



Article

Songs That Echoed on the Battlefields

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Abstract: This article explores the role of songs performed and remembered during times of war, focusing on their cultural, emotional, and historical significance. Battlefield songs have long served as powerful tools for strengthening morale, expressing patriotism, preserving collective memory, and fostering unity among soldiers and civilians. Through an analysis of selected wartime songs from different historical periods, the study examines how music reflects the realities of conflict and conveys the hopes, fears, and resilience of those affected by war. The article also discusses the enduring legacy of these songs in shaping national identity and commemorating historical events. The findings demonstrate that battlefield songs are not merely artistic expressions but also important historical documents that preserve the human experience of war across generations. Art, music, and dance form a beautiful world that uplifts the human spirit. They play an invaluable role in helping people overcome difficult situations, aiding the recovery of the sick, and even inspiring soldiers on the battlefield to move toward victory.

Keywords: battlefield songs, wartime music, military culture, patriotism, collective memory, national identity, historical songs, cultural heritage, soldiers, war and music.

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Introduction

The person whose creative work we aim to highlight is the People's Artist of Uzbekistan, Kommunakhonim Ismoilova.

Kommuna Ismoilova was born on December 15, 1927, in the city of Khiva, Khorezm region. From an early age, she developed a deep love for the arts and would often hum and sing various songs [1].

In 1942, she studied at a teacher training course opened under the Khorezm Pedagogical Institute. During those years, while continuing her education, Kommuna Ismoilova also took part in different events, where she sang and danced. One day, Gavharkhanim Rakhimova and a group of artists were passing by the educational institution where she was studying when they heard her singing. They were impressed by the sweetness and liveliness of her voice. Entering the school, they asked her to sing and, recognizing her talent, decided to take her to Tashkent. Taking Kommuna to Tashkent was not easy, but from that moment on, the new page was opened for art in "the book of life" of the future artist [2].

On February 11, 1943, her mentor Fakhriddin Sodiqov taught her several songs, including "Qiz qo'shig'i" (poem by Akmal Po'lat), "Ey, chehrasi tobonim" (a ghazal by Muqimiy), and "Salom onam" (a ghazal by Chustiy). At that time, however, the country was mobilizing all its resources to support the soldiers of the World War II and provide them with every possible form of assistance. People, firmly believing in victory, sent food and clothing to the front. Women even donated their valuable jewelry to the government as their contribution [3].

Behind the front lines, too, the people worked selflessly, with women stepping in to take on the roles of men and ensuring that no gap was left unfilled.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative research approach to examine the historical and cultural significance of songs associated with wartime experiences. The research is based on the analysis of literary sources, historical documents, archival materials, and selected wartime songs from different periods and regions. Comparative and descriptive methods were used to identify common themes, symbols, and functions of battlefield songs. Particular attention was given to the ways in which music influenced soldiers' morale, expressed patriotic values, and reflected the emotional realities of war. Content analysis was applied to song lyrics in order to reveal recurring motifs such as courage, sacrifice, hope, remembrance, and national unity. The study also draws upon interdisciplinary perspectives from history, cultural studies, and musicology to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of songs in wartime societies.

Results and Discussion

In June 1943, our singer set off to the 2nd Ukrainian Front together with a group of Uzbek performers. They served in the 29th, 39th, and 53rd divisions of the 1st Tank Army under the command of Colonel General Katikov. After some time, the group of artists returned to Moscow, but soon they were sent to the 1st Ukrainian Front. On November 5, they gave a concert for the honor of the liberation of Kyiv [4]. They stayed for two or three days during the liberation of Bila Tserkva. It was there that Kommuna Ismoilova celebrated her 16th birthday on December 15, 1943. On that day, Major General Shevchenko raised a toast, saying: "May Kommunakhon become an Honored Artist of the Republic."

Kommuna Ismoilova became widely admired for performing songs on the front lines that lifted the fighting spirit of the soldiers.

Indeed, in 1949, she was awarded with the title of Honored Artist of Uzbekistan.

After the war, from 1950 to 1956, she performed for months on tour with an orchestra led by A.I. Petrosyan, giving concerts in cities such as Kyiv, Yerevan, Tbilisi, as well as across Armenia and Turkmenistan [5].

Through these performances, the artists won the hearts of audiences with their unique and captivating art.

We once again became convinced that Kommuna Ismoilova was not only a famous artist but also a person who lived with the people's concerns at heart, cared most deeply for her students, and treated her masters with unwavering loyalty and respect [6].

During the years I studied at the Tashkent State Institute of Arts and Design (1980–1985), our master Kommuna Ismoilova taught students in the direction of Maqom. In those years, many students - who learned from her education and upbringing, her deep instruction in the secrets of the art of singing, her life experiences, and the personal example she set - grew to become Honored Artists of Uzbekistan, People's Artists of Uzbekistan, and People's Hofizs (traditional singers) [7].

To this day, these artists continue the creative path of their master, contributing to the development of the Uzbek Maqom and singing arts, and serving to pass on our spiritual heritage from generation to generation.

"When I asked, 'Kommuna Aya, did you also sing songs on the front lines?' she replied, 'Yes, I was right there while the battles were raging at the gates of Berlin,'" she answered [8].

[Kommuna]Aya then decided to share a wealth of information with us about Zebo Ganieva. "The peerless beauty Zebo Ganieva began learning the secrets of dance from a young age. However, it still amazes me to this day that this young artist gained fame as a sharpshooting sniper on the battlefields; that even after being wounded in the leg, she worked as a scholar, researcher, and translator until the end of her life, earning great renown in those fields as well."

She was born in 1920 in Guliston. A participant in the Great Patriotic War, she served as a radio operator and scout. A brave woman decorated with several orders and

medals, she eliminated 129 enemies in battle. Junior Lieutenant Zebo Ganieva was severely wounded in combat. The courage of this young girl certainly leaves everyone in awe [9].

Kommuna Ismoilova sang songs that provided spiritual support to the soldiers during the years of the Second World War. I am amazed by her ability to remember every event, down to its exact date and hour, without error.

Kommuna Ismoilova was a member of the honorary women's band named after "Zebo Ganieva" and was the recipient of the medal "Jasorat" (Courage), as well as several other orders and medals. She performed the songs of not only the Uzbek people but also those of the Russian, Ukrainian, Turkmen, and Kazakh peoples with great mastery. We were astonished to learn that the number of songs in her repertoire exceeded 490 [10].

The artist's song about Zebo Ganieva has been performed several times at events dedicated to Victory Day. The song "Zebixon noming uchun" (For the Sake of Your Name, Zebixon) was composed to the lyrics of B. Mirzayev and the music of Fahriddin Sodiqov [11].

Here is a poetic translation of the verses, maintaining the rhythm and honor of the original Uzbek tribute to Zebo Ganieva:

You took up a weapon in your hand,
 For your nation, for your glory's sake.
 For your blooming land, your kin, and friends,
 For every soul whose love you take.
 Your bullets strike and shatter deep,
 The shameful hordes of enemy foes.
 For you are a daughter of the Uzbek soul,
 For the honor that Zebixon knows.
 "Let no one call you by coward name,"
 You said as you charged, never to yield.
 For you are loyal to the Motherland,
 For the honor of Zebixon on the field.
 Girding your waist, you raised a cry,
 Leading a thousand men to the fight.
 Do not turn back, go forth on and on,
 For your people's love and your people's right.
 For you are a daughter of the Uzbek soul,
 For the honor that Zebixon knows [12].

During the years of the Great Patriotic War (1941–1945), the song "Katyusha" became immensely popular. This song provided spiritual support to the soldiers and became a symbol of patriotism. It was performed extensively both on the front lines and in the rear.

Kommuna Ismoilova also performed this song with great mastery. The lyrics of this song were written by Mikhail Isakovsky and the music composed by Matvey Blanter; even today, it continues to hold a special place in the hearts of art-loving people.

Artists, writers, and military figures have shared their positive reflections on Kommuna Ismoilova.

"Kommuna is my brave daughter. She is my swallow whose flight was sharpened over the battlefields. She is a figure too great to be contained within books, a source of pride for the people of Khorezm."

- Gavhar Rahimova, People's Artist of Uzbekistan

"I met Kommuna on the Baltic Front. During the war, I was one of the leading staff members of that front's newspaper. When Kommuna sang, her voice radiated courage and a profound faith in the future. In those turbulent years, she was able to prove exactly

what Uzbek art is capable of." [13]

- Mumtoz Muhammedov, figure of science and culture.

"One can learn so much from Sister Kommuna, especially a sense of humility that is not often found in all artists. Her pure heart and her loyalty to friends and companions always make her appear graceful and endearing."

- Tursunoy Mamedova, People's Artist of Uzbekistan.

"The soldiers who listened to her songs would conclude that Kommuna was not merely singing, but rather conversing with our very souls. In truth, there was a magic in her voice unlike any other."

- From Leonid Yusupov's book, *Puti-dorogi frontovye* (Frontline Paths and Roads). [14]

It would be no exaggeration to say that the life and creative path of Kommuna Ismoilova, People's Artist of Uzbekistan, is a history of a life that deserves to be studied and taken as an example. She is regarded as an artist worthy of the highest honor and respect - a humble, sincere, strong-willed, and hardworking individual who was exceptionally kind to her students and loved ones.

As the People's Artist of Uzbekistan, Liza-khonim Petrosyan, once said:

"The young girl Kommuna was, in my eyes, the very embodiment of inexhaustible willpower. Even in the face of hardship, she did not know what it meant to complain. She only knew how to love the art of music - and to love it with a burning passion."

In our study of the master singer's life and creative career, we learned that because her monthly salary in the women's combat unit was small, she would work in people's homes after rehearsals - babysitting and helping with household chores - to save money. Noticing this, Liza Petrosyan asked her, "Are you planning to buy something grand for yourself?"

"No, sister,"- Kommuna replied. "We will soon be departing to give concerts for the soldiers. I want to bring gifts and greetings to our compatriots at war." These words alone serve as a profound testament to Kommuna's patriotism from a young age.

A nation gains beauty through its vivid history and its past. The life and creative work of masters of our art, like Kommuna Ismoilova, constitute significant records and golden pages of our history [15].

Years will pass, but hearts devoted to art will continue to love and study the craft of an artist who loved the people and was loved by them in return. Kommuna Ismoilova will live on forever, her stature growing with the centuries as she continues to sing her songs of humanity, beauty, love, and peace at the top of her voice.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that battlefield songs have played a significant role in shaping the emotional and cultural experiences of war. Beyond their artistic value, these songs served as powerful instruments for strengthening morale, promoting solidarity, and preserving collective memory during periods of conflict. The analysis revealed that themes of patriotism, sacrifice, resilience, and hope are consistently reflected in wartime musical traditions. Furthermore, battlefield songs continue to influence contemporary understandings of historical events by connecting present generations with the experiences of those who lived through war. As important elements of cultural heritage, these songs provide valuable insights into both the human and historical dimensions of armed conflict. Therefore, the preservation and study of wartime music remain essential for understanding the relationship between culture, memory, and history.

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