

*Zurnaci* music, performed not for itself but for the others, is a function of the contact between the musician and the audience. The maestro *zurnaci* is an interpreter of the tradition, as well as an author who realizes it artistically. Like the old composers from the times of the live art of improvisation, who sensed the impact of their music upon the listeners in the very moment it came out of their instruments, the *zurnacies* check and evaluate the content of their music by the reaction of the audience during performance, and often develop or change it according to the barometer of the listeners. The players have always claimed that music “depended on people” – their reactions, desires, moods and behaviour determined what music would the maestro make, and how he would make it: “The maestro plays as the people wish – which song they want” [АИФ, I, №100, c. 40]. The ability to sense the moods and wishes of the people is one of the criteria for masterly skill and a precondition for good payment, since the professional musician relies also on the *parsa*.

The player’s contact with the audience is carried out visually: “You watch the man and make a guess”, says a *zurnaci* from Razlog and makes it clear that he needs only to see the *horos* to “paint in his mind” the music suitable to it [M.K., p.24]. Among the markers needed for choosing the appropriate music are outer appearance, clothes, age, ethnicity, and the listener or dancer’s sex. All these help the *zurnaci* to guess what music would be preferred. The emotional reaction – gestures made with the head, hands or body, tears or smiles, and dancing impulse – serves as additional information leading to the right choice of music. There is, of course, direct information, too – when someone orders a specific melody.

After guessing the song wished by the audience, the *zurnacies* play it with regard to the *horos* dancers. The leader, or *basha*, being the best dancer, governs the step, rhythm and music. This is why the maestro *zurnaci* walks close to him, watches and follows his movements, changes the tempo and *tact* if necessary, and improvises, reacting immediately to his dancing. Such a unique synchrony between musician and dancer makes one think of syncretism and archaic beginnings, and is characteristic of oral music. Those who produce music without notation elaborate on it during performance. This organic element of musical composition – the organic presence of man in music making – is described as an immediate thought process [Blacking, 1992:305]. The *zurnacies* permanently show in their performer practice the immediate thought process, especially in their dance repertoire. The hardest of all *horos* to synchronize are the heavy ones from low Strouma valley, and they do form part of the *zurnaci* repertoire. The player knows the melody but re-creates it in the moment of performance, “enlarging it by the *horos* step” – i.e. changing the tempo, adding parts in the melody, and improvising. According to a professional dancer, this “unbelievable synchrony between music and dancers” is something “original”, which “cannot be made artificially” [И, p. 14]. Both intuitive and inherited as a skill in *zurnaci* practice, this ability, which has been called “folk genius”, is characteristic of the *zurnacies* from Petrich.

In the process of *zurnaci* performance there is also two-sided communication. Often the listeners/dancers offer the music they wish. This could be done verbally, by talking to the musician, or non-verbally – by means of gestures. We once saw how during a *pravo* (straight) *horos* a dancer raised his hand and showed the maestro *zurnaci* four fingers. Then the musicians started playing a *chetvorno* (four-belt) *horos* from Ograzhden or Maleshevo, without stopping the music and interrupting the dancers.