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Book Review

Esat Bicurri and the urban song tradition of Gjakova: A review of Krenar Doli's Esat Bicurri in Eternity

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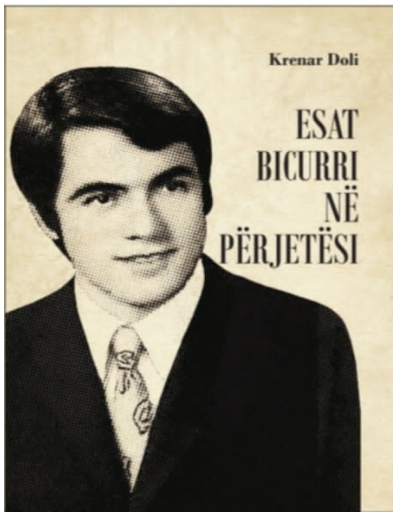
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Abstract

This book review examines Krenar Doli's monograph Esat Bicurri in Eternity, which situates Bicurri's life and artistic legacy within the urban song tradition of Gjakova. Drawing on archival documents, field interviews, and musical analysis, the book places Bicurri's work in its historical and cultural context. The review highlights two strengths of the monograph: its analysis of the stylistic, melodic, and structural features of Bicurri's two published collections and its extensive documentation of musical heritage. It also identifies areas for further discussion, including engagement with international ethnomusicological scholarship, greater critical distance in the portrayal of Bicurri, and comparison with other urban song performers. The volume contributes to research on vocal performance, urban traditional music, and the musical heritage of Kosovo and Albania.

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Book Title: Esat Bicurri in Eternity
Author: Krenar Doli
ISBN: 978-9951-28-517-9
Publisher: Artini
Publication Place: Pristina, Kosova
Publication Date: 2025
Pages: 180

Krenar Doli's *Esat Bicurri in Eternity* examines the life, repertoire, and artistic legacy of Esat Bicurri within the urban song tradition of Gjakova. The monograph places Bicurri's career in the context of the city's musical and social history.

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Its central contribution is to show how the work of an individual performer can illuminate a tradition that forms part of Kosovo's musical heritage.

Scope and Approach

Doli begins by reconstructing Gjakova's historical and cultural setting, paying particular attention to the institutions and traditions that shaped the city's musical life. This account gives readers the context they need to understand Bicurri's repertoire and its relationship to Albanian urban traditional music. The study combines archival research and a review of the literature with semi-structured and unstructured interviews, participant observation, repertoire analysis, and photographic documentation. These sources allow Doli to examine the music alongside the recollections of people familiar with the performer and his cultural milieu.

Strengths and Limitations

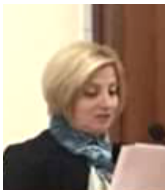
The strongest part of the book is its analysis of Bicurri's two published collections. Doli examines the stylistic, melodic, and structural characteristics of the songs, giving readers a basis for assessing Bicurri's contribution as a performer. The photographs, facsimiles, archival materials, eyewitness accounts, and bibliography also make the volume a resource for researchers studying Gjakova's musical history and the documentation of Kosovo's urban song traditions.

The book draws extensively on Albanian-language scholarship. Closer engagement with international ethnomusicological work on performance, cultural memory, and heritage would have helped situate its findings in wider debates. The account of Bicurri is predominantly affirmative, and some passages would benefit from greater attention to alternative readings of his repertoire and performance style. Comparison with other urban song performers would also help distinguish Bicurri's individual contribution from features shared across the tradition.

Summarize

Esat Bicurri in Eternity makes a substantial contribution to the study of urban traditional music in Gjakova and Kosovo. Its account of Bicurri's life is most persuasive where it connects his repertoire to the city's musical history and supports that connection through analysis of the two collections. The volume will be of interest to musicologists, ethnomusicologists, university lecturers, and graduate students working on vocal performance, urban song, and the musical heritage of Kosovo and Albania.

Biodata of Author



Assoc. Prof. Dr. **Holta Sina (Kilica)** is a musicologist and educator at the University of Arts in Tirana (UART). She studied Musicology at the Faculty of Music of the Academy of Arts (now University of Arts, Tirana) in the class of Prof. Albert Paparisto (1990–1994). She completed her degree under the academic supervision of Prof. Sokol Shupo (1994) with the highest results. She then worked as a scientific researcher in the Department of Ethnomusicology and Ethnochoreography at the Institute of Folk Culture (IFC) under the Academy of Sciences of Albania (1994–2000). In 1998, she specialized as head of the Ethnomusicological Archive of IFC at the PhonogrammArchiv in Vienna, Austria, under the direction of Prof. Ditrich Schüller. She completed postgraduate studies and a Master's degree in Musicology (at the Academy of Arts) under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Fatmir Hysi (2006) with top results. In 2011, she earned the title of "Docent" at the Faculty of Music, UART. She defended her Doctorate at the Albanian Institute of Studies (IAKSA/QSA, Tirana) under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Shaban Sinani (2013), again with the highest evaluation. Her scientific activity spans from 1996 to the present and includes participation in several research projects, such as: involvement in the development project of the National Folklore Festival 1995 in Berat, serving as a scientific committee member for the selection of folk music groups as an ethnomusicologist; and taking part in scientific expeditions organized by IFC (Academy of Sciences of Albania) in Himara (1995) and Durrës (1999), particularly among the Kosovar population displaced by Serbian genocide. She has participated in dozens of national and international symposiums, conferences, and scientific panels from 1996 to 2022 in Albania and abroad. She is the author of numerous scholarly, critical, and journalistic articles published in academic journals and media in countries including Albania, Italy, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Romania, and the United Kingdom. She is also the author or co-author of:

- *Music 5* (textbook for 9-year schools, 2007, Ministry of Education and Science), co-authored with Elira Aliaj;

- *Opera: Concept and Structure*, Express Print, Tirana (2016);
- *The Ekphonetic Codices of Albania* (scientific study), Academy of Sciences of Albania (2019);
- and co-author with Prof. Dr. Zana Shureriqi Prela of the book *60 Years of the Faculty of Music at the University of Arts (1962–2022)*, bilingual (Albanian-English), Naimi Publishing House (2024).

Academic contributions: She has developed course programs for musical form analysis (lecture cycles, recommended literature) and musicology; served as academic advisor and scientific opponent for undergraduate and master's theses in musicology and music education. She has been a member of admission and thesis defense committees in the field.
Since 2002, she has been a full-time lecturer in *Musical Work Analysis* and *Musicology* (bachelor and master programs) at UART. In 2023, she was awarded the title of *Associate Professor* at the Faculty of History and Philology, University of Tirana. She is a permanent member of the Doctoral Commission and its subcommittees, and a member of the Organizing Committee and Editorial Board of the International Conference on Arts and Education (ICAE, 2025).
Currently, she is the *Head of the Musicology Department* (chair of the subject group) in the Faculty of Music at UART.

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