthen those vowels that are long and they become irfan…. When it comes to creativity, the long vowels can be elongated and enriched. Same thing happens for the instrumentalist. When Bahram was playing the tremolo he made you think. Bahram did not know āruz but he felt it! (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 16 October 2015)

The discovery of cūmlə and guşə can transpire independently of sung texts, such as in the context of solo mugham performance. For example, gəzismə can serve as the main tool for the formulation of new musical sentences. Gəzismə is literally defined as “walking” in Azerbaijani, and musicians sometimes define it as “a cūmlə with a sequence” or, borrowing from Western classical music terminology, an “episode” or “etude.” This is a method usually used by instrumentalists, but singers can also execute similar structures.

The gəzismə are often performed using a shtrikh from a lineage, and the pattern is played as if “walking around” on tones corresponding to the section in a dastgah that one is performing at that moment. Importantly, these sequences are improvisatory because the shtrikh and the “walking” are spontaneously chosen. Sometimes it is the singer who performs an impromptu gəzismə and the accompanists merely imitate. Although characterized by much flexibility and openness, there are boundaries for how the gəzismə can develop. However, performances in the popular style frequently feature exaggerated gəzismə. Therefore, some conservative performers do complain that the mainstream manner of playing features gəzismə which are excessive and transgress the rules. Moreover, the gəzismə’s disassociation from poetry makes certain conservative musicians disdain it as mere virtuosic showiness, lacking in philosophical meaning. Many players identify gəzismə as cūmlə and never as guşə since they lack the complexity of the latter’s structure that encompasses a beginning, “meaning”, and an ending, being a separate “philosophical idea.”
Successful products of this kind of creativity – whether brought about due to *ghazal* singing or *gozişmə* – solidify and become part of the *mugham* model. For example, an intriguing new *cümə* may be fascinating to a musician in the audience who as a result memorizes it on the spot while the performing musician, in an altered state, is unable to grasp his invention. On the other hand, the creator may be fully aware of the striking flash of musical insight and remember it afterwards. Moreover, a musician may suddenly invent a musical sentence before his or her performance and keep it only for him- or herself, demanding full ownership over it. These phrases then usually become recognized among other musicians who begin to call them by the creator’s *barmaq*. The last sentence of *şur mayə* exemplifies this phenomenon since it is Ahsan Dadashev’s *barmaq*, played by everyone who is performing the popularized version.

Figure 6.6 Ahsan Dadashev’s *barmaq*
A famous instance of a crystallized гәзішма named “тизәк” is the very fast, virtuosic, sequential fourth цүмле in the popular version of шур мавә. Vugar said of it: “this is not a гүшә, it is a гәзішма, it is a sequence…. It can also be counted as цүмле.” Musicians say that this was created by an unknown тәр player Zarif Gayibov, therefore also calling it as his бармаq. The differences between the fast technical style of this цүмле and the metrical pace of гүшә belonging to conservative lineages are quite palpable.

Figure 6.7 Гәзішма тизәк
Having one’s unique guşə was declared by musicians to be common and was described as the most sophisticated kind of creativity, other than spontaneous modulation. Some of these structures are named while some remain untitled. Many are guarded as secrets and only played by the creator during performances. Owing to a more complex form and technique of guşə, as compared to cümlə, it is not easy for other musicians to remember and imitate them without knowing all the underlying tricks that the creator incorporated. Also, according to musicians, the intricacy of these sentences is reflective of an altered, elated state that must be present for these to be created. Thus, the formulation of guşə is always surrounded by mystery and there are references made to the Divine as partly responsible for bestowing upon musicians such musical structures that are embodiments of philosophical perfection. What is even more astonishing to many is that these guşə are so extremely “new” and beyond the model while somehow still remaining within so many of mugham’s boundaries. Once I asked Rovshen Gasimov whether he has his own guşə in şur mugham. He said he did, and played a part of it for me. After finishing, he emphasized that one must be in the right mind state to not only create, but also to play it. I asked how he came up with it, and he exclaimed: “it came from God, I swear! It just came to me once when I picked up the tar and that’s it. It is like...you know when people smoke and they get high and go inside [dərinə getmək]? This is similar. It gave me a new spiritual inner world [daxili ruh diünəst] and spiritual feeling. I was filled with it” (Rovshen Gasimov, interview, 19 December 2014).
6.5 Modulation

*There can be transitions between distant modes, such as from şur to çahargah. But this requires real talent [məharət], one has to be a master. This is how it is. As you know şur and çahargah are independent mughams. For example, there are 7 mayə of 7 mughams. These are all 7 mayə and they have no relationship to each other. They are separate and they have branches – şöbə and guşə. Şöbə and guşə originate in the mayə. As such, there is yoghurt mayə, sour cream mayə, etc. But all these mayə - they are made from milk!*

(Nardaran knower, interview, 25 July 2015)

Spontaneous and non-standardized modulation is yet another complex form of *mugham* creativity. Much the same as the invention of an idiosyncratic style, *cümlə*, and *guşə*, modulation represents music that is “new.” Studies into cognate musical systems such as the Persian *radif* also reveal that *morakkab-khani* or *morakkab-navazi* – which is modulation between different *dəstgah* through shared *guşə* – is the most advanced level of creativity, rarely heard today (Caron and Safvate 1966: 128). In Azerbaijan too, many regard modulation as the peak of musical innovation in *mugham* and as the most mysterious kind of creative activity. While canonized *mugham dəstgah* does feature modulation, these transitions are standardized and are learned by all, therefore not falling into the category of the kind of creativity we are discussing.

The term *modulyatsiya* (modulation, Rus.) is sometimes used among musicians and is understood simply as transition between modes. Therefore, it is also called *keçməxə* which means “to pass” or “to transition” in Azerbaijani. One musician, dedicated to the nativism trend and relying on his knowledge of ancient treatises related to *mugham*, specified that the correct word for modulation is *intiqal* and *rədifsazləq* (this terminology was discussed in the previous chapter).

Inventive and spontaneous modulation is a rare occurrence among musicians today. Thus, there is a deep fascination attached to this musical phenomenon. Often, when interviewed,
performers brought up past practices, when modulation was more common, and lamented the present-day lack of musicians who are adept at such transitions. These complaints are not unfounded because archival research does show much more variety among versions of the same *dəstgah* prior to Sovietization in Azerbaijan. Distant modes were attached to each other inventively through strings of *guşə* and *şöbə* revealing intense imaginative processes of older *mugham* performers.

At the same time, I have encountered views – of musicians who do not represent conservative styles – that oppose non-canonized modulation. This is due to the fact that some musicians adhere too strictly to the institutionalized version of *mugham*. For instance, one *tar* player, seeing ancient accounts with unusual transitions, argued that there should be no new modulation within *dəstgah*:

Modulation is allowed, but only when one is composing [referring to the national composers and composition school established in Azerbaijan by Uzeyir Hajibeyov]. But when one is playing a *dəstgah*, there shouldn’t be new modulation there…. Maybe some time back then there were such things…I have books here [he had Afrasiyab Babalbayli’s music dictionary (1969) lying on his desk] and there is data about modulation which we do not have anymore. Back then there was more freedom. And in the 1930s there was standardization and more rules created (Manaf Madatov, interview, 7 December 2015).

However, many performers still find value in modulation but do not have enough skills to create imaginative *keçid*. They therefore limit themselves to coming up with new modulations between *mughams* that are modally closely related to each other. One such musician acknowledged the possibilities of modulation but made references to straightforward transitions, such as going from *şur* to *dilkəş*. When I asked him about passages from *şur* to more distant *mughams* such as *bayati-iskahan* he remarked that it is possible, but extremely difficult.
Modulation is a type of creativity that was and is especially valued in the Absheron villages. Nardaran pundits repeatedly recalled the days when such modulations were the main “exam” questions for musicians who visited to perform in front of mugham knowers during weddings. The knowers requested particularly difficult modulations for specific and substantial sums of money. If the wild and spontaneous modulations were successfully done, performers were rewarded with prestige and the designated monetary amount. However, not all musicians were able to create transitions that had never before been performed. Thus, there are sayings in Azerbaijani that originated in the Absheron villages such as “Ona nərdıvan getirin” (“Bring him or her a ladder”) for those who cannot return to the original mugham after a complex modulation. There is a rule: after a shift into another mugham, there must be also a path back to the original section afterwards. Both are equally challenging feats. If a musician has enough inventiveness to transition once, it does not mean that he or she can skilfully return.

There are still masters left today who assert that they can create new modulatory links or at least who seem to have knowledge that was passed on to them about rare transitions. All of those with this exceptional skill and information belong to conservative lineages. For example, Vugar Rzayev, disciple of Bahram Mansurov, once informed me that mュー guşə that is currently played in zabul mugham can be developed to lead into şur mugham. When I investigated old mugham lists at the archives, I found that this musical section mュー was indeed sometimes found as part of şur performances. This data pertains to the Mansurov mugham məclises that took place in early twentieth-century Baku.

Masters enlightened me with more information about precise guşə that could serve as links for interesting modulations. The details of such guşə were of course kept secret, but the general trajectory of music between two distant modes was shown on the tar or sung. Emin
Mammadov once told me in a secretive tone that in Lankaran – a city in southern Azerbaijan – musicians came up with a way to go from ʂur to şüştər. He then explained that əmiiri was used as a transition to şüştər, and played the approximate outline of how it would sound. In a similar way, he showed me a section in bayati-türk which is musically akin to gatar and can function as a connection to mugham mahur hindi. Furthermore, a number of my teachers briefly demonstrated guşə əbulçəp as a link from ʂur to bayatı-şiraz.

Segah is a “wedding dəstgah” similar to ʂur. Both are very vast musically and allow much possibility for creativity. Segah is also most loved by Azerbaijanis. Every now and then I heard the remark: “nobody in the world has a segah like the Azerbaijanis!” There is a shared belief that the Azerbaijani segah is not only superior to other modal parts with the same name in cognate musical systems but also that it is very distinct, therefore being truly Azerbaijani. Consequently, modulation from ʂur to segah was discussed more than any other pathway from ʂur to another mode. Different ways of performing this transition were demonstrated. At our inaugural Mugham Məclisi project in Baku, invited ustads were asked to perform ʂur and they created an exhilarating link to segah. During my lessons, masters also informed me about available ways to pass from ʂur to segah. Eldar Miriyev noted: “this is not taught, and it depends from where one transitions. To go to segah one must be either in şikəsteyi-fars or şəmayi-şəms” (Eldar Miriyev, interview, 4 June 2015).

When it came to actually demonstrating bewildering and rare modulations in their entirety, few ustads seemed to be willing and ready. The main reason for this is that such transitions are guarded as secrets because of how valuable they are deemed to be.

Based on the examples I witnessed and on further research, there are five main ways for modulation to occur: (a) directly from one mugham to another; (b) through a cadence; (c)
through emphasis on a shared tone; (d) through a guşə; and (e) through a əzismə. One important
criterion for any modulation is that it is performed gradually. Therefore, all the options were
compared to ladders that help to smooth the transition. Furthermore, transitions must always be
satisfying on three grounds: modally, melodically, and in terms of the conveyed mood. If two
mughams use almost the same ərədə (e.g. çahargah and hümayun) but differ in character and
nature of melodic development, the modulation is highly unlikely. The dissimilarity in the way
melodies progress in distinct mughams is an especially interesting point because it seems to be
connected to əruz patterns. This explains why many performers identify əruz and poetry to be
crucial factors for modulation (see below).

While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to delve into every form of transition, a
few examples of particular instances are necessary to highlight some points and make
conclusions.

To analyze how transitions take place through a guşə, I present here examples from şur
dostgah as taught by Emin Mammadov. Azerbaijan guşə is part of bayati-kürd mugham. It is
followed by guşə şah Xətai and məvərənnəhr which are part of dügah and therefore they function
as a keçid from bayati-kürd to dügah. I encountered this transition only in the Mansurov lineage,
and subsequently, discovered lists of pre-Soviet şur with the same progression of guşə.

Figure 6.8 Transition from bayati-kürd mugham to dügah mugham as played in the Mansurov
school

Azerbaijan guşə

Şah Xətai guşə
At one of our *Mugham Məclisi* gatherings, invited masters performed a spontaneous link from şur to segah. First, the musicians performed what is known as *gulağı doldurmaq* (filling the ears) which features accentuation of a common tone used in both *mughams*. Also, this modulation was signalled with a shift to a completely new *ghazal*. I had an opportunity to question the performing *tar* master about the demonstrated skill:

Polina Dessiatnitchenko: a modulation can be performed via a certain note?

Eldar Miriyev: yes, through a certain note.

PD: who usually leads such modulations?

EM: if the *xanəndə* is experienced, he or she can.

PD: is this similar to what happened when you and the invited *xanəndə* performed şur at the *Mugham Məclisi*?

EM: yes, this singer I performed with can lead such things. He knows *əruz*.

PD: is *əruz* important for such modulation?
EM: well, he can get the meaning of the words across clearly because he knows əruz.

PD: and why is that important?

EM: one must know what one is singing about (Eldar Miriyev, interview, 8 June 2015).

əruz as the hint is interesting because it suggests that certain mughams may be brought closer melodically through the choice of poetry that shares the same underlying əruz metres. Also, accurate əruz patterns and consequent clarity of the sung words and their meanings could potentially lead to a state of inspiration that in turn fires up one’s imagination towards unprecedented modulatory links. We will continue to explore the mystery behind modulation and other forms of creativity in the next chapter when we look into experience of performers.

6.6 Incorporation of non-mugham genres and styles

There is another form of mugham creativity that entails the integration of non-mugham musical material into the dəstgah. This practice differs from the above categories – variation, idiosyncratic style, new guşə and cümə, and modulation – in important ways and this is why it was excluded in the diagram at the outset of the chapter. There are other genres of Azerbaijani traditional music such as the aşiq bardic tradition that have influenced mugham. The exchange of musical features between mugham and aşiq music, for example, has been especially prominent since musicians of both traditions often performed in the same settings and even learned from teachers of both art forms. This reciprocation was and is regarded as permissible and welcomed creativity, even among conservative musicians. For instance, many prominent xanənda re-fashion aşiq songs into mugham təsnifs. This practice is especially salient in şur mugham because much of aşiq music is created in this mode. It is very important to note, however, that
while the songs are borrowed as təsnifs, the mugham fabric comprised of şöbə, guşə, cümlə is for the most part left unimpacted by aşıq music. Therefore, this kind of creativity does not concern us in the present work.

Moreover, there is a new tendency to add foreign “Eastern” musical gestures or styles of playing as part of the nativism trend that characterized the post-Soviet context (see chapter 4). Although this proclivity affects primarily the main mugham content in a dəstgah (şöbə, guşə, and cümlə), it does not demonstrate the relationship between the model and creativity which has been explored thus far. In other words, the new shades of oriental sounds in mugham are not yet part of the mugham model and do not represent the same kinds of processes that are part of the creativity we have been discussing. Moreover, there is no native terminology associated with this kind of practice.

Conclusions

During identifies several “levels of interpretation” which depart progressively from the learned radif in Iran until the musician is liberated from it. He calls the extreme of creativity “la grande improvisation” as opposed to his “la petite improvisation” in which the radif is just modified (During 1984: 202). In another work, he also divides improvisation into “strategic” and “creative”: the first entails choosing between possibilities without creating anything “new”, while the second category deals with the “new” (During 1987: 23). Most, if not all, musical traditions involve such a creativity continuum. In order to understand the factors that are responsible for mapping music of a particular tradition onto this continuum, analysis must begin with local terminology and correlated musical examples. Such an exploration presented in
chapters 5 and 6 revealed that when it comes to Azerbaijani *mugham* there are clear distinctions between the model and the “new”, variation and breakthrough, interpretation of the mind and intuition of the imagination. Moreover, significant factors such as the accumulation of musical material transmitted in *mugham* lineages and the influence of *ghazal* poetry and *əruz* metres determine the course of the imagination. In the next chapter, we continue our inquiry by looking at how Azerbaijani musicians experience creativity. This information will supplement our conclusions thus far, bringing us closer to our analysis of the enigmatic flash of musical insight as experienced in the moment of performance.
Chapter 7
Experiencing Creativity: Ontological Possibilities of Mugham Within and Beyond Discourses

In addition to controlled manipulation and variation of musical structures within the learned system there are more complicated forms of mugham creativity that entail creating new material beyond the existing model. When it comes to the flashes of creative insight, local terminology reveals the obstacle to discursively grasping and explicating the phenomenon. For instance, the ability to create beyond the model is regarded as mysterious and performers who achieve it are often called mürəkkəb ıstədadlı, meaning “talented in a complicated way.” Azerbaijani musicians are at a loss when asked to explain such phenomena and resort to phrases such as “explosion of thinking”, “revelation” or “the self is taken from the self” that show only the limits of language to capture what is going on musically. However, despite the limitations of language, there are discernible inducing factors that can be analyzed as catalysts for creativity in its most extreme manifestations. Synchronic analysis that looks into creativity through the lens of hermeneutic phenomenology combined with the conclusions about creativity in pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet Azerbaijan show that ghazal poetry and the vast realm of meanings it conjures seems to be central for generating music that is unique. It is my contention that an interpretive and imaginative engagement with meanings constitutes the experience of mugham creativity that opens up both musical and ontological possibilities for performers.
7.1 Characteristics of creativity

The different branches of creativity covered in chapter 6 are united by a common thread: possibilities extend into the terrain of “new” music under the influence of the vast realm of meanings that is evoked from the sung texts and the related Islamic sciences. This causality was repeatedly suggested when performers described creativity during lessons and interviews. In addition, *mugham* musicians discussed the following three characteristics of creativity: precision, harmony between members of the trio, and variation. Here, the centrality of sung poetry is further underlined. With precision, proper tuning-in between trio members, and variation, meanings are highlighted and the musicians can engage with them. The resulting processes of interpretation and imagination comprise musical creativity.

Precision was the primary goal reiterated endlessly during *mugham* lessons and was believed to transform bare duplication of the transmitted system into something original, as paradoxical as that may seem at first. Copying the teacher’s part, sentence by sentence, the student aims to grasp the music in its minutest detail. Usually one full lesson is devoted to just one *kümlə* or *guşə* because the task is to get everything right. Repeating one fragment over thirty times, the *tar* student must pay attention to the following: rhythmical and microtonal inflections, *mizrab* gestures, and the order of sections. These forms of precision were said to establish a flow that facilitates creativity. Furthermore, masters today tied many of these precision markers to *əruz*, one of the most pronounced but tacit stimulants of creativity.

The demand for precision is somewhat dependent on the lineage one is studying, with conservative schools placing more emphasis on exactitude. For example, heirs of the Mansurov and Bakikhanov lineages were very strict when it comes to precision because it is a crucial marker of authenticity. They usually connected plectrum strokes, rhythms, structure of *guşə* and
other features to əruz and upheld the view that pre-Soviet mugham was thoroughly structured based on prosodical metres. Masters expect nothing less than exact imitation of these parameters.

During one of my lessons with Emin Mammadov, he abruptly stopped me and corrected my playing, urging me to feel the rhythm and saying:

You must play fiercely. And the pauses will fall into place if you are feeling the metre correctly.… At the end of the nineteenth century, early twentieth century, mugham had its own metre, and succession [ardicl]. What was played was the same as what was sung. If you play without the metre, you make it difficult for the singer (Emin Mammadov, interview, 27 February 2015).

Even when it comes to styles that do not feature a regular pace characteristic of conservative lineages, the idea of a correct and precise rhythm persists. The vivid pauses and the sudden acceleration or deceleration were also said to fall into the inherent metrical structure based on əruz. In my lessons with Rovshen Gasimov, he frequently corrected me when I copied his playing with tiny differences in terms of rhythmical patterns. These deviations were immediately detected, and I had to repeat the segments many times so that I would internalize the right version. He made sure that we achieved the most precise temporal organization of mugham, citing əruz as the underlying reason. One tar player discussed the presence of əruz in the playing of Haji Mammadov, who was the teacher of Rovshen:

In Haji Mammadov’s style, it seems that the əruz is not very pervasive. However, sometimes as you listen to him…you can feel that it came from əruz. There is a metre! This is in the blood. Because he accompanied so many xanəndo, his playing was influenced as such. The singing, the tar, and the kamança all influence each other and adopt elements from each other (Manaf Madatov, interview, 7 December 2015).

Singers who inserted extra words into ghazal lines, thereby affecting əruz, were also criticized for imprecision. For example, a xanəndo’s “Oooy!” or “Ah!” exclaimations at the
beginning of a *misra* were often blamed for ruining *ghazals* because they interfere with prosodical metres. These and other additions were considered to be permissible only outside of *ghazal* lines where they serve as tools for the virtuosic display of the voice. Otherwise they impact the accuracy of *əruz* metres and lead to erroneous performances, according to many masters. On the contrary, proper treatment of *əruz* by the singer was believed to expand the possibilities of creativity.

Harmony between members of the *mugham* trio is another central component of creativity discussed by performers. The accord between music and poetry is believed to enhance creativity by allowing for a tuning-in between musicians, thereby propelling the momentum of the aggregate creative impulse. All musicians agree on the importance of unity when playing in a trio, but not all can achieve it. Styles of playing on the *tar* that are closer to poetry and are not virtuosic in terms of speed are said to yield better performances of *mugham* precisely because they further mutual inspiration among instrumentalists and vocalists. Similarly, if a *xanondə* sings masterfully and delivers the meanings clearly, the *tar* and *kamança* players become inspired. As such, all participants are equally important and responsible for bringing about rapport between their parts and weaving their *mugham* journey together. One musician explained:

> You can’t say that somewhere in Nardaran, Kurdakhani, or somewhere in a restaurant, things are different when it comes to improvisation…this does not even depend on your own self. What heightened improvisation depends on is complete understanding between performers in a trio. If one link in a trio is weaker then even if you play day and night at a wedding, there will be nothing above and beyond. This kind of improvisation cannot be explained, it is almost like the *vohy* given to the Prophet. Almost the same thing happens during performance, it is like not you yourself anymore, but a second someone…it is as if not just my spirit is inside me but three others. Such experiences can take place! (Arif Mutallibov, interview, 4 December 2015)
Tar musicians described how they should accompany in order to improve harmony in a trio and stimulate creativity. The most important objective is to avoid getting in the way of the singer by dominating the spotlight with virtuosic solos. Instead, the instrumentalist’s part should be sparse so that the sung texts remain central. Only during breaks between poetical lines when the singer rests can an instrumentalist insert more colourful and dazzling techniques. For example, Eldar Miriyev commented: “the main rule is that I follow the xanəndo. Only if the xanəndo is young and unexperienced, then I can lead. In any case, the tar player must not interrupt the xanəndo. You must play in the pauses only. Some tar players are a nuisance because the ghazals are not heard” (Eldar Miriyev, interview, 4 June 2015).

Completeness of the musical units played by instrumentalists is another important way to promote the tuning-in explained above. When performers of a trio all perform in finished and equal fragments, their melodies coincide and synchronize. Chelebiyev writes about the structure of guşə and cümlə: “If a thought that was started is not completed by a performer with a cadential turn on the main tone, this thought is considered unfinished and the performer is considered incompetent” (Chelebiyev 2009: 62). The common association between mugham units and “thoughts” that occurs here and in other terminology of performers (e.g. mugham təfəkkürü) further testifies to the link between music and poetry and the need for music to be modelled after complete beyts of sung texts. Therefore, even parts with much creativity such as gozişmə are said to take the form of a “complete idea” when done correctly. The main aim is for the playing to be in whole units in order to correspond with the singing, as is evident in the following statement by a distinguished xanəndo:

I like the instrumentalists in a trio to be very attentive. Every sentence which I sing, the tar player should also answer in the same manner and volume. Not longer. For example…I have a recording of one tar player accompanying Hajibaba singing zabul
segah on television. When you listen to this performance, you are mesmerized! As Hajibaba opens his mouth, the tar performer plays 1:1, not more. Accompanying has its own school, one has to learn this. But this is not a certain school, it is not taught, you have to learn it yourself…. This is not easy. It is different from solo playing…. Once Hajibaba was accompanied by a young tar player who was known to favour virtuosity above all. They were not getting along well. In a wedding ceremony, çahargah was requested, and the tar player wanted to show off. He started playing very fast. Hajibaba looked at him and said “hey you, should I stand up and start dancing now?” The guy on the tar wanted to flaunt his technique but Hajibaba stopped him. What I want to say is that accompanying and following the xanəndə correctly is important (Azad Mustafayev, interview, 17 July 2015).

Xanəndə masters, for their part, are also responsible for ensuring that harmony happens in a trio. Their role, however, is somewhat different from that of instrumentalists; namely, they need to know and properly convey the ghazal poetry in order to inspire the instrumentalists. Emin Mammadov told me a story about his impromptu mugham session with a xanəndə when a powerful state of creativity formed:

…this is improvisation. One enters the state and creates. This depends on how the xanəndə delivers a ghazal. If a ghazal is sung with an understanding, then I also get inspired and I enter this trance and play…. When I played with Rafig Aliyev and he entered such a state, I also followed him. We were singing mirza hüseyn segah. And ours ended up being so much more extensive and improvisatory. This is because of the collective state (Emin Mammadov, interview, 4 November 2015).

Lastly, the significance of variation often comes up in performers’ conceptualizations of mugham creativity. This is the main type of creativity discussed in chapter 6 and illustrated with musical examples. All masters underscore that mugham should never be played the same way twice. Musicians are obligated to play differently each time, imaginatively varying cadences, parts of guşə and cümə or entire sentences. For instance, as I was taking lessons with Rovshen Gasimov, he continuously changed the same part in successive lessons, saying: “someone has an easy path, one path, but not mugham players because they can choose. They have to be sensitive
and choose, so mugham is always different” (Rovshen Gasimov, interview, 27 March 2014). As with precision and tuning-in, variation is viewed as a catalyst for music beyond the model and, as I will show below, this is related to placing emphasis on the meanings.

Perceptions of creativity are part of the current context wherein discourses about what constitutes tradition loom large. Finding əruz at the root of all demands for precision could be part of the post-Soviet nativism. In this case, əruz serves as a symbol of pre-Soviet mugham and the harmony between music and poetry that was cultivated at that time. Rapport in a mugham trio can similarly function as a marker of purity and authenticity that the masters seek to recover today. Could the need to play in sync with the singer be a way to challenge the demands for virtuosity advanced in Soviet Azerbaijan? Could the emphasis on variation be a nativist reaction to Soviet standardization? At the same time that these ideas may stem from or be reinforced by nativism, they also determine creativity and shape its experience.

Although musicians identify precision, tuning-in, and variation as characteristics of performance that intensify creativity, how and why this is achieved is left unexplained. For instance, many masters insist that precision sparks spontaneous creativity. However, the transformation of established boundaries into possibilities is never taught or made explicit. Performing and experiencing mugham is the only way to feel how these forms of tacit knowledge bring about enhanced creativity. For example, performing with əruz or playing in complete musical units are said to be inherent in mugham and therefore intuited with enough experience as a mugham musician.
7.2 Meanings take centre stage

The moment of performance constitutes a flux when meanings are interpreted, imagined, and transformed. Precision, trio harmony, and variation are parameters of performance that are the tools for musicians to bring forth the “philosophy of mugham” that inspires creativity.

Above all, accurate pronunciation effectively exposes meanings. It is believed that this outcome is enhanced when əruz metres are performed with precision by both singers and instrumentalists. As one of my teachers informed me: “You know, when əruz is present and the singing is with inspiration, this pulls one towards philosophy” (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 12 September 2014). In addition, other kinds of accuracy, such as plectrum technique, act as vehicles to express meanings non-discursively. For example, one master explained that the spiritual meaning behind əlif mizrab only comes across when the technique is performed correctly and with the right understanding. Əlif mizrab is “the symbol of God” for him because it mirrors the letter əlif, also interpreted as the form of God.

The unity between trio performers is also geared towards an unobstructed delivery of meanings. Surely, there are a number of features indicative of the harmony between the xanəndə and instrumentalists: the use of əruz, a corresponding pace, the coinciding of instrumentalists’ cadences with the endings of ghazals, and the completeness of units. For instance, singers have the option to skip beyts or change their order. However, the two lines of a single beyt must be sung and remain in the original progression because they form one unit in which the second hemistich completes the first in structure and in semantics. The beyts cannot be split even among successive şöbəs because this would affect the conveyance of meanings. Likewise, instrumentalists refer to their musical sentences as “finished thoughts” (tam fikir) and maintain that this totality of structure represents meaningfulness. Both the singing and the playing must be
comprised of harmonious whole units that align with each other. As such, harmony between music and words allows for unity in performance, a kind of “shared somatic state” (Blacking 1997; Csordas 1993). Certainly, the views of Azerbaijani musicians emphasize the force of unified creativity made possible by the harmony between music and words. I argue that this allows for a tuning-in (Schutz 1951) between the performers developing the momentum of mutual inspiration. Therefore, engagement with meanings happens on a collective level, intensifying creativity.

Musical variation that is at the core of creativity also promotes immersion into the world of mugham meanings. First, the same lines of poetry can be sung multiple times to accentuate the content being expressed. The rule is that when a line is repeated, the musical expression must change (see musical examples in chapter 1). One teacher explained:

Sometimes, the xanəndo must repeat certain lines of a ghazal. This is done when a line is emphasized. It is repeated to uncover its meaning further. Some texts can be repeated up to four times. Then, the artistic quality is raised. There are rules for the repetition: the intonations must change each time (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 6 June 2015).

Second, variation of entire ghazals can take place. Usually, there are standardized ghazals that are used in particular mughams but a new ghazal can be made to fit a dəstgah part with knowledge or feeling of əruz.

Engagement with meanings is central to creativity. I rely on hermeneutic phenomenology and identify engagement with meanings as a process of interpretation. Imagination is an impellent that drives interpretation: it is an act that allows for experience of that which is possible and sets the course for interpretation to unfold temporally. Therefore, I use the words interpretation (tafakkur) and imagination (təxəyyüll) are also concepts used by native
mugham performers for creativity (e.g. mugham тəфəkkүрү, тəфəkkүр партиясы, and төхүүл партиясы). Although I use phenomenology to inquire into experience of creativity, I also incorporate emic explanations in order to identify potential differences in the respective approaches and, more importantly, instances when phenomenology falls short in accounting for what goes on.

Ghazal texts are a pertinent example of what Ricoeur designates as equivocal symbols with multiple layers of meanings (versus univocal with single meaning). Therefore, hermeneutics as “the system by which the deeper significance is revealed beneath the manifest content” (Palmer 1969: 44) is at the core of mugham creativity. As part of my analysis, I consider both discursive (textual) and expressive (musical) dimensions of interpretation in order to understand how the sung texts inspire creativity that reaches beyond them through musical symbols.

Moreover, I take understanding that arises from interpretation to be both epistemological and ontological. The primal mode of understanding – our being-in-the-world – is crucial in order to have a full picture of what hermeneutics is, especially for mugham performers. Thus I apply the ideas of Heidegger for whom “understanding is the power to grasp one’s own possibilities for being, within the context of the lifeworld in which one exists” (Palmer 1969: 131). Interpretation and imagination of meanings that constitute mugham creativity thus become a journey of ontological disclosure. Lastly, I discuss the numinous reality, cited to be part of creativity, with findings of phenomenologists of mysticism.
7.3 The *mugham* journey: interpretation and imagination

*Mugham təfəkkürü*, the umbrella term for creativity was defined as performing using one’s logic and thinking. Considering the insiders’ explanations, it becomes evident that this process of “thinking” involves enigmatic moments of musical discovery called explosion of thinking, explosion of imagination, revelation, etc. In this part of the chapter, I am mainly concerned with the interpretive and imaginative process that approaches the moments of creativity in its most extreme manifestation, while the ensuing section investigates the ontological shift.

One *mugham* knower in a suburban region of Absheron remarked as we were listening to a recording of Hajibaba’s performance:

> See how Hajibaba varies the same phrase? This is not improvisation. It is interpretation. It happens when inspiration comes…. He chose such ghazals with different bəhrs and this helped him create new styles. This is linked to əruz…. He understood ghazals, he had an inner understanding of the ghazals….This also provoked the tar player to create (Nardaran knower, interview, 25 July 2015).

In this quote, all the qualities of creativity discussed above – əruz precision, tuning-in, and variation – are related to interpretation and to the sung texts. For instrumentalists, just as for the xanənda, knowledge of poetry must be cultivated (Zohrabov 1991: 85). Naturally, many musicians understand *mugham* creativity to be interpretation and substitute the word improvisation with interpretation. Other terminology such as “*mugham* thinking” and “*mugham* philosophy” also relate to interpretive processes. Scholars are similarly convinced about the centrality of interpretation for *mugham* and situate it within Islamic spirituality. For example, Gultekin Shamilli in *The Classical Music of Iran: Rules of Knowledge and Practice* (2007) writes about the importance of interpretive processes in Islam, specifically when it comes to
music such as Persian and Azerbaijani dostgah which, according to the author, is connected to Islam. She writes that “The principle of interpretation or making sense of something becomes the principle of thinking itself, in other words, thinking in the sphere of Islam means interpretation…. This can be taken as the foundation for the theses ‘music is the movement of thought’ and ‘music is interpretation expressed in sounds’” (Shamilli 2007: 115). Comparatively, Bagirova explains, “As with sacred writings when the meaning of one and the same text is revealed to the seeker with more and more depth each time due to his spiritual growth, the meaning of mugham is revealed to the listener on the level of his personal emotional state, deepening as his soul develops” (Bagirova 2006: 16).

What are some aspects that broaden the horizons of interpretation in mugham? First, mugham creativity is a phenomenon of non-discursive interpretation. It is interpretation of texts through musical sounds. According to one of my tar teachers, “Music helps to open the text, to uncover the words. Mugham is the divine genre for uncovering the philosophy of the Quran” (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 11 December 2014). Consequently, adding an expressive (musical) dimension to a discursive (textual) interpretive activity eliminates boundaries inherent in language.

Second, there are different kinds of spheres of knowledge that are implicated. Ghazal poetry is the primary source of meanings interpreted in a mugham performance. These meanings are rooted in Islamic thought and worldview, therefore, knowledge of these spheres expands the horizons of interpretation to infinity. My teacher explained that mugham thinking comes only with time because one must reach a profound understanding of mugham philosophy. For this, the ability to play all the mughams does not suffice; the grasp of ghazal terminology, religion, and
significant historical treatises are all required. Thus, to achieve heightened creativity, one must acquire a wealth of meanings that the music conveys in addition to learning the mugham model.

Third, interpretation comes with the subjective and individual factors that guarantee the impossibility of a conclusive or singular reading. One Nardaran knower clarified:

Some poetry by Fuzuli or Nasimi has never been disclosed by orientalists and scholars. We try to open this poetry a bit, but cannot go deeper. There was a molla in our village and he said that it is difficult to reveal the meaning of Fuzuli’s poetry. Then seven men went to him and declared that they found explanations for the poetry but from seven different perspectives. The molla said: “So what? There are still deeper meanings to uncover.” Everyone, based on their own level of knowledge, can interpret it. Mugham is also like that (Nardaran knower July 25, 2015).

Lastly, as mentioned earlier, the subject matter of ghazals is the Beyond, offering possibilities for multiple layers of meanings. The sung text is full of metaphors that are suggestive rather than determinate, and often the use of imagery and metaphor points to the awareness of language’s own limitations. Longing, expressed through a series of metaphors, can be interpreted as secular or divine based on a knowledge of terminology and symbols rooted in Islamic sciences. Therefore, there is much opportunity in the realm of the imagined. Below is a line from Fuzuli’s ghazal, explained by one mugham performer:

Canı canan diləmiş, verməmək olmaz, ey del!  
Nə niza eyləyəlim, ol nə şənindir, nə manım.

*My soul my Beloved demanded from me, I cannot refuse!  
Why refuse? It is neither yours, nor is it mine.*

Interpretation: “Can” is the soul which God gave me, so when God asks me for my soul, I cannot give it, since it already comes from God. There is an excerpt in the Quran precisely about this: “All that comes from God will return to God.” However, the surface meaning here is about human love, of course (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 2 September 2014).
This is just one possible interpretation from myriad others. As one of my teachers clarified:

If you want to know a ghazal, every line, every letter must be analyzed, you must go there, and under there, to the bottom, to the hidden meaning, there is Sufism and irfan, but not everybody can do this…. The deepest meaning of a ghazal is understood by the poet as the poet, by Vugar as Vugar, Polina xanım [madame] as Polina xanım, taxi driver as taxi driver. The ghazal genre has that prospect – to be understood differently by different people (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 6 June 2014).

Vincent Crapanzano writes about the chain of interpretation and experience related to the “hinterland” or the unreachable Beyond – such as future, past, ecstasy, memory: “…once the hinterland, once possibility, is articulated, it is somehow fixed and constraining, determining further possibilities: the newly displaced hinterland” (Crapanzano 2004: 23). Similarly, there is a recursive relationship between experience and meanings throughout the performance of mugham: musicians are left with possibility for endless interpretation, when subjective experience continuously reaches past symbols which are trying to capture it. My informants understand travelling through the mugham dostgah cycle as diving to the bottom of an ocean because it involves this process of continuous engagement with meanings that opens further possibilities for experience.

These possibilities are multiplied when it comes to musical expression that can convey past discursive symbols. While the link to ghazal poetry seems to be at the core of the facets that comprise creativity, musical expression is also a way beyond these meanings. In other words, sung texts trigger and facilitate creativity and simultaneously allow music to surpass discursive representation. During reached a similar conclusion in his investigation into mysticism and music: “It is essentially a circular or spiral relationship in which the experience feeds the interpretation and produces symbols, which in turn sensitizes the listener and prepares him for other experiences” (During 2003: 96). According to Crapanzano, we cannot describe the Beyond
without losing it because words are not the experience itself, they “change experiential register. They create a distance between the experience of the dream and its articulation” (Crapanzano 2004: 21). While talking with mugham musicians about this, I understood that the desired experience of mugham is nurtured by knowledge but is beyond texts and understanding:

Polina Dessiatnitchenko: knowledge about irfan and Sufism – how does it help me perform mugham correctly?

Vugar Rzayev: this is hard to explain using words!

PD: but then why must I attain this knowledge? If instead it is all about intuition, sense, feeling and the words are not needed…why is the text important?

VR: this is a very difficult question. Those who know Sufism in depth, they also have a hard time articulating it. I will tell you one thing which Hazrat Ali said: “I have never seen Allah, He is not a person. Even if I will see Him, in my thoughts there would not be any changes. He would be exactly as I thought about Him. This is because God is beyond everything” (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 20 May 2014).

In this quote, the analogy about Hazrat Ali corroborates the continuously-displaced quality of the Beyond discussed above. Articulation or expression of the Beyond, in this case Allah, further removes the Beyond that transcends all attempts to depict, describe, and capture it via expressive media.

Musically, the momentum is propelled not in a linear sense but as continuous encircling and returning to the main tone, which reflects the ghazal form unfolding in continuous suggestions. This is why creativity is so important for musicians, allowing for variation and intensification through that very variation. Musicians embark on interpretive and imaginative variations of the Beyond expressed in the texts of poetry and are continuously re-making the meanings of poetry through their own creativity, hence moving through their own sequence of interpretation and experience. Moreover, this is why the texts do not even have to be present, as
happens in solo instrumental *mugham*: the music is so connected to the poetry that the playing still expresses the meanings of texts even when they are absent.

Musicians express their interpretation by means of a distinct style. While crafted to be unique, this idiosyncratic style is rooted in tradition and a particular lineage of *mugham*. As such, the individual styles are used by musicians to express their own story as well as engage with the tradition of *mugham* and re-make it in the present of performance. Musicians always formulate a web of significance that involves their style and lineage in relation to others, and while performing this understanding shapes their creative process. The meanings and discourses about how the ontological possibility of *mugham* is best achieved through a certain manner of playing are re-evaluated and re-created through experience in the moment of performance. For example, Rovshen Gasimov linked the uniqueness of his style to something ineffable that comes from his heart. He also said that his idiosyncratic style is a tool to express the depths of *mugham* philosophy, exclaiming:

Yes, there are musical elements in my style which best convey the philosophy of *mugham*! For example, the *xirdaliq* done by the plectrum: from feelings come the small nuances in playing…. But this all does not have a name, it just comes from my heart. There has to be the mind, the fingers, and the heart, it is all parallel, it must be parallel for the effect to be there (Rovshen Gasimov, interview, 16 December 2014).

Interpretation and imagination often take place in a shared somatic state when the trio of musicians collectively traverse the realm of *mugham* meanings. This is why many performers single out harmony between trio members as one main factor responsible for heightened creativity. The body is implicated in these interpretive and imaginative processes because it is part of the totality of experience and not divorced from activity of the mind. Musicians are atuned to each other through their bodies that are inseparable from the musical expression.
Anthropologist Thomas J. Csordas writes about the inalienable freedom and possibility that exists in embodiment. He observes that “Although the habitus bears some of the schematism of a fixed text, it can be transcended in embodied existence” (Csordas 1993:152). There is a “bodily empathy” comprised of attending to and with the body to others and to the Self before objectification takes place. Therefore, engagement with meanings through bodily empathy further engenders possibilities beyond the text. The embodiment entailed in *mugham* creativity should not be seen to contradict interpretive processes of the mind, discussed in preceding paragraphs. As John Blacking wrote: “the mind cannot be separated from the body…it is in the areas of nonverbal communication, especially dancing and music, that we may observe mind at work through movements of bodies in space and time” (Blacking 1977: 18). Moreover, the bias stemming from notions of Cartesian dualism that simplify and disintegrate the complexity of experience is challenged when we take into account the insiders’ beliefs about the reality and even physicality of interpretation and imagination.

### 7.4 The ontological shift

According to Crapanzano (2004), the imaginative process related to the “hinterland” or the unreachable Beyond entails an ontological tranformation. Similarly, I argue that as *mugham* music brings forth the text that is musically varied, there is increased engagement which in turn induces more powerful experiences and ontological possibilities of the journey “elsewhere.” In other words, the process of interpretation and imagination that comprises creativity involves moments of musical discovery that happen in an ontological state that is extraordinary. Indeed, some musicians report reaching a trance-like state when performing *mugham* in the right
circumstances and through the appropriate playing style. Below are performers’ statements about these kinds of experiences:

Hajibaba felt how to take one from the self into a good, uninhabited place, like heaven [cənnət], where there is no difference between people…only goodness, and only elegance. This happens momentarily…. Let me explain – when the enemies of the Muslim religion threw an arrow at Mohammad, Ali sacrificed himself and the arrow hit him instead, it hurt him a lot! There were questions: how can the arrow be taken out? It is too painful. One person answered: “When Ali does his prayer he gets into a trance, and he cannot feel or see anything” (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 17 April 2014).

Sometimes, I can’t walk after I play mugham. I’m in ecstasy [ekstaz]. I enter that state and can’t get out of it. I’m in that world…. Mugham is my inner world [daxili dünüa]. It is my communication and meeting with God (Rovshen Gasimov, interview, 27 March 2014).

The real purpose of mugham is to take a person away to dreams [xəyal] and thoughts [fikir]. When a person is listening to mugham…there are things that pull towards dreams. Somewhere [haradasa]. There is a sense of pleasure, and you are turned away from this world. When mugham is performed with a xanəndə, the words of ghazals are crucial, the meanings of these words. All this must pull (Emin Mammadov, interview, 4 November 2015).

Mugham is often described by musicians as a “story”, “road”, “flight”, and even “dive to the depths of an ocean” that “takes yourself elsewhere from your self.” Teaching me how to play, masters instructed that I must practise in a secluded place without any distractions while meditating and “entering myself.” Bagirova, writing about the spiritual dimension of mugham, echoes these ideas, defining mugham as the “art of states” and the “adventure of the soul” (Bagirova 2007: 77-78). Based on the explanations of musicians, there seem to be fundamental qualities of the journey “elsewhere” such as a liminal time-space realm constructed through performers’ textual and expressive interpretation, possibilities of being, and sudden bursts of creativity that entail divine intervention. Below, I inquire into these aspects using informants’ descriptions and conclusions of phenomenologists.
It seems that the ontological condition that accompanies heightened creativity is induced by the creation of a liminal time-space dimension. In other words, engagement with meanings about the Beyond establishes a “dwelling” or a “world” as theorized by Heidegger in “The Origin of the Work of Art” (1950). Building on Heidegger’s concepts, Bruce Ellis Benson proposes that “one way of thinking about a musical work is that it provides a world in which music making can take place. Performers, listeners, and even composers in effect dwell within the world it creates. And their way of dwelling is best characterized as ‘improvisation’…” (Benson 2003: 32). Creativity then is the being that is submerged in interpretation and imagination while actively structuring the world of mugham. Importantly, this signifies a process when meanings are in flux and the interpretive activity is more of a journey rather than a suspended and transfixed state “elsewhere.”

Imagination based on ghazal meanings evokes the world of mugham by activating a temporality of an extraordinary nature. One of my teachers talked about the “moments” (an) that comprise the experience of playing mugham:

Learning mugham is not just about playing. It is about mugham’s world of philosophy [mughamın felsefi dünyası], the inner moments. Mugham world is a world of all these moments: moments of love, moments of sadness… it is a dive into dreams, your emotions, they are lying parallel. And each mugham has its own character, its own life, and emotions. Mugham is the performers’ inner world (Rovshen Gasimov, interview, 16 December 2014).

Ritual trance experience involving music is characterized across cultures as having a “continuous present” and “vertical time” (Becker 2004: 25; Biswas 2011; Clarke 2011: 23; Friedson 1996: 125; Kapferer 1983; Lowe 2011: 123; Qureshi 1994; Rowell 1992; Simms 2012a: 108) despite the obviously different cultural notions and traditions. For example, During writes about Sufi experience of music in Iran as a “suprasensory” level of perception (During 1982: 72, During
and Mirabolbaghi: 178). He explains that in Muslim theology, instead of duration there are only instants, and these do not have an established order of succession (During 1989: 574). In her article “Exploring Time Cross-Culturally: Ideology and Performance of Time in the Sufi Qawwālī” Regula Qureshi (1994) also investigates how time is subjectively felt in performance when ideas about time rooted in Islam and Sufism are conveyed through the philosophical language of ghazals. Similarly, in Azerbaijani ghazals ideas about əzəl or “time before time”, tövhid (oneness of God) and hal or union with the Divine in the eternal moment, as well as references to the lives of Prophets and ancient stories from the Quran are mentioned.

Two consecutive beyts from a ghazal by Seyyid Azim Shirvani (Rustamov 2005 1: 297) exemplify how temporality is interpreted and experienced by Azerbaijani musicians.

Çeşmi-Qibti nə bilir xilqəti Harun sirrin,
Nə bilir dəhrə Firon ki, Musa kim idi?

How could Copt’s eyes understand the secret of Aaron’s creation,
How could the worldly Pharaoh know who is Moses?

Nəfsi-vahiddən əgər mətləbə olsan vaqif,
Bilən onda ki sən, Adəmü Hovva kim idi.

If you were familiar with the goal of Singular Soul,
Then you would know who are Adam and Eve.

I took these beyts to a tar player, a mugham knower from Nardaran, and a xanənda for explanations. The elaborate interpretations of each provided a window into a liminal time-space dimension that tied together the past, the present, and the eternal. The interwoven topics of Moses and his mission, Prophet Muhammad, monotheism, the divine union between Adam and Eve, the meaning of human desire (nəfs), deception of physical reality, value of sacrifice, were
supplemented with related lines from the Quran and personal life experiences. The knower from Nardaran added after his explanation:

Musicians performing must understand the complicated meanings behind the lines of this poetry! If it is *mugham* or *mərsiyyə* that you are singing and you do not understand the real meaning being expressed, then you cannot sing it sincerely from your heart. For example, if I am singing *mərsiyyə*, I have to sing it in such a way as if I saw heaven or and felt it! (Nardaran knower, interview, 25 July 2016)

What the *ghazal* text invokes is not a historical past or ideas separate from reality. Instead, these meanings are brought into the experiential realm of the present through the poetic content. As such, a feeling of time is brought about that is plural, indefinite, and even eternal instead of objectified and linear. Consequently, although the meaning of such a state can be grasped hermeneutically and consciously, its experience involves a temporality that alters interpretive and perceptual faculties of Being through music, and this needs to be explored phenomenologically.

Phenomenologist Edward Casey writes that temporality as imagined lacks “determinate positions in a measurable space and time. More than anything else, it is the vague and shifting world-frame of imagined space and time which is responsible for the indeterminacy which infects even relatively definite imagined content” (Casey 1991: 48). Therefore, imagination is a way to transcend ordinary linear time. Moreover, this kind of temporality occurs with its own feeling of space: “…neither imaginal space not imaginal time form a fixed field within which imaginative phenomena can be given determinate locations. Both of these frame factors lack the rigourously ordered structure and the all-inclusiveness of the spatial and temporal networks that serve as bases of location for perceptual phenomena” (Casey 1976: 107). The indeterminancy of the Beyond that can only be intuited but not perceived necessitates continuous interpretation and
imagination via musical symbols. Musical expression reaches beyond discursive means towards that which is inexpressible through language. Hence, creativity is enriched with endless possibilities for variation. As Casey notes, pure possibility that characterizes imagination enables the mind’s free movement to traverse a terrain considerably more vast than the region occupied by perceived and remembered things (Casey 1976: 191).

What happens musically in the imagined time-space realm? Ontological possibilities are expressed through, and are therefore intimately related to, musical possibilities. As such, one *tar* master said to me: “*Mugham* improvisation is a person’s spirituality” (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 11 April 2014). Each *şöbə* is centered on three- or four-tone melodies drawn out in all possible variations, manifesting a self-imposed demand on human imagination to let a motif rotate in never-ending spirals. The momentum is gained through continuous encircling and returning to the main tone, and it is creativity which entails variation and resulting intensification. As one of my *tar* teachers said: “when playing *mugham*, one must be in a state of searching [axtarmaq]. However, one can never find *mugham*, just search all the time” (Rovshen Gasimov, interview, 25 March 2014). Imagination enacts the shift into the musical beyond as musicians are enveloped in interpretation of the Beyond in a liminal time-space. As opposed to the large-scale fixed form, the varied repetition is where a musician can imagine and create. It is variation itself that triggers the indeterminate cathartic state in which music beyond the model is formed. Indeed, *tar* masters often talk about flashes of musical insight transpiring in extraordinary temporal dimensions such as the moment of explosion of thinking.

The hermeneutic phenomenology of Ricoeur and Heidegger offers effective methodologies for investigating *mugham* musical experience. These writings are especially insightful in helping us question how the world of meanings opened up by textual parameters is
surpassed in experience through musical expression. For Ricoeur, the text becomes practical possibilities through experience and imagination, and therefore does not close in on itself. He writes, “to interpret is to explicate the type of being-in-the-world unfolded in front of the text….

Through fiction and poetry, new possibilities of being-in-the-world are opened up within everyday reality” (Ricoeur 1991: 86). Ricoeur’s ideas are influenced by Heidegger who argues that language has roots in the existential condition of Dasein or “being-in-the-world” (Heidegger 2010: 160). Being is essentially an ontological condition of Dasein, or “Being-there”: meaning being “thrown into the world.” Understanding, is the response of a being thrown into the world who exists in this world by mapping onto it his or her ownmost possibilities. Our state as Dasein, or our placement in the world, is the feeling of a situation that precedes our knowledge and our perceptions. Therefore, an understanding arises that is not a fact of texts. In a similar vein, Csordas criticizes the dominance of semiotics and representation, advocating phenomenology of “being-in-the-world” and challenging scholarship in the vein of Derrida (1976) and other proponents of deconstruction who argue that nothing exists outside of the text (Csordas 1993: 136; Csordas 1994: 11). I believe that the case of mugham creativity exemplifies how the text can open up possibilities beyond the text through interpretation, imagination, and musical expression.

Heidegger also explains that the self of everyday Dasein is the inauthentic being that takes Being for granted, distinguished from authentic self, that is the self which has engaged in the process of grasping itself or understanding its ontological condition as Dasein (Heidegger 2010: 125). Ethnomusicologist Steven Friedson researched spirit possession among Tumbuka healers who “in an ontological sense, dance an authentic existence, an openness to Being, which must be understood first and foremost in its existential status as a mode of being-in-the-world”
(Friedson 1996: 5). He concludes that the musical activity accompanying trance in the ritual is a transformation of Being and a new way of being-in-the-world (Friedson 1996: 14). It is my contention that in *mugham* performance, through interpretation and imagination of the given meanings, musicians are also enveloped in a realm of authentic existence, redolent with ontological possibilities. Moreover, it is this state that is inextricably linked to heightened creativity.

While phenomenology sheds light on how interpretation and imagination can bring about an extraordinary time-space realm or an ontological transformation through possibilities beyond the text, these philosophical explanations are also limiting because they do not account for certain aspects of creativity that *mugham* musicians speak about. For example, the belief that imagination is a *real* and *existing* alternate time-space dimension or the conviction that divine intervention occurs are phenomena that do not fit well with the phenomenological assertions above and are in need of further questioning.

Throughout my fieldwork, I encountered many incidents and statements that pointed to the involvement of God in *mugham* creativity:

Murad Mirzayev: yol, *mugham*, the way. The way leads one somewhere. The way leads to infinity, straight to God. You are on the path to God. Sufism. This is the way and the way has the stops: *bərdəst*, *mayə*, *şur-şəhnaz* [these are the successive *şəbə* in *mugham* *dəstgah şur*]...

Polina Dessiatnitchenko: do you consider yourself as a creator of *mugham* when you are on this road and you are playing?

MM: yes…no! It is God, it is from God. I can’t compose myself. If you are by God’s side, and if you are already on the road moving closer to Him, everything comes from Him.

Shahin Ibrahimov: yes, it’s a complicated and dangerous question. A bit from God, a bit from me.
MM: no! More from God, God shows. On the way, God shows. God composes…this is why I hate the canonized mugham! (Murad Mirzayev and Shahin Ibrahimov, interview, 17 June 2013).

Even the most progressive musicians explained that there is a presence of the Divine in instances of heightened creativity. Also, the historical development of mugham was tied to such phenomena:

When the Sufi had hal and məgam and sought union with God they would sing ghazals and mugham, while making gestures. From this, certain guşə were made. For example balu-kəbutər in çahargah which is the imitation of birds. They were in a trance and these guşə were created (Vugar Rzayev, interview, 22 March 2015).

It is still a challenge for scholarship to address such phenomena and explain experiences that are asserted by insiders to be truly and ontologically in the realm of the Beyond. I believe phenomenologists of mysticism provide a valid starting point for such an undertaking. Firstly, there is an agreement in such phenomenological writings that while the mystical moment is not in itself a perceptual event and has no perceivable object, it is nevertheless occasioned by perception. Louis Roy argues that preparation is an element of mystical experiences and is the cognitive and affective setting (involving lifestyle, worldviews, etc): a pre-understanding that conditions the forthcoming experience but without determining it (Roy 2001: 5). There is significance in consciousness given by tradition, texts, symbols, etc, but there is also an immediate awareness in the mystical experience in which there is a striving Beyond and a “withdrawal from reflection and deliberation in order to move into a ‘cloud of unknowing’” (Roy 2001: 138). Nevertheless, the interpretation and imagination of meanings is a paramount part of the mystical experience because “our sense of the indefinite begins with the imagination” (Roy
This view harks back to my conclusion about possibilities beyond the text created by the text.

Although phenomenologists of mysticism agree that the process towards the mystical moment is enculturated, the mystical union with the Infinite itself is agreed to be “numinous” – Rudolf Otto’s designation of the Divine, or that which is a mystery and that which is incomprehensible. The apprehension or “the sense that an infinite is actually present” is common to all mystical experiences (Roy 2001: 13) and “the numinous conveys a unique, a priori, and unmediated knowledge…the numinous cannot be captured by human concepts” (Roy 2001: 123). Consequently, while the mystical union is prepared by pre-given perceptions and values, it transcends their limits towards what is infinite in meaning (Roy 2001: 139). Anthony Steinbock, likewise, characterizes mystical experience as numinous and entirely indeterminate (Steinbock 2007: 97, 115).

Henry Corbin, a phenomenologist who partook in the Islamic belief system, asserts that an imaginative process is a reality in itself, but in the spiritual realm, and therefore imagination provides a path to the Divine:

…the active Imagination thus induced will not produce some arbitrary, even lyrical, construction standing between us and ‘reality’, but will, on the contrary, function directly as a faculty and organ of knowledge just as real as – if not more real than – the sense organs. However, it will perceive in the manner proper to it: The organ is not a sensory faculty but an archetype-Image that it possessed from the beginning; it is not something derived from any outer perception…. Such perception through the Imagination is therefore equivalent to a ‘dematerialization’; it changes the physical datum impressed upon the senses in a pure mirror, a spiritual transparency…. (Corbin 1977: 11, italics in original).

Corbin argues that imagination is a real realm in itself, not within the subject, but somehow outside and towards the Divine. In other words, the imaginative process can create a realm that is just as real, if not more real, than the physical reality. The poignant issue here is whether and
how scholarship should acknowledge the actuality of such an imaginative dimension or mystical moment with altered space and time. During, in *The Spirit of Sounds: The Unique Art of Ostad Elahi (1895-1974)*, upholds emic beliefs that the music of Ostad Elahi is in a numinous and metaphysical realm. During’s constant concern is not to “dissipate (the subject), by excessive illumination, the aura and mystery, which are inseparable from its manifestation” (During 2003: 20). As such, he presents the view that mystic experience is a sudden connection to the Divine, a revelation of a ‘sense’ in the heart and is not determined by the subject, but by the Source (During 2003: 85).

Corbin also offers insight into the possibility of alternate temporalities, different from linear and objectified ones. He writes that the spiritual realm means abandoning chronological time and entering the “qualitative” temporality. This is “the world in which we perceive the *spiritual sense* of the written word and of beings – that is, their suprasensory dimension, that meaning which most often seems to us an arbitrary extrapolation, because we confuse it with allegory” (Corbin 1977: xii). Music as we have been investigating it is an imaginative process imbedded within Islamic philosophy derived from poetry. Interpretation then becomes a path towards the imagined but real realm with its own “qualitative” temporality.

In addition, phenomenological theories about mysticism oppose psychologism and regard the self as unimportant in an analysis of the mystical union. Similar assertions were made by some of my informants who stressed the involuntary quality of heightened creativity, and divine intervention during the creation of music in this state. As Steinbock explains, “Treating the mystics as witnesses to a unique sphere of evidence given in the first person should not be construed as a reduction to psychologism. These mystical experiences constitute a witnessing to givenness and therefore do not originate in a subjective mental state” (Steinbock 2007: 29). The
mystic speaks from the “perspective” of the Holy during mystical ecstasy and, thus, we cannot meaningfully speak of the self any longer (Steinbock 2007: 176).

Conclusions

The main question that shaped my analysis concerned the nature of experience of *mugham* creativity based on the insiders’ perspectives and the writings of phenomenologists. The possibilities in musical expression seem to be directly related to the ontological condition triggered through interpretation and imagination. Taking seriously the musicians’ claims about an ontological shift, I believe, is imperative for an understanding of the *mugham* experience because this state is clearly important for creativity, and for some it is the main goal of the music.

However, fervent statements about the eminence of religion and mysticism for *mugham*, as well as heated enthusiasm for musical parameters that enhance creativity and for creativity in general, are also nativist discourses and must be situated as such. Analogously to musicians, native scholars are beginning to explore these themes. For example, creativity in *mugham* has been linked to *əhval* (spiritual state) (Dzhani-zade 1989: 330), while the form of the *dastgah* has been linked to the path of Sufism (Dzhani-zade 1989: 333) in recent scholarship. Increased preoccupation with spirituality, creativity beyond the model and a particular engagement with meanings are very well aligned with the broader sociohistorical context which gives rise to them and which they shape accordingly. Certainly, these discourses make sense as products of the historical trajectory of *mugham* from its pre-Soviet, Soviet, to post-Soviet conditions.
Chapter 8
Conclusions:
Discourses versus Experiences of Creativity

*Mugham təfəkkürü* is the term for *mugham* creativity and stands for interpretation, interrupted by sudden *tafəkkür partlayışı* and *təxəyyül partlayışı*. These are undefinable moments when music beyond the model is discovered and to which a feeling of “elsewhere” is attributed. The nature of this terminology, as well as the inherent emphasis on the recovery of creativity as a whole is timely as a reaction to Soviet intervention when creativity was the primary target. The intense development of *mugham* in pre-Soviet Azerbaijan – when links between poetry and music were strengthened, networks to religious figures flourished, nationalism unfolded and affected playing and singing technique – had a direct impact on creativity. This was the time of intense development of *mugham* that suddenly came to a halt when Azerbaijan was Sovietized.

The aesthetics of socialist realism resulted in the temperament of national instruments and Westernization and standardization of the *mugham* system, while language reforms enacted secularization and removed Arabic and Persian terminology along with its ties to spheres of Islamic knowledge. As a result, the creativity of *mugham* was severely impacted as both musical and textual elements were changed in such a way to hinder engagement with meanings. That which was passed on underground resurfaced and was developed by musicians eager to recover the suppressed parameters as the dissolution of the USSR approached. In the post-Soviet setting, the efforts towards bringing back indigenous musical forms and experiences reached their apex to become a collective mission of many musicians. While certain performers search in the
practices of their respective lineages, some of which extend to pre-Soviet times, others dig through treatises and writings of Islamic philosophers such as Al-Ghazali to find the right ideas and expressions such as *mugham tafakküri* for the “true” version of *mugham*.

Jonathan Shannon in his ethnographic account *Among the Jasmine Trees: Music and Modernity in Contemporary Syria* emphasizes the characteristic known as *tarab* when it comes to what is authentic in the experience of modal music in Syria today (Shannon 2006: 166). *Tarab* is rapture and enchantment, an emotional state associated with modes and learned in Sufi *dhikr* rituals (Shannon 2006: 166) and which arises when perception of temporality is transformed (Shannon 2006: 177). He notes a similar effect in *dhikr*, pointing to features of music such as increase in pitch and tempo that trigger states of intense emotional energy when there is a reach towards infinite, eternal time (Shannon 2006: 122). Moreover, Shannon identifies the arabesque as significant in Arab music experience because it “is not merely an element of design but an aesthetic principle based on the processes of repetition and variation and the play between infinity and finitude, openness and closure, unity and diversity, circle and line” (Shannon 2006: 179). He continues to argue that those involved in musical performance are “brought to a temporal margin – a *barzakh*, to use the Sufi terminology – between the temporalities of everyday life and those of transcendent experiences” (Shannon 2006: 180). However, Shannon also adopts an etic standpoint and grounds these experiences in popular discourses of authenticity.

But how can discourse as text contribute to an experience of altered temporality or the *barzakh*? Similarly, how can one explain divine intervention or “the Self taken from the Self” as phenomena created by discourses of nativists? Can these ideas, arising from sociohistorical circumstances, condition belief and induce the experience of the eternal moment that is
supposedly beyond context, ideas, and anything finite? Or is there a contact with the Infinite reality that is the main cause for these experiences and discourses about them?

Ethnomusicologists such as Michael Frishkopf (2001), During (2003), and Qureshi (1994) present mystical experiences of Sufi music through the insiders’ discourses, allowing for a possibility of an alternate reality as the main impetus for religious feeling. For example, During notes:

If one begins by flattening out the sacred to take a closer look at it, seeking to recognize in it only that which yields to an examination of the ‘facts’ (physical, psychological, or sociological), one is vulnerable to the following objection: what is really being examined if what is retained of the sacred is precisely what those involved in it consider to be the least interesting aspect of their experience (During 2003: 18).

I side with this approach and choose to leave the questions posed open because while I recognize the value of a contextual analysis that elucidates why certain discourses dominate and how texts can shape experience, I also argue for a possibility inherent in experience and therefore refuse to dismiss the power for transformation of Being that some musicians find in particular musical elements and their meanings as imagined.

I shall conclude with a few remarks about scholarly work and belief in order to further justify the approach and the conclusions presented in this chapter. Anthropologist Katherine Ewing (1994) whose research centres on Sufi saints in modern Pakistan writes about the taboo of “going native” in anthropology because of a necessity to study insiders’ belief systems with objectivity and distance. She argues, although with some hesitation, that perhaps what our informants assert to know about the human condition should be taken seriously and not with less credibility than our own scholarly interpretations. She writes: “Practitioners are right to argue against the box that the anthropologist’s representations places them in. To rule out the
possibility of belief in another’s reality is to encapsulate that reality and, thus, to impose implicitly the hegemony of one’s own view of the world” (Ewing 1994: 572). Scholars of music and consciousness raise the same issue when it comes to higher-order consciousness realized through music and theorized by academics as real only to those subjects who believe to experience it, thereby judging from an “etic” status: “some universal, objective, or transcultural standpoint from which such claims can be judged as ‘really real’ – or not” (Clarke and Kini 2011: 151).

When it comes to Islam, on the one hand, writers on Islamic aesthetics oppose the reduction of experience to sociocultural context and maintain that precedence should be given to eternal truths instead of worldly political and historical factors (Chittick 2011; Nasr 1987: 5; Leaman 2004: 183). Phenomenologists also write about Sufism in a similar fashion (Steinbock 2007: 90). As I have demonstrated throughout this dissertation, such a stance is limited because tradition, texts, and discourses give meanings that shape experience, implicating it in the broader cultural, social, and political milieux.

On the other hand, historians, anthropologists and sociologists criticize the universalist approach and explain phenomena in relation to historical and geographical conditions (Raudvere and Stenberg 2009; Zelkina 2000). For example, Catharina Raudvere and Leif Stenberg state:

Idealised presentations of Sufism as the history of pious mystics and orders more or less separated from society in a world of beautiful poetry and rituals, or as abstract outlines of universalist and essentialist mysticism, have played a vital role in the history of Orientalism…. Viewing Sufism as exotic and sacred is not only a historical phenomenon linked to the Orientalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is very much a viewpoint reproduced today (Raudvere and Stenberg 2009: 2).
I contend that this stance is equally if not more unacceptable than the first. There is certainly nothing incorrect about considering a sacred and mystical tradition as sacred and mystical. The task is to tie and relate the inner with the outer, showing how the politics of activity associated with Islam is a form of “engaged distance”: while distant from worldly power, it is engaged in it, creating a continuum between spiritual and material existence (Heck 2009: 14).

Therefore, I believe that when it comes to *mugham* in contemporary Azerbaijan, scholarship must be done to attempt to understand how experiences, discourses and contexts interact, or how text shapes performance and how performance shapes text within particular contexts. Knowledge and interpretation of tradition through imaginative variation does not arise in a vacuum and is advocated by nativists as a reaction to the broader socio-political context. However, this should not devalue the reality of the transformative being-in-the-world that *mugham* creativity can bring about; a power of this music guarded and defended vigourously by musicians today.
Bibliography

Abasova, E.G.


Abasova, E.G. and K.A. Kasimov


Abasova, E.G. and D.X. Danilov, L.V.Karagicheva, K.K.Safar-Aliev


Abasova E.G. and L.V. Karagicheva, S.D.Kasimova, N.A.Mextieva, A.Z. Tagizade


‘Abdul Haq, Muhammad


Abdulgassimov, Vagif


Abdullayeva, Saadat

Abdullazade, Gul’naz


Adilov, Mammad, ed.


Alekhperova, Nigyar


Al Faruqi, Ismail R.


Al Faruqi, Lois Ibsen


Altstadt, Audrey A.


Amoozegar-Fassie, Farzad

Astourian, Stephan H.


Azerbaijani


Babayev, Elkhan


Badalbeyli, Afrasiyab


Bagirova, Sanubar

2006 Imeyushiy Ushi Da Uslyshit [Whoever has Ears to Hear, Let them Hear]. Nasledie, Mezhdunarodnyy Azerbaydzhanskiy Zhurnal 2-3(20-21): 16-17.


Bakikhanov, Ahmad


Bakst, James

Bashir, Shahzad


Becker, Judith


Bedford, Sofie


Belyaev, V.


Benson, Bruce Ellis


Berger, Harris


Biswa, Ansuman

Blacking, John


Blum, Stephen


Böwering, Gerhard


Carey, Henry F. and Rafal Raciborski


Caron, Nelly and Dariouche Safvate


Casey, Edward


1993 Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Chelebiyev, Faik Ibrahim oglu

Chittick, William C.


Clarke, David


Clarke, David and Tara Kini


Corbin, Henry


Cornell, Svante E.


Crpanzano, Vincent


Csordas, Thomas J.


Csordas, Thomas J. and Jack Katz


Deeb, Lara


Desjarlais, Robert and Jason C. Throop


Dessiatnitchenko, Polina


Dilbazova, Minira


Djumaev, Alexander


Duranti, A.


During, Jean


During, Jean and Zia Mirabdolbaghi


Dzhani-zade, Tamila


Ewing, Katherine P.


Farhat, Hormoz


Farkhadova, Sevil T.

Fazeli, Nematallah


Friedson, Steven M.


Frishkopf, Michael


Frolova-Walker, Marina


Gadzhiyev, J.


Gasanova, Dzhamiluya


Goltz, Thomas


Grant, Bruce


Guliyev, Farid

Guliyev, Imanyar


Guliyev, Ramiz and Kamilya Dadashzade


Guliyev, Tarlan


Hajibeyov, Uzeyir

1945 Osnovy Azerbaydzhanskoy Narodnoy Muzyki [The Basis of Azerbaijani Folk Music]. Baku: Izdatel’stvo AN Azerbaydzhanskoy SSR.


Heck, Paul L.


Heidegger, Martin


Heyat, Farideh

Hogg, Bennet


Huseyni, Ebulfelz


Huseynova, Aida


Husserl, Edmund


Ihde, Don


Imrani, Rafig


Isazade, A.I. and T.G. Akhundov

Isazade, A.I. and K.A. Kasimov


Ismailzade, Nurida


Ismayilov, M.S.


Jackson, Michael


Jankowsky, Richard C.


Kapferer, Bruce


Kasimova, Solmaz and Nazim Bagirov


Keller, Pierre

Kerimli, Teymur, ed.


Krebs, Stanley Dale


Kuli-Zade, Z.


Kyazimova, Lala


Leaman, Oliver


Levin, Theodore


Levinson, Gerrold


Lewisohn, Leonard


Lindsay, Shawn

Linton, Ralph and A. Irving Hallowell


Lowe, Bethany


Macann, Christopher


Magomaev, Muslim


Makhmudova, Shakhla


Mammadov, N.


Mammadova, Rena A.


Mansurov, Bahram


Mansurov, Eldar


Mansurov, Eldar and Ismayil Dadashov, eds.


Marquardt, Kyle L.


Merleau-Ponty, Maurice


Mignolo, Walter D.

2007 From Central Asia to the Caucasus and Anatolia: Transcultural Subjectivity and Decolonial Thinking. Postcolonial Studies 10(1): 111-120.

Mittermaier, Amira


Montague, Eugene

– 319 –

Moore, David Chioni


Musazade, Rafig

2012 Muğamin Tədrisi Metodikası [Taught Methodology of Mugham]. Baku.

Naroditskaya, Inna


Nasr, Seyyed Hossein


Navaro-Yashin, Yael


Nettl, Bruno


Nizomov, Asliddin


Nooshin, Laudan


O’Brien, Matthew


Ó Loaire, Lillis


Oldfield, Anna C.


Ordzhonikidze, G. and N. Shahnazarova


Ottaway, Marina


Palmer, Richard E.

Porcello, Thomas


Qasimov, Alim


Qureshi, R.B.


Raudvere, Catharina and Leif Stenberg


Rahmatov, Avaz


Rasmussen, Anne K.


Rice, Timothy


Ricoeur, Paul


Rouget, Gilbert


Rowell, Lewis


Roy, Louis

2001 Transcendent Experiences: Phenomenology and Critique. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Russian


Russo, Deborah and Kerim Yildiz


Rustamov, Suleyman, ed.


Rzayeva-Baghirova, Rugiyye

1986 Tarçın Mirza Fərəc Haqqında Xatirələri [Recollections about Tar Player Mirza Faraj]. Baku: İşiq.

Said, Edward W.


Safarova, Zemfira


Sanglibayev, A.A.


Sayilov, Alirza, ed.


Schutz, Alfred


Schwarz, Boris


Schwartz, Donald


Seyidova, Saadat


Shamilli, Gultekin B.


Shannon, Jonathan Holt


Shushinsky, Firudin


Simms, Rob and Amir Koushkani


Small, Christopher


Steinbock, Anthony J.


Stoller, Paul


Stokes, Martin


Sultanova, Razia


Taruskin, Richard


Titon, Jeff Todd


Tlostanova, Madina V. and Walter D. Mignolo


Tohidi, Nayereh


Tokluoglu, Ceylan


Tsuge, Gen’ichi


Turino, Thomas


Turner, Victor


Vinogradov, V.


1947 Uzeyir Hajibeyov. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Muzykal’noe Izdatel’stvo.

Wright, Owen


Yarshater, Ehsan


Yousef, Mohamed Haj


Yunusov, Arif


Yusif qizi, Zemfira


Yusifli, Vasif


Yusifli, Xalil, ed.

Zelkina, Anna


Zohrabov, Ramiz


Zonis, Ella