

Culture of Elbasan from 1908 up to 1943

PhD (C.) Elvin Elezi
"Sami Frashëri" High-school

Abstract

In this work are treated activities cultural, artistic activities developed in the prefecture of Elbasan in the first half of century xx. Chronological order of organization of the Albania national cultural, artistic activities documented and which are treated in this work dates with the announcement of the Turkish constitution in 1908 until the eve of the Word War II. Curtain of artistic performances in the national language in the prefecture of Elbasan have been opened with artistic parts in the field of theater, in improvised environment of school, after failure for objective reasons of rehearsal of another theatrical part at the turn of years 1913-1914. Developments in the field of theater will be followed by artistic performances in musical city in Elbasan, which was the center of prefecture. The combination theatrical and artistic performances have been two main directions of the development of culture in artistic performances plan in the prefecture of Elbasan till the year 1943. Artistic parts enacted on the stage are presented with a wide variety of art. Implementers of artistic performances expect theatrical groups aerated by cultural societies, were also pupils of schools and their teachers.

Keywords: national culture, performances, prefecture of Elbasan roduction.

Introduction

Cultural developments the some as educational ones in motive language in Albania which was under ottoman empire until November 1912 are associated with announcement of the Turkish constitution in the meaning of freedom in the legality for the whole country and not in persecution and prohibition by the ottoman authorities. The Turkish constitution sanctioned the freedom of educational and cultural activities of the people who were under its rule. Immediately after admission of the delivery language and culture in motive language, patriots of the region of Elbasan, in this city reestablish "Aferdita" club with the clear task: Development of national culture, as a patriotic act.

Cultural and artistic activities in the Elbasan district started in the end of the first decade of the XX century. It was founded by the creation of the club in Elbasan "Afërdita (Venus)", it was said was formed in 1908 (ASHVE, 1947, File. 13, 31). After the declaration of the Turkish Constitution (Hyrjetit), they have a patriotic movement within the population in Elbasan not only in the field of education but also its national culture. In this regard, a prominent part of Elbasan society made a commitment to establish a patriotic theater group who will be demonstrated to the public, at least part patriotic. The task of forming the group have made a commitment to engage in the club "Afërdita", as mentioned at the start of the article, formed in 1909 (Pajuni, 1967, 21).

Around 1913, Elbasan created a cultural society, an artistic group called "Llauta

(lutes)", created by Thanas Floqi. This society formed an orchestra group of talented mandolin players. In 1913-14, cultural society prepared a display of a drama "Besa" to the general public, but resulted in the uprising of central Albania that did not allow drama to be staged for the public (ASHVE, 1947, File. 13, 31).

The first appearance of art in this period was given in the school building "Naim Frashëri". The organization of the stage was modest, and actors lacked costumes for their roles. The premiere of the play appeared at the end of the school year as titled "The Love of Motherland". There were roughly 200 spectators who attended the premier (ASHVE, 1947, File. 13, 31). However, it is unknown of the exact year it was put on for the artistic performance on stage. The first decade that followed the creation of the club "Afërdita" and the commitment which it took to develop this city, as a national cultural and artistic life, was not easy due to the geopolitical situation of the period during the Balkan wars. Shortly after World War I, this created a big obstacle. The society continued to develop its cultural and artistic activity, particularly performing theatrical art on stage.

Despite the situation created by war, the artistic cultural life was not interrupted. In 1916-17, in Elbasan, Austrian army created a company called "Përparimi (The Progress)" with the aim of delivering performances, as well as establishing friendship with the intention of creating an orchestral band. These companies worked together and agreed to have a cultural society in Elbasan. In 1917 the first musical instruments were bought and on November 28, 1918, the city's first musical band was created (ASHVE, 1947, File. 13, 31).

In 1917, one of the band members from "Afërdita", Adem Jahja, participated in this artistic development. He showed how to give concerts on the street, particularly at Rrapi i Bezistanit (the Bezistan Tree), in the center of Elbasan, with prepared repertoire with patriotic songs. Also developed different activities such as theater, sport, music, promenade, conference, etc. At the time, the Elbasan mayor was Dervish Hima, who visited the center and was interested with the artistic program that was prepared for the society, especially the independence festival and the encouragement of its members. On the other hand, the people (or anyone) can contribute to the patriotic celebration with festive elements such as banners, balloons, fireworks, bay leaves, plum, sugars, gifts for school children, etc.



(Aferdita music band, 1909-2009, Catalog)

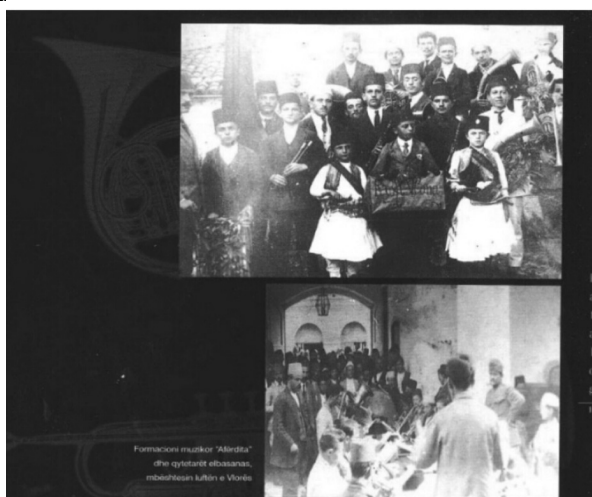
In this way, with its artistic activity, created the possibility to wave the flag of

"Afërdita" in squares and streets of Elbasan, and hints that always talking about November 29, 1917 (Jahja, 1967, 34), which means a full year earlier than the source which is demonstrated above.

The activities of group Aferdita intensified in 1917 - 1919, the theme became more diverse, at least this conclusion drawn from the titles of artistic performances. The activities identified part artistic issues of national interest, Albanian values, but also social issues in problematic times and treated to accomplish the emancipation of society. Artistic performances set the stage for the public in Elbasan from 1917 to 1919 were:

- Groom wry;
- Stop drinking;
- Filja, banker's daughter;
- Sudens' games;
- The brother of interest;
- Religion and nationality;
- Besa (ASHVE, 1947, File. 13, 32).

In the summer of 1920, Afërdita band members with the request of the committee, led the war of Vlora, went to the district of Vlora, Drashovicë, after Vlora has not yet been submitted by the Italian army. Immediately after receipt of Vlora, together with fighters of the band members entered the towns of Koçiu's Neck. The reception that made the people of Vlora also made a huge impression on members of the band. The band members continued along the sea cost of Durrës and Vlora to Kavaje and Peqin until the arrival in Elbasan. This was the first tournament conducted by the band outside the boundaries of Elbasan district and was also an important contribution in a historical event for Albanians (Jahja, 1967, 34). Even more important is the role of the musical band when before heading to Vlora, launched awareness campaign in Elbasan so people contributed financially to help the war for Vlora. For two months from June to July 1920, the band performed songs in every street of the city, and neighborhoods where people had the ability to help as much as they could in an event of national importance

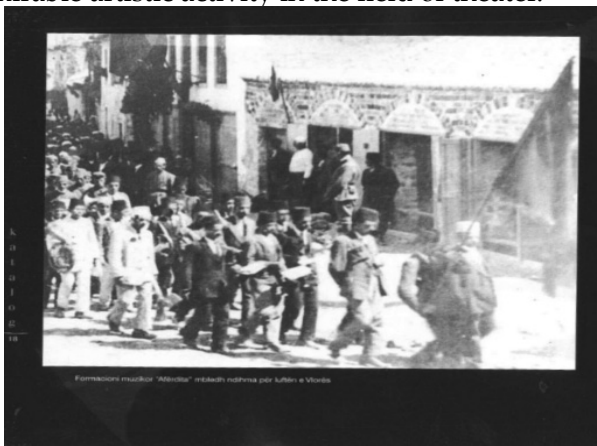


(Aferdita music band, 1909-2009, Catalog)

The people of Elbasan contributed to the musical band with more than 2,000 gold Napoleons (Gashi, 1967, 38). In spring 1921, group "Aferdita" received an invitation to Tirana by the government, to celebrate the opening ceremony of the Constituent Assembly of Albania. The bands in this period were led by Professor Ahmet Gashi, conducted a performance as only he could (Jahja, 1967, 34). In the competition held on this occasion between musical bands from several cities in Albania, group Aferdita of Elbasan took first place after leaving Shkodra and Durres (Gashi, 1967, 38).

Artistic cultural activities by Aferdita group should be evaluated not only for the extraordinary contribution given in the district of Elbasan, but for the entire country, particularly its participation in shows and historical events of our country.

Theatrical and artistic activities from 1924 to 1939 in Elbasan were not many and they were given a few performances prepared by groups of amateurs, mainly by students and teachers under the direction of the latter, because it lacked a professional theater group. State bodies do not come to help those less base materials for stage performances and a convenient place where to make the evidence of its preparation. These amateurs not only prepare themselves artistic performances, but in the absence of their country taking the necessary items for the realization of the show with them in their homes or assisted occasionally by art lovers. With the idea of Vasil Llapushi, Abedin Çausi and teachers, they organize and form a theater group of teachers, who developed an admirable artistic activity in the field of theater.



(Aferdita music band, 1909-2009, Catalog)

In a short time within this group theater stand out for their talent as an actor Faik Haxhiymeri, Faik Pajuni, Mustafa Shqerra, Dude Sejdini, Mustafa Shehu, Ismail Haxhimusaj, Azmi Qafleshi, Sejdin Vyshka, Ibrahim Borronija, Mynevere Zaimi, Skender Hoxha, Thanas Borodani, other pretty well given their contribution to the group performing in various roles, as in such plays as: "Alexander", "Andromache", "Piro Neptoleni" "Flower of Remembrance", etc (Pajuni, 1967, 22).

Also during this period, formed two groups in the field of theatrical interpretation. One group was formed at School "Normal" and the other belonged to the society outside the school at the club of intellectuals. These groups developed cultural and artistic activities, consisted mostly of teachers or prospective teachers. These groups

present spectators artistic pieces, like drama "Besa", "Religion and nationality" and comedies "Mullah Tahiri", "Reluctant Marriage", etc (Pajuni, 1967, 22).

From 1918 to 1932, there were performances that set the stage of a theater group formed by teachers of Elbasan and the performances are staged not only in Elbasan and rural areas but also in other cities of the country. Also other thematic performances that is diverse as artistic pieces classical antiquity, figures of Balkan history, the world, and modern and old Albanian to the social issues of the time of award headlines. The titles of artistic performances set the stage for the public in Elbasan prefecture and other Albanian cities theatrical group of teachers from this prefecture from 1918 - 1932 are:

- "Oh boy", which is staged in the city of Elbasan;
- "The Flower of Remembrance";
- "The doctor saw the hurry", which was staged in the city of Elbasan in the village of Elbasan – Llixha;
- "Betrayal";
- "Alexander";
- "Andromache";
- "Fork";
- "Diomedi";
- "Meço Qafyzezi";
- "Two sergeant";
- "Firuzi", which are staged in the city of Elbasan and Tirana;
- "Ali Pasha", which was put in Llixha, Elbasan, Lushnje, Berat and Vlora in 1932 (ASHVE, 1947, File. 13, 32), while the number of spectators who attended them has no data provided.

Cultural developments, especially the artistic activities of different genders are tied on involving students in general, organizing, directing, and role and image in particular teachers. A series of cultural and artistic performances took place in educational institutions in Elbasan district by following a broad public. An important role in these educational institutions undoubtedly sounds certain normal schools, in which other schools joined. Developed artistic performances in their schools were found early in 1942-1943.

School "Normal" during this period has given performances for these following titles:

- Ulysses
- Achilles
- Skanderbeg
- Merushja
- The Triumph of Liberty

The fifth artistic shows were staggering in Elbasan city and the first four were attended by a public where the number reaches about 600 people each, while the fifth show which was put on scene in Elbasan too but the spectator reached 1000 people and this artistic show was on some with the initiative of the 8-th class of the Normale school year 1942-1943 with the intention of population awareness in sign of revolt against invaders (ASHVE, 1947, File. 13, 32).

"The triumph of freedom" show had its premiere on 31-th December 1942 in New

York's height in Elbasan. Where every year in this day the student's of Normale School had shows for the public creating a culture tradition in theatrical interpretation. The theme of the artistic show was from the war for freedom of albania's agonist turks and the declaration of independence with the raise of the flog in Vlora on 28-th of November 1912. The roles were interpreted by candidates for teachers like. Andon Pano, Mynever Zaimi, Liri Hakani, Beqir Dardha, Sara Kavaja, Dragush Frasheri etc. It's very important to emphasize that in this show for the first time the roles of the female characters were played by girls that until that moment were excluded from theatrical art some and their roles were also played by boys. The financial income collected by the show comes in support of national liberation war. The Elbasan's public found itself expressed by means of the characters of the show their right to freedom for the removal of the invaders expressing in the hall their antifascist revolt with saying like: "Viva liberty"; "Down fascism" (Pajuni, 1967, 23). Another school nominated at this time and which has given artistic shows was Ushtrimore School with the artistic shows like:

- 1)"The white one";
- 2)"The little children".

Both of these shows were put on scene in Elbasan city and were attended from a public about 800 persons each (ASHVE, 1947, File. 13, 32). Meanwhile a number of artistic shows was put on scene even from other different schools of Elbasan, but these educations institutions weren't nominated while the shows one:

- 1)"How beautiful we live in the village";
- 2)"Petrit";
- 3)"Cinema tickets";
- 4)"Hashish".

The fourth of the shows were put on scene in Elbasan and were attended by about 800 people each (ASHVE, 1947, File. 13, 32). The repertoire of the shows prepared by the students and the teachers in clued different themes in their compositions judging by their headlines. It starts from ancient mythology figures and old greek literature, continues with the figure of our national heroes, themes of time actuality, from the patriotic ones especially when the country is invaded, social problems and even subjects related to drugs and their damage in people's life or health.

Conclusions

As a conclusion of this subject, it was documented the efforts of people of Elbasan District to develop the culture after fife centuries of Osman invasion. The development of culture was the major priority for patriots of Elbasan District. As a proof for this was the establishment of cultural societies, which would be the base for the creation of artistic groups, which would perform in the field of theatre and music. The importance of their activities and shows over three and a half decades was in several directions:

Firstly, they were the proof of the continuity of Albanian national culture, with the specifics of the period we are analyzing.

Secondly, the expressed clear patriotic messages over important events in the history

of Albania, becoming in this way an active part of these events. Thirdly, the large diversity of subject in these artistic shows confirms their high level and artistic values.

References

- ASHVE, The fund of Executive Committee - Sector of Education, 1947, File. 13.
- Pajuni, F. (1967). "The teacher, the first one who expanded theatre in the city of Elbasan", *The development of education in Elbasan*. Elbasan: The Pedagogical Cabinet of the Section of Culture and Education.
- Adem Jahja, A. (1967). "From the chronicle of a teacher's work", *The development of education in Elbasan*, Elbasan: The Pedagogical Cabinet of the Section of Culture and Education.
- Gashi, A. (1967). "Our National Education in Elbasan", *The development of education in Elbasan*, Elbasan: The Pedagogical Cabinet of the Section of Culture and Education.