

# DANCING IDENTITIES: THE WALTZ AS A CULTURAL BRIDGE IN KAZAKH MUSIC

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## Abstract

This paper examines the cultural transformation and vocal adaptation of the European waltz genre in Kazakh music. Although the waltz originated as a social dance in 18th-century Europe, its evolution in the Kazakh context illustrates a dynamic intercultural process shaped by national aesthetics, folklore traditions, and the specifics of vocal music. In the study, we consider the appearance of the waltz in Kazakh music in the 1930s and 1950s and examine how composers such as Latif Khamidi, Nurgisa Tlendiev, and Shamshi Kaldayakov adapted this form to pop vocal music. The analysis demonstrates how the waltz transformed from a dance form into a poetic and emotional vocal genre reflecting the national worldview and musical identity. Special attention is paid to the legacy of Shamshi Kaldayakov, who is often called the ‘King of the Kazakh waltz’, whose melodies made this genre truly popular. It is clearly shown that the pop waltz in Kazakh music is not just a genre phenomenon but also a form of cultural dialogue between tradition and modernity, and between the national spirit and a universal musical language.

## Keywords

Kazakh waltz, vocal genre, cultural adaptation, East-West dialogue, popular music

## HOW DID WALTZ COME INTO KAZAKHSTAN? INTRODUCTION

Waltz as a term appeared in the 18th century and originally meant a peasant dance rooted in the Austrian and South German folk traditions of the 16th century. Already at the beginning of the 17th century, similar dances were performed at balls at the court of the Habsburgs. Over time, penetrating into urban culture, the waltz became more refined – its movements acquired smoothness, roundness, and elegance. Along with gavotte, mazurka, and cancan, it has evolved into one popular dance and musical genres of the era (Abdullina, Sui, 2018: 314).

The waltz is characterized by a moderate or fast tempo and a size of  $\frac{3}{4}$  (less often  $\frac{6}{8}$ ). The first written mention of it dates back to 1770, and by the beginning of the 19th century, dance had already dominated the balls of Vienna and Paris. The heyday of the genre is associated with the work of Johann Strauss Sr. and his son, Johann Strauss Jr., who was nicknamed the King of the Waltz (Ivanovsky, 1978: 17).

As it spread across Europe, the waltz split into several regional styles. The most famous was the Viennese waltz with its fast tempo and graceful rotational movements. The Congress of Vienna (1814–1815), which even received the unofficial name Dancing Congress, played a special role in popularizing dance (Stratton, 2024: 384). Despite the initial public resistance and criticism, the waltz

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gradually gained cultural recognition, becoming a key element of diplomatic balls attended by the aristocracy and the new professional elite.

In parallel, other varieties developed, such as the slower French waltz and the lyrically inspired waltz with elements of the Landler, reflecting local traditions. This flexibility of the genre not only ensured its success in different cultures but also laid the foundation for the adaptation of the waltz outside Europe, including Central Asia.

But how did the waltz come to Kazakhstan? Kazakhstan is a country with a distinct musical heritage and a national performing school, where genre synthesis has become an important vector for the development of professional art in the 20th century. The waltz in the works of Kazakh composers often becomes a space of dialogue between the European form and the Kazakh modal system, manifesting itself as an expressive means of lyrical melody and national intonation.

Mosienko in her work analyzes how in the 1930s and 1940s, the drama theater played a key role in adapting European musical genres to the Kazakh musical tradition (Mosienko, 2016). At the same time, the formation of the nomad school of composition demonstrated a double perception – a combination of folk performing style with Western musical forms. This synthesis can be interpreted as a conscious intercultural dialogue, where the waltz is transformed through the prism of local rhythmic and melodic structures.

Similar intercultural processes can be observed across Asia, where European musical traditions interacted with local cultures in diverse and often uneven ways. As Bayramova (2022) notes in *Oil, Trade, and Music: Penetration of European Musical Instruments and Music to Azerbaijan and Its Subsequence*, the spread of Western instruments and educational systems in Azerbaijan at the turn of the 20th century shaped the foundations of modern Azerbaijani composition and performance. A comparable process is described by Tạ Hoàng May Anh (2025) in *The French Cultural Acculturation Process in Vietnamese Songs before 1975*, where the encounter between French and Vietnamese musical languages produced new hybrid forms that reflected both imported and indigenous aesthetics. Extending these regional perspectives, Tan Shyr Ee (2024) emphasizes that global music knowledge transmission unfolds in uneven patterns, generating new hierarchies and marginalities within supposedly inclusive cultural exchanges. Taken together, these examples demonstrate that musical globalization is a multilayered negotiation of meanings in which local creativity redefines the very idea of ‘global’. The development of the Kazakh waltz fits into this broader pattern, representing an active and conscious reinterpretation of the European genre through national artistic sensibility.

Of particular interest is the manifestation of the waltz in Kazakh pop music of the second half of the 20th century, for example, in the work of Shamshi Kaldayakov and Nurgisa Tlendiev, where the classical form of the waltz is filled with national intonations and becomes part of the mass musical consciousness. The pop waltz in Kazakhstan can be considered as a form of cultural identity that conveys not only musical but also socio-cultural meanings.

Thus, the study of the Kazakh waltz in the aspect of intercultural adaptation of the genre makes it possible to identify the mechanisms of integration of global musical forms into local contexts, which makes this study relevant for both ethnomusicology and cultural studies, musicology, and interdisciplinary studies of cultural globalization.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the transformation of the waltz genre from its European origin to adaptation in Kazakh academic and pop music culture, revealing the mechanisms of intercultural interaction and the peculiarities of genre interpretation in a local context.

This research is very personal. It grew out of the live practice of communicating with Kazakh performers and composers, as well as from the desire to understand why waltz continues to appeal so directly to both artists and the audience. Ryskulov, who proposed this topic for research, relies in his work on the live experience of interacting with contemporary performers, with Iskakova, Saduakassova, Karimov, Alpeissova, Akparova, and Nurtaza, in turn, provided the study with a methodological basis, as they work directly with modern Kazakhstani researchers whose dissertation research is devoted to waltz topics, for example, with Myltykbayeva. Together, we sought to combine living empirical experience with a solid methodological base, so that the resulting research could help, firstly,

trace the evolution of the waltz and, secondly, answer the question of why the waltz is becoming increasingly popular in Kazakhstan.

## CLASSICAL EUROPEAN WALTZ

The waltz, as a musical and dance genre, originated at the end of the 18th century in the German-speaking regions of Europe – mainly in Austria and Southern Germany – and soon became an integral part of both secular and professional musical culture. Originating from peasant circular dances (such as the Ländler that has the same steps but a different tempo (Reeser, 1949: 16)), the waltz quickly gained popularity due to its simplicity, paired performance, and expressive melody. For the first time as a separate genre, it began to form in the 1770s – 1780s, and already at the beginning of the 19th century, it gained considerable popularity in Vienna (Stratton, 2024: 384).



**Figure 1: Capodanno a Vienna con il Ballo nella Hofburg [New Year's Eve in Vienna with the Ball at the Hofburg]. Picture in the public domain since 2016.**

The key element distinguishing the waltz from previous dance forms was the three-part meter with a characteristic emphasis on the first part: this created a feeling of smoothness, rotation, which became both the musical and kinetic basis of the genre. In addition, the waltz was accompanied by elegant melodies, smooth harmonic transitions, and steady rhythmic formulas, which made it easily recognizable and adaptable. Spreading across Europe and beyond, it took on new forms – from French to English, and from Polish to Hungarian, becoming a kind of cultural code of the Romantic era. In addition to dance halls, it became a part of opera and chamber works, appearing in such authors as Chopin, Tchaikovsky, Liszt, and others, embedding themselves in the fabric of symphonies, ballets, and piano miniatures.

Thus, already in the 19th century, the waltz went beyond its national origin and became a universal art form capable of integration into various cultural contexts, which predetermined its widespread internationalization in the 20th century.

Spreading its influence beyond the German-Austrian musical tradition, in the 19th century, during the period of romantic music, the waltz became very popular, as it reflected the spirit of the times (Noh, 2016: 6). Over time, the waltz has acquired many regional variations, each reflecting the aesthetic and rhythmic preferences of the relevant cultural context. As the waltz spread around the world, it did not lose its recognition, but it acquired new features in every culture, demonstrating a high degree of adaptability and the ability to synthesize with local traditions. These examples are important for understanding how the waltz was able to integrate into the Kazakh musical culture, both in academic and pop formats. Throughout its history, the waltz has served not only an aesthetic but also an important social function, reflecting changes in the social structure and tastes of different eras. His

transformation from a peasant folk dance into an exquisite symbol of secular culture is a vivid example of how musical forms become a reflection of cultural dynamics and social mobility.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the waltz became a symbol of a new freedom of the body and expression of feelings, contrasting itself with the more formalized Baroque court dances. His pair structure, which allowed for close physical contact, was perceived as a challenge to old norms and initially drew criticism from a conservative society. However, by the middle of the 19th century, the waltz had consolidated its position as one of the main genres of urban leisure, having penetrated into dance halls, salons, and then into concert life. In this sense, it has become an instrument of social integration, bringing together representatives of different classes and cultures.

From an artistic point of view, the waltz demonstrated a high flexibility of genre form. It retained the structural features of the dance genre – three-four rhythm, repetition, periodicity – but became actively used in chamber, symphonic, opera, and ballet music. Waltzes by Ravel, Hindemith, and Prokofiev demonstrate how the waltz can act as an expressive means of lyricism, drama, irony, and the grotesque (Noh, 2016).

Later, in the middle of the 20th century, the waltz became a part of pop and film music, embodying romance, nostalgia, and sometimes irony in relation to the past. Its melodiousness and clarity of form have made it particularly convenient for stylizations and processing in a wide variety of genres – from jazz to pop music and even rock. The ability of the waltz to adapt to various musical traditions is directly related to its structural flexibility and versatility. At the level of rhythm, harmony, and form, the waltz is a fairly stable, but at the same time open, model that allows you to include local intonation and rhythmic elements. This adaptability makes it particularly attractive for inclusion in national musical languages.

The classical rhythmic basis of the waltz is a three-four rhythm (3/4) with an emphasis on the first movement, which creates a feeling of roundness and smoothness. This size is easily stylized and syncopated and varies rhythmically, allowing it to be adapted to various musical traditions. For instance, the Latin American waltz, *vals criollo*, which appeared on the basis of European music, acquired specific features characteristic of Latin American music (Veniard, 2013). In the Russian tradition, there is also a tendency to saturate the rhythmic structure with elements of broad chant and length (e.g., in Glinka's *Fantasy Waltz* or Lyadov's *Waltz*).

The harmonic language of the waltz is usually based on functional tonality, often using stable turns: tonality – subdominant – dominant – tonic. Such a clear structure makes the waltz understandable and easily recognizable. In different cultures, local modes are added to this: for example, in Kazakh music, intonations of the pentatonic, specific modulations and quarter-fifth turns are possible. The Kriol waltz is characterized by movements in parallel major and minor keys, which brings the harmonic language closer to the lyrics of popular songs.

A typical waltz form is a three—part (A–B–A) or verse-chorus, which makes it easy to create both instrumental and vocal compositions. Such formal predictability is convenient both for dancing and for the musical design of stage and variety performances. During adaptation, the form can expand, as in the symphonic waltzes of Tchaikovsky or Ravel (*Waltz of Flowers* by Tchaikovsky and *Waltz for Orchestra* by Ravel), or, conversely, simplify to the couplet principle, as in a popular song, where memorability and ease of perception are important.

It was this structural stability and stylistic flexibility that allowed the waltz to become a cultural transformer: it was easily mastered in various contexts – from palace balls to street parties, from piano pieces to guitar miniatures, and from ballet to pop music. Due to these qualities, the waltz has proved to be a particularly convenient genre for intercultural dialogue, including in Kazakh musical culture, where its structure fits into existing intonation and rhythmic systems.

## CLASSICAL WALTZ ON KAZAKH GROUND

The appearance of the waltz in Kazakh music is closely related to the processes of Europeanization and professionalization of musical culture in Kazakhstan in the 1930s and 1950s. During this period, the foundations of academic composer education were laid, the first national musical groups were

formed, operas and symphonic works were created, and, at the same time, genres of the Western European tradition, including the waltz, were actively mastered.

One of the first composers to use waltz elements in Kazakh music was Evgeny Brusilovsky, who played an important role in the formation of Kazakh academic music. In his opera *Kyz-Zhibek* (1934) and other works, waltz rhythms appear as a means of creating imaginative lightness, elegance, and ballad character. Brusilovsky, having a Russian academic education, organically combined the Western genre form with Kazakh melodic and rhythmic intonations, which was the first step toward adapting the waltz in the national culture.

During the same period, Akhmet Zhubanov and Latif Hamidi also showed interest in the waltz genre, using it in chamber instrumental and vocal works. Their work marks not only the borrowing of a form but also an attempt at its internal transformation under the influence of Kazakh melos. An example is the *Kazakh Waltz* by Hamidi, in which waltz metrorhythmicity is combined with a chant characteristic of the Kazakh song and a pentatonic base (Ketegenova, 2009: 128).

Already in the 1940s, the waltz became a recognizable and sought-after genre in Kazakh musical culture, primarily in song lyrics. This is due both to its emotionally expressive nature and to its convenience for vocal expression – the smooth three-part rhythm and couplet form perfectly match the traditional Kazakh vocal thinking (Mylytkbaeva, 2009).

Thus, the period of the 1930s–1950s can be considered as a stage of the primary development and intonation adaptation of the genre, during which the waltz begins to acquire national specificity, while maintaining its European basis. This served as the foundation for the subsequent development of the Kazakh waltz as a unique cultural phenomenon located at the intersection of local and global musical experience.

## CO-WORKING OF KAZAKH NATIONAL MUSIC AND EUROPEAN FORM

The adaptation of the waltz in Kazakh music was not limited to borrowing the three-part meter and formal features of the genre. Since the middle of the 20th century, a profound transformation of the genre has been taking place, as a result of which the waltz is integrated into the intonation system of Kazakh music, becoming an integral part of the national musical language. This transformation is based on the synthesis of the metrorhythmic structure of the European waltz and the fret features of the Kazakh tradition.

Kazakh music, historically based on pentatonics, variable frets, and free rhythms, initially seemed poorly compatible with the usual three-part waltz rhythm. However, a unique approach is being developed in the works of Kazakh composers of the 1950s and 1970s: the texture of the waltz remains, but it is filled with characteristic melodic turns, motifs dating back to the technique of playing the *dombra*, ornamentation of Kazakh vocal intonations, and fret flexibility.

A striking example of this synthesis is the instrumental waltzes of Sydyk Mukhamedzhanov, where the European dance form is combined with Kazakh melodic turns based on alternating quarter-fifth structures, chants, and characteristic intonations. Similar features are observed in Akhmed Zhubanov's chamber works, in which the waltz form is used as a stage to demonstrate Kazakh intonational expressiveness.

## WALTZ AS VOCAL GENRE

In the second half of the 20th century, the waltz genre received a special development in vocal music, especially in the song genre. Composers, including Tlendiev, Hamidi, and Kaldayakov, create waltz compositions in which classical three-part music is combined with national images. In works such as *Koktem waltz*, *Ana turaly zhyr*, and *Syrgalym*, lyricism, melodic length, the use of characteristic chants, and pentatonic melodies are emphasized, while the form remains recognizably waltzing.

The musical and structural analysis of these works shows that Kazakh composers actively vary the elements of the classical waltz: they can weaken the accents on the first measure, use syncopations

and incorrect phrases, while maintaining the overall feeling of waltzing movement. Harmonic language is also undergoing changes – along with functional harmony, parallelisms, primitive reliance on quarts and fifths, as well as elements of modal thinking are often used.

Thus, the Kazakh musical culture has developed its own waltz style, in which the European genre model is reworked through the prism of the national intonation system. This style is successfully manifested both in academic forms (chamber instrumental and symphonic works) and in the lyrics of popular songs, demonstrating a unique way of intercultural synthesis.

In the second half of the 20th century, the waltz found a new life in Kazakh culture thanks to the genre of pop songs, which featured a meaningful and emotionally intense combination of European dance form with Kazakh melody, intonation, and poetics. A key figure in this process was composer Shamshi Kaldayakov, People's Artist of Kazakhstan, author of more than 300 songs, most of which are written to the rhythm of a waltz.

## THE KING OF KAZAKH WALTZ

It was in Kaldayakov's work that the waltz went beyond the academic stage and became part of the mass musical consciousness. His works were not just a borrowing of a genre – they became a form of expression of national feeling, love for his native land, images of mother, woman, and nature (Kaliakbarova, 2015: 118). Songs such as *Kaidasyn*, *Bakyt kushagynda*, *Kuanysh waltzes*, *Syr suluy*, and *Ak bantik* gained national popularity and made Kaldayakov a cult figure, nicknamed 'King of the Kazakh waltz'.

His waltz compositions demonstrate a unique synthesis of rhythms characteristic of the genre and the Kazakh intonation system. In music, Kaldayakov's European triplicity is naturally intertwined with Kazakh modality, pentatonics, and intonations close to folklore melos. This makes his waltzes easily recognizable, touching, and close to the Kazakh listener.

The work of Kaldayakov has a high emotional expressiveness, filled with images understandable to the mass audience, and at the same time retains artistic sophistication. He became not only a pop composer but also an exponent of the national style through a popular song, turning the waltz genre into a symbol of the era.

Kaldayakov's creative legacy has left an indelible mark on the cultural memory of the people. A striking example of this is the waltz *Syr Suluy*, which not only marked the beginning of the *Kyzylorda* folklore ensemble but also became its symbol. Created in collaboration with Shukirov, this masterpiece immediately won the hearts of listeners. Over time, the composition has not lost its charm, turning into a real pearl of Russian waltz art.

According to the researchers, the genre specificity of the waltz in Kaldayakov's work is manifested not only in musical means but also in the poetic structure of texts that rely on folk imagery, ethno-psychology, and aesthetic sensitivity. Kaldayakov's waltzes are often plot compositions that combine elements of poetry, epic, and romance. They have become an important element of national and cultural education, broadcasting images of beauty, morality, respect for a woman, mother, and the native land (Kaliakbarova, 2015: 118).

Thus, the waltz on the Kazakh stage, especially in the legacy of Kaldayakov, received a new cultural and artistic function: it became a form of self-expression of the Kazakh musical identity in popular culture, demonstrating a unique way of localization and adaptation of the European genre in the national environment.

Although the waltz genre was borrowed from a specific European musical and dance tradition, its penetration into Kazakh music cannot be perceived as a simple borrowing of the form. On the contrary, in the context of national musical thinking, the waltz has undergone significant artistic transformations, becoming a unique phenomenon combining the intonations of the Kazakh song, the peculiarities of the national rhythm, and the lyrical coloring of the folk melody. A striking example of the formation of the waltz in Kazakh music is the work of Latif Hamidi, one of the first composers to turn to this genre.

## CONTRIBUTIONS OF OTHER KAZAKH COMPOSERS

Hamidi's works, such as *Kazakh Waltz*, *Koktem waltz* (Spring waltz), and *Bulbul* (Nightingale), have become not only popular but also symbolic in many ways. The *Kazakh waltz*, performed for the first time by opera diva Kulyash Bayseitova, is especially significant. This composition immediately won the hearts of listeners and became a kind of anthem of love and happiness. The composer himself recalled the difficulties of creativity: The desire to combine the European form with the Kazakh melos required great creative sensitivity, search, and inspiration. As a result, L. Hamidi managed to create a melody that can rightfully be called the pearl of the national musical classics, which became the composer's calling card» and the starting point of the history of the Kazakh waltz as a genre.

Continuing the line of the waltz song, it is impossible not to mention the name of Nurgisa Tlendiev – a composer who managed to combine the principles of Kazakh folk musical aesthetics with European genre forms. National motifs can be clearly heard in his waltzes, from the characteristic rhythm and melodic intonations to the use of folk instruments such as the dombra and the Kazakh orchestra of folk instruments. His waltz songs, such as *Kel, yerkem Alatauyna*, *Zhan-zharym*, *Tenizde – tolkynda*, *Bakyt waltz*, *Almatym menin*, *Ken dala*, and *Bayanauy waltz*, have become real masterpieces of Kazakh lyrical song (Iskakova, 2010).

For Tlendiev, the waltz is not just a form of dance but also a way of artistically expressing feelings for the Motherland, nature, and native people. His works are imbued with light intonations, images of Kazakhstani landscapes, lyrical mood, and deep respect for Kazakh musical traditions. Tlendiev's waltz songs, created in the genre style of a concert waltz, are intended for performance by professional singers, but, at the same time, they have retained the simplicity and accessibility inherent in folk songs.

Thus, both Hamidi and Tlendiev became composers who not only adapted the waltz to the Kazakh musical culture but also made it an integral part of the national musical heritage. Their work confirms that the interaction of traditions can produce truly original artistic phenomena.

## POP WALTZ

The pop waltz in Kazakh music has become an important stage in popularizing the national sound, adapted to the requirements of the time and a wide audience. If the waltzes of Latif Hamidi and Nurgisa Tlendiev became the first examples of the symbiosis of folk intonations and European forms, then later this tradition was developed in the pop culture of Kazakhstan, where the waltz acquired a special role – to be accessible, recognizable, and a carrier of the Kazakh musical identity.

Pop waltz, as a genre, is characterized by melodic clarity, expressive lyrics, and the simplicity of vocals, which makes it especially close to the mass audience. It retains a waltz-like dimension, but significantly enhances the role of song as a form of self-expression – love, landscape, and philosophical. Kazakh composers increasingly began to use the waltz not as a dance form, but as an emotionally intense, poetic way to tell about feelings and their native land.

A special feature of the Kazakh pop waltz is the inclusion of timbres and intonations characteristic of traditional music: dombra accompaniment techniques, folklore turns, fret features, and a specific vocal style of performance. This synthesis contains not just a borrowed form but also an updated tradition aimed at preserving and developing the Kazakh musical identity in the context of globalization.

Waltzes performed by Kazakh pop stars such as Rosa Baglanova, Bibigul Tulegenova, Rosa Rymbaeva, Zhenis Iskakova reflect exactly this feature – a combination of national poetics with a universal musical form. Their performance of Kazakh waltzes has become an important cultural phenomenon contributing to the formation of national taste, especially among young people.

In addition, the pop waltz has become a powerful instrument of musical education: it is performed in music schools, colleges, and at student concerts, which helps to strengthen the bond between generations of performers and listeners. It is thanks to the variety treatment of the waltz that the Kazakh musical tradition is becoming closer to a wide audience.

Thus, the pop waltz in Kazakh music is not just a genre phenomenon, but a form of cultural dialogue between tradition and modernity, and between the national spirit and the universal musical language. His role in popularizing the Kazakh sound cannot be overestimated: it is thanks to him that national music goes beyond the academic stage and becomes part of the living musical space of society.

The transfer of academic form into popular culture in the context of the Kazakh musical tradition is a complex and multifaceted process associated with a change in the context of perception, the transformation of performing style, and the rethinking of genre frameworks. The waltz, which came to Kazakh music from the European classical tradition, was initially perceived as an element of the academic repertoire. However, already in the middle of the 20th century, there was a steady process of its integration into mass musical culture, which contributed to the rethinking of the genre itself in the spirit of national aesthetics.

One of the key aspects of academic form transfer is to preserve the structural rigor and artistic expressiveness of the classical genre while adapting it to a wider audience. Thus, the composers and performers tried to preserve the three-part rhythm, the smoothness, and the romantic flavor characteristic of the waltz, but at the same time saturated the form with intonations close to Kazakh traditional music: pentatonic, fret variability, melismatics, and rhythmic formulas characteristic of *kuys* and folk songs.

The works of Latif Hamidi, who initiated the Kazakh waltz in an academic form, became the basis on which more democratic forms of representation were later formed. For example, his *Kazakh Waltz*, originally performed on the academic stage by Kulyash Bayseitova, later appeared on radio and television, and entered concert programs and even into the household repertoire. Thus, academic work has become a part of the cultural memory of the people, having gone from the stage of the opera house to music schools and variety concerts.

Nurgisa Tlendiev, continuing the Khamidi line, made a special contribution to the popularization of academic forms through mass culture, while relying on the synthesis of folk and professional traditions. His waltzes retain the imagery of academic music, but are clothed in an accessible, emotionally saturated form, where traditional images of nature, love, and native land become central. The orchestra's use of folk instruments, the timbre expressiveness of the *dombra*, and the choral texture make his works highly artistic and close to popular perception.

The transfer of academic forms into popular culture is also carried out through the music education system, television, radio, and festival movements. The popularization of waltz songs performed by professional singers such as Bibigul Tulegenova and Rosa Rymbaeva makes academic material accessible to a wide audience. In the concert practice of the 1960s and 1980s, a special place was occupied by solo performances accompanied by an orchestra of folk instruments, in which academic vocals were combined with the folk sound and intonation of the Kazakh song.

Thus, the transfer of academic form into popular culture is a process aimed not at simplification, but at rethinking and spreading high artistic values. It contributes to the formation of stable cultural codes, within which the Kazakh musical tradition acquires new forms of life without losing its authenticity. It was in this context that the waltz became a symbol of cultural synthesis, an example of a harmonious combination of academic rigor and folk expressiveness.

## WHY IS WALTZ SO POPULAR IN KAZAKH POP VOCAL?

### CONCLUSION

One of the main reasons for the growing popularity of the waltz in Kazakh music is its accessibility and emotional clarity. Today, the waltz has firmly entered the repertoire of pop performers, becoming a familiar and beloved sound for a wide audience. Young performers such as Zhanar Dugalova, Aigerim Kalaubayeva, Zhenis Iskakova, Tamara Assar and Meirambek Besbayev continue to rethink this genre, bringing it closer to modern aesthetics. Their versions, as well as reinterpretations of Rosa Rymbaeva's iconic waltzes by artists such as Madina Saduakassova and the *KeshYOU* group, give new breath and meaning to melodies that have long been part of the collective memory.

According to our observations, this continuity of reinterpretation shows that the composers of previous generations are very close and understandable to modern listeners, since the Kazakh waltz has a deep national basis. Not only are the melodies themselves remembered but also the poetic texts that remain relevant over time. Each waltz carries a trace of the past, sounding in the present, an echo of memory that lives during the performance. The emotional themes of these songs – love in its sublime and humane manifestations, devotion to the motherland, admiration for beauty and motherhood, reflections on life itself – made the waltz a particularly adaptable and stable form in Kazakh vocal culture.

Not every musical genre finds such a deep response in the nation’s sound world. The waltz has been found, and this says a lot about the continuity of generations of Kazakhstani performers who reread, arrange, and revive familiar melodies in their own way. The legacy of outstanding composers such as Shamshi Kaldayakov, whose lyrical style perfectly matched the rhythm and mood of the waltz, continues to inspire both professional and amateur musicians.

The popularity of the waltz is also supported by such major cultural projects as *Sagyndyrgan anderai* by Ilyassova, which performs songs by Kaldayakov, and *Shamshi anderi*, a series of concerts held annually in Astana and Almaty, later broadcast on national television. These projects emphasize not only the timelessness of Kaldayakov’s music but also the idea that the waltz in Kazakhstan has become a living part of the national sound identity, uniting generations, styles, and emotions.

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