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Review Article

Art music in Kosovo: an overview of existing literature (1975-2015)

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Abstract

his article provides an overview of the development and challenges faced by art music in Kosovo from 1975 to 2015. Despite Kosovo's rich musical tradition, academic musicological research has remained limited, particularly in understanding the origins and growth of art music. The research highlights the lack of systematic data collection and preservation, which has hindered the documentation of Kosovo's musical history. Although the Kosovo Composers' Association existed from 1975 to 1980, it was unable to produce significant musicological works due to political instability in the 1980s. Additionally, the absence of trained musicologists and a dedicated musicology department at the University of Pristina has exacerbated this issue. The article also discusses key individuals who have made significant contributions to the promotion of Kosovo's art music, such as musicologist Engjëll Berisha. His works, such as *Studies and Writings on Music* (2004), offer critical perspectives and analyses of local composers and the challenges faced by the genre. Other important contributors, including composers like Zeqirja Ballata, Rafet Rudi, and Rexhep Munishi, have made significant strides in documenting and analyzing Kosovo's art music. Despite limited publications, music festivals and public discussions have provided some platforms for the exchange of ideas. However, the article concludes that there is a need for a more robust and organized effort to strengthen the academic and public discourse on art music in Kosovo, encouraging further research, publication, and recognition of local composers.

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Introduction

Art Music in Kosovo developed much later than in the majority of European countries and reflected upon its historical and socio-political context (Luzha, 2016, Luzha & Kryeziu - Breznica, 2024). Kosovo, a developing country in the Western Balkans, has experienced profound political and socio-historical challenges over the centuries (Malcolm, Schmidt). The struggle for self-determination and statehood intensified between 1981 and 1999, particularly in opposition to the Serbian regime, which engaged in cultural suppression, forced acculturation, and, ultimately, atrocities against civilians during the 1998–1999 conflict. In June 1999, NATO, leading a Western alliance, intervened to end the war and secure Kosovo's liberation. The country's formal independence was later declared in 2008.

Art music in Kosovo: an overview of existing literature (1975-2015)

Between 2012 and 2016, I made a definitive commitment to engage in detailed research on art music in Kosovo, focusing on its origins and continuous development. This period was marked by attending virtually all concerts within the country's modest musical life, meeting musicians and composers, engaging in extensive conversations, conducting brief interviews with musicians at festivals, concerts, and at the Faculty of Music in Pristina, gathering impressions from everyday yet information-rich discussions, and persistently studying and listening to works of professional music. These

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activities constituted the most significant and qualitative steps I undertook to shape the initial framework of this research. Not all individuals demonstrated willingness to assist or provide information; more often than not, this reluctance confirmed for me, as a researcher, the broader lack of systematic data collection and preservation — a deficiency that I personally experienced as a form of "individual suffering."

Current musicological research in Kosovo (e.g., historical, sociological) does not primarily address the causes behind the emergence and development of art music. Rather, it focuses on its subsequent development and management through the establishment of appropriate conditions, ranging from financial support to the provision of concert halls. Regarding the literature, one may reasonably conclude that the publication of musical works, including musicological studies in Kosovo, has demonstrated weak performance in this regard. Only a few scholars have recognized the importance of such research and have concluded that difficult social — and undoubtedly economic — circumstances have negatively influenced the delayed emergence and presentation of art music in Kosovo.

The establishment of a musicological literature corpus in Kosovo could have begun with the Kosovo Composers' Association during the period 1975–1980, a time when more favorable conditions existed. Unfortunately, no significant musicological study was undertaken during this period. Due to the difficult political circumstances that emerged in Kosovo during the 1980s, the publishing sector within the Composers' Association — the central institution for such activities — was subsequently forced to cease its operations.

Similarly, journalism, music criticism, and musicological research have not adequately followed the development of the art music corpus and other musical activities in Kosovo. One of the primary reasons for this shortfall is the lack of trained musicologists, as the Faculty of Arts — Department of Music at the University of Prishtina (Kosovo) still does not possess a dedicated Department of Musicology. In an environment such as ours, there is an extraordinary need for music writing — particularly the publication of scholarly works — yet at the same time, it remains a challenging and intimidating environment for those who attempt to engage in this field. Consequently, the space for its rapid development has remained limited. In my view, the easiest and most immediate way to express critical opinions about art music would be through the written media; however, this, too, remains unlikely in the current context of Kosovo. Local media allocate very limited space to music criticism and are generally reluctant to engage in in-depth analyses, often arguing — as I have personally experienced as a musicologist — that such articles do not attract readers or generate profit. In relation to the development of technology, social media has remained the only immediate platform for the free expression of ideas.

Nevertheless, my focus shifted towards those individuals who, although few in number, have made significant contributions to the music literature of Kosovo. Among them, Engjëll Berisha (1934–2015) stands out, arguably the most eminent musicologist in Kosovo to date, who left behind a substantial body of publications. The most significant among these will be discussed below. His works contributed to the promotion of Kosovo's art music by offering critical perspectives, addressing the challenges faced by this genre, and analyzing the creative output of local composers.

Berisha placed particular emphasis on the educational curricula of both non-professional and professional music schools, an aspect evident in his publication *Studime dhe vështrime për muzikën* (*Studies and Writings on Music*, 2004). This volume includes a collection of articles and reviews published in various local journals, as well as portrayals of both local and international composers. Almost all musical institutions have found this publication to be a valuable resource, although it essentially remains a compilation of selected moments in the development of art music both in Kosovo and beyond.

Another of Berisha's central works is *Zhvillimi i stileve në veprat e kompozitorëve shqiptarëve të Kosovës* (*The Development of Styles in the Works of Albanian Composers from Kosovo*, 1997), where he addresses the stylistic aspects of the creative output of Kosovar composers, ranging from smaller forms to larger scenic works. This publication had a significant impact on Kosovar musicology, as it not only represented the artistic values of local art music but also provided a critical analysis of the Albanian musical creative corpus.

Nonetheless, part of such intellectual activities is also the composer and academic Zeqirja Ballata (1941–), a composer who published articles in various magazines (*Rilindja*, *Bujku*, *Bota e Re*, among others), and who also authored the book

Gjurmët e Muzës (1987; *The Traces of the Muse*), in which the author addresses general issues of art music with a particular focus on art music in Kosovo.

Furthermore, composer Rafet Rudi (1949–) published a book titled *Sprova Estetike* (2002; *An Aesthetic Essay*), where, in addition to discussing characteristic problems related to the development of art music in Kosovo and beyond, he adopts an analytical approach to European twentieth-century music, particularly focusing on the core characteristics of avant-garde music, which by then had gained widespread popularity in Europe. Additionally, Rudi has dedicated many years to the documentation of Kosovo's cultural and musical life. He has amassed a significant archive that presents nearly all musical events up to the year 2000. In recent years, Rudi has focused on publishing works that directly address the musical life in Kosovo and its many components, as a direct participant in shaping its artistic landscape.

Rexhep Munishi (1936–) is primarily dedicated to ethnomusicology and folklore, but he also has a notable work titled *Identiteti muzikor* (2001; *Musical Identity*), in which he addresses the challenges faced by music in Kosovo, particularly in the post-war period (after 1999). As Munishi argues, not a single element of art music remained "in its proper place," largely due to the dominance of commercial music, which has occupied — and continues to occupy — a significant space in Kosovo's musical landscape.

The importance and need for such publications in Kosovo is clearly reflected in the forewords of the few existing publications of this kind. To this day, there are only eight professionally written theoretical music books containing historical facts that we can refer to.

A particular significance lies in the encyclopedic dictionary of music — the first and only one published in the Albanian language — *Fjalori enciklopedik muzikor* (*The Encyclopedic Dictionary of Music*, 2014), written by the conductor and pedagogue Bajar Berisha (1951–). This dictionary contains both well-known and lesser-known musical terms. The author has made efforts to include as many words as possible from scientific musical terminology. As in standardized dictionaries, the terms are arranged alphabetically, and the dictionary consists of 440 pages. This dictionary was extremely necessary and remains highly important, serving musicians — especially professionals — knowing that artistic music in Kosovo has long suffered from a lack of specialized terminology, particularly regarding the translation of musical terms into the Albanian language.

I must also mention composer Akil Koci (1936–), who has produced a number of publications. However, due to the unavailability of many of his works (often for unknown reasons), it is difficult to discuss them extensively. Nevertheless, *Vibracione të shpirtit shqiptar* (*Vibrations of the Albanian Spirit*, 2008) is one of the few works I have had access to. In this book, the author presents portraits of local composers and also touches on various — often personal — issues within the artistic community.

In the context of limited publishing activities in the country, another important form of public expression, evaluation, and promotion of art music consisted of public presentations, conferences, debates through professional musicology discussions, and musicological panels (organized especially within the frameworks of art music festivals in Kosovo). Although limited in number, these activities successfully fulfilled their mission in advancing both our music and cultural life in general.

Such discussions were organized and offered by various music festivals such as *ReMusica* (founded in 2001) and *DAM Festival* (founded in 2006), through small workshops and roundtables that continue their tradition even today (as of 2020). However, currently, the number of such discussions has significantly decreased, further diminishing this important form of promoting the exchange of professional thought in the field.

Today, such activities are rare. Nevertheless, the few publications previously mentioned remain highly valuable and are considered essential for the music publicists and scholars. Kosovo — or more precisely, the body of literature on art music within the country — possesses only a small number of such publications, which is why this field remains, to this day, only partially developed.

The main focus of these studies has been the representation of composers, analyzing the historical background of their lives and professional development, as well as the formal and stylistic aspects of their creative opus, along with the

promotion of institutions and performers. Together with composers, these individuals and institutions constitute the essential factors in demonstrating the existence and continuity of professional music in Kosovo.

All of the publications mentioned above present analyses primarily focused on the period from 1945 to 1975, with rare references to the subsequent years. Furthermore, there exists a significant gap when it comes to identifying the historical cultural events in Kosovo during this period. As a result, informative articles on this topic are mostly found in daily newspapers. Identifying other elements and factors from this era, aside from the documentation left behind in the works of musicologist Engjëll Berisha, is quite difficult. The last war (1999) destroyed any documentation that could assist in providing evidence for this period today. However, it is worth mentioning that individuals who lived through this time and who, fortunately, are still alive, have provided valuable help in expanding on the facts that were initially presented in Berisha's publications.

The aforementioned publications have served as significant reference points and will continue to be frequently cited. Unfortunately, there is little documentary material available regarding the origins of art music in Kosovo. More often, we find articles focused on the development of art music globally, examining the creative styles of European composers and others, all of which are written in Albanian by Albanian authors.

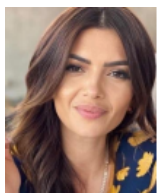
It is important to note that since the war of 1999, there has been a noticeable increase in awareness, and individuals have created a space for sharing material and memories. More personal libraries and archives have been opened, enriching the body of literature with publications on musical scores (works of composers). Furthermore, the increasing demand from universities for scientific papers in indexed journals has led to a shift, emphasizing research and publication as an obligation.

This transformation marks a significant change in the way musicology and the study of art music are being approached in Kosovo. Such efforts will continue to shape the development of this field and will undoubtedly enrich the ongoing scholarly discourse, particularly in the context of the evolving cultural memory of Kosovo's music history.

Conclusion

As this article concludes, the development of art music in Kosovo has been significantly hindered by a number of challenges, including political instability, lack of institutional support, and the absence of a dedicated musicology department at the University of Pristina. These factors have contributed to the limited academic research on the origins and evolution of Kosovo's art music. Kosovo has yet to develop a comprehensive corpus of musicological literature, which remains a critical gap in understanding the full scope of its musical heritage. Despite these setbacks, several individuals and composers, most notably Engjëll Berisha, have made significant contributions to the preservation and promotion of Kosovo's art music. His writings, along with the works of other important composers such as Zeqirja Ballata and Rafet Rudi, have provided essential insights into the stylistic and historical development of the local music. Furthermore, while the publishing sector is underdeveloped, music festivals and public debates have served as platforms for the exchange of ideas, albeit limited in scope. The future of musicology and art music in Kosovo depends on the joint efforts of academics, institutions, and policy makers to address these gaps. There is an urgent need to create and support avenues for research, publication and wider recognition of local music. Strengthening the academic framework, especially through the establishment of a dedicated musicology department, would be an important step towards creating a more vibrant and well-documented musical culture in Kosovo and ensure that the rich history of art music is preserved for future generations.

Biodata od Authors



Prof. assist. Dr. sc., **Rreze Kryeziu - Breznica** is a musicologist. Her academic and research work is mainly focused on Albanian and Balkan music. Kryeziu - Breznica was born in Prishtina (1986) where he took her first piano lessons in the elementary music school while in secondary education, she attended lessons in music theory. Rreze graduated from the University with distinguished success at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Prishtina (Kosovo) in the direction of Musicology in the class of musicologist and veteran of music education in Kosovo, Prof. Engjëll Berisha. The Department of Musicology was closed after Kryeziu – Breznica graduated, making her the sole heiress of E. Berisha's class and the

school of Albanian musicology in Kosovo. At the same time, she attended studies in the direction of Music Pedagogy at the same Institution of Higher Education. Rreze continued her studies at the 'master' level (Musicology) at the Faculty of Music at the University "Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje (Macedonia), in the class of Prof. Stefanija Leskova - Zelenkovska. She completed her doctorate at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Philosophy at the University of Bern (Switzerland) with mentor Prof. Britta Sweers. As one of the most active personalities in the classical / artistic music scene of Kosovo, Kryeziu - Breznica is the initiator and bearer of many cultural activities, conferences and musicological tables and musical events in Kosovo. She is the general director of the International Music Festival "DAM" and secretary of the Association of Composers of Kosovo and co-founder of the Balkan Composers Competition in Prishtina (BCCP). Kryeziu-Breznica has undertaken a recent initiative to reinvigorate and optimize the publishing sector within the Association of Composers of Kosovo. As part of this effort, there has been a notable focus on the release of publications that showcase the musical talents and creations of local composers. Specifically, her latest research resulted with three publications. These publications are characterized by the inclusion of cyclical songs and chamber compositions, offering a diverse and comprehensive representation of the creative output within the local composition community. This strategic move not only highlights the commitment to fostering and promoting the rich musical landscape of Kosovo but also serves as a testament to the ongoing efforts to document and disseminate the artistic achievements of the region's composers. Since 2009 he has been teaching "History of World and Albanian Music" at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Prishtina. Kryeziu – Breznica has done valuable work in compiling the Biographical Dictionary of Women Composers in Kosovo (2017) while four of her publications are "Monografi – Reshat Randobrava", "Goca e Kaçanikut" and "The History of Art Music of Albanians in Kosovo", "Mes dashurisë dhe kërkësive për muzikën".

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Research Article

Analysis of Lorenc Antoni from a musicological perspective

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Abstract

Among the many creators whose works hold significant value in musicological studies, Lorenc Antoni (1909, Skopje – 1991, Pristina) stands out as a revered and enduring figure in our collective memory. As one delves deeper into his oeuvre, it becomes evident that his work represents a rich musical spectrum, intertwining diverse elements from the complex world of music. Antoni, a man of broad intellectual culture, was a dedicated educator, composer, conductor, musicologist, and tireless ethnomusicologist. His unwavering passion and perseverance were instrumental in developing a profound and authentic musical culture. He understood the mission of the artist as an active engagement in elevating artistic consciousness and shaping cultural reality, striving to preserve the impressions, experiences, and values of the past and present for the future. His legacy is a treasure, a cultural heritage that serves not only his name and family but also instrumentalists, singers, choirs, orchestras, conductors, educators, musicologists, Albanologists, folklore researchers – indeed, anyone interested in identity and the Albanian ethnocultural world, as well as in musical culture at large. Ultimately, a sense of collective ownership and shared values is a hallmark of a cultivated society. Thus, this paper seeks to honor with profound respect and affection the work of this exceptional artist, with particular focus on his ethnomusicological contributions, aiming to elucidate not only his role within the context of his time but also the enduring impact he has left on generations to follow.

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Introduction

To speak today about the course of Kosovo music in the 20th century – especially the scientific developments in the field of ethnomusicology – without mentioning Lorenc Antoni would be more than an oversight; it would be an injustice. The history of Albanian music would remain incomplete without the name of this pedagogue, cultural organizer, and leader of numerous initiatives, actions, and institutions. Anyone aiming to study Albanian musical folklore must inevitably consult the works of Lorenc Antoni – otherwise, their efforts risk being branded as academically superficial or even scientifically amateurish.



Photo 1. Lorenc Antoni (Web1)

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Recognizing the fact that the cultural significance of an individual's activity depends not only on the quality of the results achieved but also on the positive influence exerted during the cultural development of a specific time, it becomes evident that Lorenc Antoni's scientific, research, and cultural contributions are both broad and profoundly impactful.

The results of his many years of dedicated work represent a high level of achievement in the field of folk music studies – not only in his immediate environment but also across all Albanian – speaking regions. For this reason, Antoni rightfully earns his place among the most distinguished ethnomusicologists, alongside names such as Kostandin Trako (1919–1986), Ramadan Sokoli (1920–2008), Beniamin Kruta (1940–1994), Pirro Miso (1942–), Ramazan Bogdani (1943–), Spiro Shituni (1951–2021), and Sokol Shupo (1954–), among others.

Place of Birth

Lorenc Antoni was born on September 23, 1909, in Skopje – a city marked by a multiethnic, multiconfessional, and multicultural environment. During that period, Skopje was considered a central hub of social, political, economic, and military developments – a city of strategic interest to the Ottoman Empire. It was a place where trade and craftsmanship flourished daily, particularly in leatherwork, weaponry, and silversmithing.

As noted by historians, “Austro–Hungarian goods and capital arriving from the direction of Shkodra, alongside Anglo – French and even Italian imports coming from Thessaloniki, in mutual competition to dominate the Balkan markets, created a favorable moment for the economic growth of Skopje.” (Verli, 2018) This dynamic commercial atmosphere inevitably contributed to the development of the city's infrastructure and, more broadly, to the flourishing of its cultural life.

Family Background

His family, primarily engaged in the craft of silversmithing, was also widely recognized for its valuable contribution to the preservation and cultivation of cultural values. Music in the Antoni household – described as “a daily, monthly, and yearly presence” (Koci, 2008, p. 80), was an essential element of family life and gave young Lanku² both strength and purpose. Thus, the greatest inspiration for finding the right path toward becoming a complete musician came from his parents. From his father, Gjon – a singer and clarinetist – he inherited a deep love for music theory, harmony, orchestration, and the vibrant, limitless world of music. From his mother, Leze, he absorbed a keen curiosity for the lyrics and thematic content of folk songs – an early influence that would later shape his ethnomusicological orientation.³ From his grandmother Maria⁴ (his mother's mother), he learned not only songs from various genres, but also numerous folktales, proverbs, humorous rhymes (*kashelasha*), and other forms of oral creativity. This early exposure to the richness of oral tradition deeply influenced his later dedication to the collection, study, and preservation of Albanian folk heritage. (Antoni, 1982) She was a world unto herself – a living encyclopedia, an inexhaustible source of folklore. Her presence and storytelling left an indelible mark on young Lorenc, nurturing his imagination and shaping his lifelong commitment to the cultural treasures of the Albanian oral tradition.

Education

He completed his primary and secondary education in Skopje, which during that period – thanks to the activities of the Catholic Church (considered a highly organized institution) – was a center of Albanian intellectual life, a cradle of knowledge and culture, and a crossroads of political events. The Catholic Church played a key role in preserving identity – not only religious and cultural, but also national. In this “nursery” of values, various activities took place, not only religious but also educational, social, political, and cultural in nature.

By participating in these activities, Lorenc Antoni acquired not only profound knowledge and valuable experience, but also self – confidence, creative energy, and a firm belief that learning is a lifelong process. Deeply devoted to music

² **Lanku** was the affectionate childhood nickname of little Lorenc Antoni—a tender name used by his family and those close to him, reflecting the warmth and intimacy of his early upbringing.

³ Thus, his mother – whose full name was Terezia but was affectionately called **Leze** – played a vital role in shaping his sensitivity to the lyrical and narrative dimensions of folk music, nurturing in him a deep appreciation for the emotional and cultural depth of traditional song.

⁴ Maria was the sister of the father of Gonxhe Bojaxhiu (Mother Teresa).

– an art to which he surrendered unconditionally – he began to attend private lessons, sparing neither time, nor money, nor effort.

Conducting Activity

The first musical activity that Lorenc Antoni began to engage in, starting in 1927, was conducting. His initial steps in this field were taken with the cultural society of the Albanian – language elementary school, established in 1919 within the Catholic Church in Skopje. He continued his work as a conductor when this society was later joined by a high school student choir, forming a mixed choir.

In the following years, Lorenc conducted the tamburitza orchestra of the Skopje Technical High School and the mandolin orchestra of the Scout Association, and for a brief period, also led the male choir of the trade union organization.

With the outbreak of World War II, the Antoni family was forced to relocate, initially to Ferizaj, where he led the choir of the local elementary school. In 1942, after a short stay in Pristina, they moved to Prizren, where among other roles, he served as the conductor of the city choir. Immediately after the war and until 1956, he intensively led the choir of the “Agimi” Cultural Society, performing around 420 concerts throughout various regions of the former Yugoslavia.

In Prizren, during the years 1948 and 1949, he also conducted the “Budućnost” choir (in Serbo–Croatian). From the late 1950s to the early 1980s, he worked as a folk music editor at Radio Prishtina, where he also led the institution's choir for a significant period. In addition to the Radio Prishtina Choir, he also conducted the mixed choir of the Cultural – Artistic Society “Radnički” (in Serbo–Croatian) for one year.

Every one of his appearances with the ensembles of the time was filled with optimism, enthusiasm, love, and deep emotion. His professionalism, presence, and authority earned the obedience not only of the choir and orchestra, but also of the audience. It is particularly important to note that: *“Lorenc Antoni enjoyed great authority and respect even in international circles... Everyone admired, respected, and consulted him with special reverence, wherever he appeared...”* (Krasniqi, 2009)

Pedagogical Activity

Lorenc Antoni's pedagogical activity is rich, well-known, and highly regarded throughout the Albanian – speaking world, holding a significant place in the educational heritage of Albanian music instruction and pedagogical organization.

Despite difficult circumstances – including lack of literature, space, musical instruments, and professional support – Lorenc Antoni consistently strove to provide students with knowledge both in theory and practice, across scientific and artistic, traditional and contemporary dimensions. His teaching addressed all essential aspects, such as: the fundamental distinguishing features of traditional vocal and instrumental music, its main expressive means, prominent musical styles, characteristic genres, shared and distinct elements, as well as interactions between Gheg and Tosk traditions, rural and urban music, and cultural bridges with the traditional or professional music of neighboring peoples.

At different stages, he worked in the elementary school of Ferizaj, later in the high school of Prishtina, and subsequently in the secondary music school of Prizren. However, it must be emphasized that his teaching and pedagogical advice extended well beyond formal institutional settings – whenever needed – even while serving as a choir or orchestra conductor, ensemble leader, music editor, composer, professional collaborator, advisor, researcher... and as a dedicated citizen.

It is particularly important to highlight that throughout his devoted pedagogical work, Professor Antoni transmitted to his students, with great love, all the theoretical, practical, and aesthetic dimensions related to the evolution of music in general – and Albanian music in particular – awakening and cultivating their musical consciousness.

Creative and Publicistic Activity

As a creator, an intellectual, and a man “with a strategic discourse in the pursuit of professional goals,” his multidimensional reflections can also be described as an unrealized vision – precisely because the intellectual of that time was constantly confronted by ignorance and the ignorant who surrounded him and repeatedly obstructed the realization

of noble goals. Despite this, through the beauty of his art, he aimed to promote true humanism. (Koci, Vibracione të shpirtit shqiptar - Lorenc Antoni, ky bard i muzikës shqiptare dhe misioni i tij reformues e krijues, 2008, p. 83) Unfortunately, however, *“the relationship between society, the composer, and the musical work is still not as fair or as mutually understanding as it ought to be.”* (Sakač, 1980)

In addition to the many challenges he faced in his noble efforts to organize musical life, he was also confronted with a severe lack of musical literature and a significant gap in choral and instrumental scores – especially in the Albanian language – which would have been essential to his work with various ensembles and musical formations. Despite the countless obstacles he encountered, this erudite creator managed to place thousands upon thousands of notes onto the staff, composing a total of 93 musical works in various forms.

Lorenc Antoni began composing at the age of 17, during the time he was conducting a choir in Skopje. *“A short time after starting my work as a conductor, the idea and desire to compose musical works was born within me. My wish to pursue this idea was further inspired by the beautiful voice of Gonxhe, who would later be known as Mother Teresa, and who was the best singer in the choir in Skopje. By a stroke of luck, I also came across a book of poems by Hil Mosi. Among them, the poem ‘By the Lake’ left a deep impression on me. It truly reflected my innermost feelings. Enthusiastic and inspired by this poem, I quickly composed the music for it in early January 1927. I managed to successfully imitate the waves of the lake and the wind, especially, through the use of sound. This song was performed by the sisters Age and Gonxhe Bojaxhiu in Skopje on March 25, 1928. It was very well received by the audience and was repeated on April 8. This success encouraged and motivated me to continue my musical creativity.”* (Antoni, Dëshirën për komponim ma ngjalli zëri i bukur i Gonxhe Bojaxhiut, 1984) From this period emerged the first compositions of Lorenc Antoni, which were vocal songs. During this initial phase – lasting until the establishment of the cultural society *“Agimi”* – Antoni composed several monophonic songs, which were performed during the events of the Catholic youth in Skopje. He also harmonized a number of folk songs that were sung by choirs in Skopje, and later by choirs in Ferizaj and Prizren during World War II. Among his instrumental works from this period are *“Andante of Longing”* for tamburitza orchestra, and a harmonization of a piece by Franz Neruda. (Bejtullahu, Një jetë në muzikë - Lorenc Antoni dhe trashëgimia e tij muzikore, 2010, p. 143) His creative work reached significant achievements, particularly during his time with the *“Agimi”* Cultural Society in Prizren.

At the foundation of Lorenc Antoni’s creative work lie the beautiful motifs of the inexhaustible folk tradition. Antoni himself acknowledged that there is a significant distinction between the rich Albanian folk music and the European art music tradition; therefore, music based on classical elements should be introduced to the people in a gradual manner. *“The works of Lorenc Antoni do not belong to the forms and genres of the European musical tradition; rather, they emerge from the very substance of folk music.”* (Berisha, 1989, p. 192)

The first two collections of choral songs for mixed choir – *“Albanian Choirs”*⁵ (1957) and *“Echoes of the Heart”*⁶ (1958) – which include songs composed between 1945 and 1960, represent a highly important step forward, as they are works in which folk motifs are treated with professional musical approach. *“The traditional and professional musical culture of a nation, people, or ethnic group constitutes a key factor in its very existence.”* (Loli, 2014)

In 1961, the choral suite *“Opojanja”*⁷ was published, followed ten years later by the collection of choral songs for mixed choir titled *“Three Songs from Opoja.”*⁸

In Lorenc Antoni’s creative opus, a special place is also held by his compositions for children’s choir, such as *“The Sparrows of Kosovo”* and *“A Defeated Crab”*, works that include humorous elements as well.

⁵ This collection includes four compositions for mixed choir: “Mirë mbrema” (Good Evening), “Kanga e Rexhës” (Rexha’s Song), “Shkojti çika” (The Girl Has Gone), and “Hajde dalim kah pazari” (Let’s Go Out to the Market).

⁶ This collection includes six compositions for mixed choir: “Çorapet e burrit” (The Husband’s Socks), “Hasimja trime” (Brave Hasimja), “Lan vasha” (The Maiden Bathed), “Na ka dalë nusja e mirë” (The Good Bride Has Come Out), “Po vijnë krushqit maleve” (The Wedding Guests Are Coming Through the Mountains), and “Ç’janë këta krushq që vijnë” (Who Are These Wedding Guests That Are Arriving?).

⁷ This suite includes five songs for mixed choir: “Sugare” (Mother’s Little Girl), “Piki molla e kuqe” (The Red Apple Fell), “E morën Fatimen” (They Took Fatime), “Gji ma paske ballin” (Your Forehead Is Mine), dhe “Ka ra dilli” (The Sun Has Risen). These compositions are connected in the form of a suite, meaning the final section of one piece flows directly into the beginning of the next.

⁸ “Ani çilma derën” (Please, Open the Door), “Oj lulija jonë” (Oh, Our Flower), and “O lum e lum” (Oh Joy, Oh Joy)..

Together with Vinçenc Gjini, he co – authored a sacred music collection titled “*Book of Choral Church Songs*”, which was published in 1994.

Antoni also distinguished himself in the field of vocal – instrumental compositions. For example, the songs “*Under a Mountain*” (*Nën një mal*) and “*Wedding Dance and Song*” (*Valle e këngë dasme*), interpreted by the great Nexhmije Pagarusha and broadcast for many years on Radio Prishtina, left an indelible mark on the memory of many lovers of refined music.

In 1975, the collection “*Five Musical Works*” was published, which includes the instrumental pieces: “*Albanian Rhapsody No. 1*”, “*The Highlander Woman*” (*Malësorja*), “*In Old Prizren*” (*Në Prizrenin e vjetër*), “*The Good Bride Has Come Out*” (*Na ka dalë nusja e mirë*), and “*Wedding Dance and Song*” (*Valle e këngë dasme*).

It is worth noting that Antoni also composed other works for mandolin and tamburitza orchestras; however, when it comes to his instrumental creations, it must be emphasized that they all stand in the shadow of “*In Old Prizren*”, in terms of aesthetic and artistic value.

All of his works are the manifestation of a specific inner emotional state, shaped by Antoni’s life itself – a life full of events, memories, disappointments, joys, innovations, activities, and struggles, which ultimately brought the composer significant success and artistic achievement.

Ethnomusicological Activity

From an early age, Lorenc Antoni was convinced that Albanian folk music represents a treasure of exceptional value and importance – a vast and richly diverse heritage in both content and form, in quality and genre, in color and melody, in meter and harmony. To explore its essence, its mysteries and unknowns, he understood that courage, knowledge, and deep dedication were essential.⁹ Thanks to his determination and tireless work, researcher Lorenc Antoni succeeded in shedding light on a field that, until then, had remained almost entirely unexplored among Albanians. With undeniable passion and dedication, he set out to collect, process, transcribe (melograph), and archive a rich and diverse body of ethnomusicological material from various Albanian regions – creating a precious cultural heritage of great value for future generations. It is with this bard, this cultural giant, that the first scholarly studies in the field of Albanian ethnomusicology begin.

Between 1956 and 1977, he published seven volumes under the title “*Albanian Musical Folklore*”, in which he transcribed approximately 800 songs into musical notation. “In 1956, he published the first volume, which included 105 folk songs from Skopje, Ferizaj, Prizren, and Gjakova. The second volume, published in 1961, contained 106 songs, most of which were collected during a research expedition in Opoja and the Ulqin region. The third volume (1964) brought 110 songs, the majority of which were gathered in Macedonia (Skopje, Tetova, Gostivar, Kërçova, Dibra, Struga, Prespa, Kumanova). The fourth volume was published in 1970 and presented 112 songs collected over different periods, most from the Dardana region. The fifth volume (1972) included 122 songs from various periods and Albanian territories. The final two volumes were published in 1974 and 1977. In the sixth volume, 122 songs were presented, including several polyphonic, heterophonic, and bifonic (two – voiced) songs. The seventh volume brought together 93 songs from different regions, structured similarly to the previous volume.” (Bejtullahu, Një jetë në muzikë - Lorenc Antoni dhe trashëgimia e tij muzikore, 2010, pp. 138-139) Through the notation and publication of these volumes, the distortion, misinterpretation, or disappearance of a highly significant sphere of the spiritual heritage of Albanians in the former Yugoslavia has been effectively prevented. The value of these volumes has also been acknowledged by Croatian ethnomusicologist Dunja Rihtman – Šotrić, who emphasized that, through the publication of Mr. Antoni’s collections, “*we have been given the opportunity to closely become acquainted with the musical creativity of the Albanian people.*” (Shotriq, 1972, p. 215)

“The recording and magnetophone registration of a large number of our folk songs, and their transcription by Lorenc Antoni some 70–80 years ago, constitutes not only a valuable testimony to a vital tradition, but also a powerful indication that – despite external influences, changes, and modifications linked to the everyday life of our people – it

⁹ Lorenc Antoni understood that a good ethnomusicologist must, above all, be a great scholar, as the role involves extensive contact with various layers of society, with different dialects, customs, rituals, traditions, and temperaments.

has succeeded in preserving its original forms, traditional singing styles, and many other distinctive and authentic elements, both in rural areas and in the urban musical tradition. Through their recording and documentation, these songs have been granted a form of immortality – as living forms that, at any time, can be interpreted in their original shape, just as transcribed by the author of these collections. Moreover, they can serve as material for compositional creativity in so – called serious music, or as a foundation for various comparative studies.” (Sheholli, 2011, pp. 11-13)

These collections include songs of various types and genres, forms and styles—songs that belong to both the old and the new musical traditions. Some are intended for entertainment purposes, while others serve ritual, practical, and functional roles. As noted by the renowned German ethnomusicologist Fritz Bose: *“While for us music is art (a means of entertainment), for the majority of the world’s peoples it is much more than that – it is a magical release in relation to cosmic laws, a vehicle for ethical norms, and an inseparable part of human life.”* (Bose, Etnomuzikologjia (Përkthyer nga Bekim Ramadani), 2019, p. 47)

“Folk songs are indicators of a people’s intellectual development and a mirror of their life. Through songs, the people pour out their emotions and immortalize their lives with the heroism and deeds of the past. In them, they find spiritual nourishment and entertainment; thus, in sorrow and in joy, at weddings and dances, during the harvest and grape gathering, while embroidering and spinning, in the fields and in the mountains, songs flow abundantly as if from a rich spring. Therefore, it can rightly be said that the people are an eternal and great singer.” (Miladinov, 2012, p. 15) From the heart of the people emerged Lorenc Antoni, whose portrait reflects not only the concerns of his people, the issues of his time, the fate of his contemporaries, their sorrows, sufferings, virtues, and joys – but also the inspiring call to elevate the cultural consciousness of future generations. As the renowned Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky once said: “Every work of art is a child of its time and, often, the mother of our emotions.”

Conclusion

From what has been presented thus far, we may conclude that Lorenc Antoni dedicated his entire life to bringing to light the genuine values of Albanian art music. He was a pedagogue, ethnomusicologist, composer, conductor, organizer of musical life, tireless cultural worker, and a committed scholar who matched the scientific standards of his time. Despite some criticism that he followed the school of Miodrag Vasiljević rather than, for example, the research methodologies of M. Živković, Doris and Erich Stockmann, or Cvjetko Rihtman, Antoni’s work remains foundational and deeply respected in the field of Albanian musical scholarship.¹⁰

As a pedagogue, he succeeded in eliminating from the minds of his students expressions of irony, bitterness, distrust, and ignorance – awakening and nurturing in them a love for music, for folklore, and for diverse and authentic cultural values.

As an organizer of cultural life, he became the epicenter of a circle of talented activists, musicians, singers, and art enthusiasts.¹¹ (Minci, 2014)

As a founder of cultural institutions, he ensured that the activities conducted there reached a level where they became an integral part and an inseparable factor of the spiritual life of our people.

As a conductor, he laid the foundations for practical work that, for that time and those regions, was underdeveloped, if not completely unknown.

As a composer, he succeeded in presenting the characteristics and features of folk music in higher, more refined, more perfected, and more artistic forms – *“whether in harmonized, stylized, or arranged choral songs, or in vocal, vocal – instrumental, and orchestral compositions”* (Ballata, 1987, p. 68) – thus laying the groundwork for a new initiative, a creative and noble endeavor. As a composer, he also managed to radiate the virtue of a person who, with ease, beauty, and spontaneity, finds and establishes forms of cooperation with others, demonstrating that the ethical aspect is a value without which the creator, no matter how genuine, cannot gain the proper authority.

¹⁰ See more in Bahtir Sheholli’s paper, “On the Value and Importance of the ‘Albanian Musical Folklore’ Volumes by Lorenc Antoni”, Gjurmime albanologjike – Folklor dhe etnologji, 40-2010, Albanological Institute, Pristina, 2011.

¹¹ Singer Semahate Mashkulli, in an interview with journalist Fisnik Minci, recalls: “... there was no other activity or gathering place, except for ‘Agimi’, which brought together young people for songs and dances.”

As a scholar, he always kept in mind that subjectivism in science affirms prejudice, provokes undesired emotion, gesture, and thought, and compromises intellectual and scientific ethics in general. Therefore, he placed the truth above any personal interest, striving to competently and respectfully explore the values of our rich ethnocultural tradition.

Professor Lorenc Antoni harmoniously synthesized thought and practical action, becoming a distinguished humanist in the scientific and cultural development field. To find, discover, decipher, and understand is a titanic task; it is exhausting, laborious, but also a duty when it concerns a determined person with clear principles, foresight, and high ideals, as Lorenc Antoni was.

He traced, collected, clarified, systematized, and archived vast materials from the musical folklore of the Albanians in Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Kosovo, providing sufficient explanations and necessary formal and structural analyses.

Based on all of this, the conclusion is drawn that Lorenc Antoni is an unwavering pillar of Albanian musical culture and, not infrequently, an inspiration for enlightening purposes. Now, as the meaningful expression of the renowned Bohemian – Austrian composer and conductor Gustav Mahler (1860–1911) comes to mind: “Tradition is not the worship of ashes, but the preservation of fire,” I wholeheartedly declare that Lorenc Antoni is the eternal flame of Albanian ethnomusicological tradition, a fire from whose brilliance the minds of thousands of musicians, scholars, and folklore enthusiasts have been illuminated.

Biodata of Author



Dr. Bekim Ramadani was born in 1970 in the village of Orashje near Tetovo. He completed his primary and secondary education in his hometown. In 2001, he graduated from the Faculty of Music at the State University of Tetova. He earned his Master's degree in Musicology in Tirana in 2006 and completed his PhD in Ethnomusicology in Skopje in 2018. He works as a lecturer at the Faculty of Music, University of Tetova, where he teaches subjects related to folk music and music informatics.

For over two decades, he has also served as a music teacher at the “Kiril Pejçinoviç” Gymnasium in Tetovo, where he successfully led the school choir. As an active member and artistic leader of the folklore ensemble “Xheladin Zeqiri” in Tetovo, as well as co-founder of the group “Margaritarët,” he has contributed to the promotion and preservation of Albanian folk music both locally and internationally. His research focuses on the documentation, transcription, and analysis of Albanian traditional music, as well as the cultural role of music in contemporary society. He has presented at numerous academic conferences and published essays in scientific and cultural journals. He is the author, co-author, or translator of over 20 books in the fields of ethnomusicology, traditional music, and music education, contributing significantly to the preservation and transmission of Albanian musical folklore. **E-mail:** b_ramadani@yahoo.com **ORCID:** 0009-0007-6108-1851 **Affiliation:** Faculty of Music, University of Tetova, Tetovo, North Macedonia.

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Research Article

Migration songs and their sensibility as a social phenomenon in Kosovo

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Abstract

Migration has been an integral aspect of the lives of Kosovars. The reasons behind the widespread phenomenon of migration are multifaceted, with each factor holding significant importance. This study will explore and analyze three characteristic musical pieces that focus on the theme of migration, aiming to provide not only an analytical overview of these pieces of creation but also to convey the spiritual dimension they embody. It is this very dimension that renders these songs an authentic expression of the thoughts and emotions of the Kosovar people. These songs serve as a voice for its concerns rather than its tangible benefits. It was these songs that were instrumental in sustaining the painful anticipation of mothers, sisters, and women in the early last century. Furthermore, these songs act as a balm for the wounds that remain open for the Kosovar people even today. It is precisely these songs that flow from sources imbued with a remarkable sensitivity, akin to the magic of a legacy passed down through generations.

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Introduction

Migration has been an integral aspect of the lives of Kosovar people. The reasons behind the widespread phenomenon of migration are multifaceted, with each factor holding significant importance. Considering the specific circumstances and conditions of our society, it becomes evident that the leaving of Kosovars has not been a voluntary escape, but rather a forced exodus driven by certain social factors, primarily economic ones. This situation has turned migration into a tragedy for the entire society, with the primary characters of this drama being the members of Kosovar families.

In this context, the poignant and realistic framework is uniquely expressed through folk creations that, for an extended period, resonated more closely with people than anything else, often serving as a voice for their thoughts and aspirations.

The drama of migration is conveyed in the form of an artistic message that aligns with the issues and concerns faced by each human as an individual, family members, and society as a whole. With their genuine and relatable content, these songs come naturally and sincerely, devoid of exaggeration—a characteristic that accompanies many other themes of the folklore (Minga, 2006:79).

Migration due to economic reasons has profoundly impacted Kosovar society, as evidenced by the significant number of musical creations dedicated to this very theme. In light of the current situation, where many individuals have left the country to work and live abroad primarily for economic reasons, I would like to focus on these songs. They not only hold significant scholarly value as folkloric material but they also resonate with contemporary issues, revealing commonalities with the present time. Furthermore, these new perspectives do not merely reside within historical

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contexts or current realities; rather, by comparing them, they foster new avenues for thought and appreciation within the boundless realm of musical art.

Inspired by folk poetry, Ismail Kadare depicts a rural environment from that era imbued with romantic characteristics. He notably, inter alia, mentions: *“A great road that leads to migration. Along this road, he states, the men of the village depart, and news from the world arrives”* (Kadare, 2002:86). This simple piece of information transforms into a profound symbol; a symbol that, along with many others, is immortalized within the songs of migration.

How does folklore portray migration? What do the songs of migration reveal?

Migration has been uniquely addressed within traditional Kosovar songs. This theme has also been woven into our songs, reflecting the wound that has remained open in the battered body of the Kosovar nation for over a century. The people have sung about pain and sacrifice with remarkable eloquence, offering through songs a narrative that is both poignant and sublime, making this genre of social lyrics a missionary vehicle for recounting the struggles and sufferings of the Kosovar people.

Generally speaking, these songs are short creations, yet despite their consistent content, they evoke distinct emotional states through a concentrated use of artistic figures, melody, and authentic musical expressions. We encounter these elements at every turn: in songs of departure for migration, in songs of separated families, and in songs celebrating the return from migration. Such a division of events, which follow one another in distinct stages, takes on the characteristics of a ritual, which at every moment is marked by various elements and specific experiences.

The researcher Mikaela Minga, inter alia, states that *“in the migration songs, three main characters are more frequently encountered: the migrant, the mother, and the bride or maiden in specific portrayals”* (Minga, 2006: 81). The characters in migration songs employ various methods of expression, which differ from one song to another. The narrative, dialogue, and monologue are presented both in individualized forms and intertwined with one another, enriching the artistic expression and simultaneously creating an internal rhythm. This trio (the migrant, the mother, and the bride) mentioned earlier forms the core of the Kosovar family, constituting the focal point for all events depicted in these migration-themed songs. The anonymous creator communicates through these characters within this seemingly confined environment, yet managing to be complemented with numerous stylistic features, resulting in an original depiction and a natural expression.

In a general overview, folkloric creation represents a symbiosis where the aforementioned characteristics pertain solely to its literary aspect. However, this creation is basically a song, and as such, music constitutes another significant component of it.

When making a comparison, poetry, due to its inherent qualities, is more direct and communicates easier with the reader, while music appears more abstract, fostering a different kind of relationship with the audience.

Among the various migration songs we examined, we chose to analyze three specific songs in this study. Our aim is not only to provide an analytical perspective on these musical creations within the realm of social lyrics but also to convey the spiritual dimension they embody. It is precisely this dimension that renders these songs an authentic expression of the thoughts and feelings of the Kosovar people.

In the selected migration songs that we have chosen as a model, we encounter the realities of life, the struggles and suffering faced by migrants in their daily tasks, the hardships of living, and the deep longing for family members and for oneself. All three chosen pieces are characterized by an elegiac tone, where powerful feelings and emotions related to the theme of migration are vividly expressed through folkloric creation.

A perfect example of the direct transfer of poetic form into musical form, distinguished by their harmony, is the first selected piece, the Shkodra song *“Vaj, si kenka ba dyrnjaja”* with lyrics and music by Ndrek Vogli. All three stanzas of the song are based on the same melody.

Vaj, si kenka ba dyrnjaja

Lyrics and music: Ndrekë Vogli

Performed by: Ismet Peja

Vaj si kenka ba dyr njaja mos me

7
t'u ba me ken gjallë un o mje ri fu ka

13
ra ja pas kam ndo llun pa ik ballë

I	II	III
Vaj si kenka ba dyrnjaja Mos me t'u ba me ken gjallë Un, o'i mjeri, fukaraja Paskam ndollun-o pa ikballe.	Gjith prej hallit, prej sikletit M'u ba borxh me dalë me tretë Mora rrugat e gyrbetit, Selametin për m'e gjetë.	Rrugën mar me lot e lava Der sa mrrina jabanxhi, Zemra m'tha gjithmonë se kjava Qysh'i vogël-o der n'pleqni.

The musical form is directly connected to poetry, meaning that the melodic outline of the musical material aligns with the rhyme, incorporating slight variations that enhance the chromatic melodic formula with melancholic nuances. The A vocal phrases utilize the same melodic structure, cadencing in the dominant interval, while the B vocal phrases, constructed in the higher registers of vocal range, cadences in the tonic interval. *This harmonic analysis of the musical material is viewed from a more modal perspective rather than a tonal one, indicating that the cadential scheme of the final note (finalis) is regarded as the tonic, with the chromatic pentachord is positioned between the first and fifth degrees of the vocal range* (Shuteriqi, 1985:85).

Another selected musical example that also demonstrates a direct connection between poetic form and musical expression is the Shkodra song "*N'bash t'zamanit të djelmënisë*." The complete lyrics of the song consists of seven stanzas (Taipi, 1998:182-293), but it is noteworthy that in our celebratory settings, it is typically performed with three or four stanzas, depending on performing singers. For our analysis, we have chosen four stanzas from this migration song as performed by the singer Edi Furra. The interpretation of this song is characterized by profound feeling, where melancholic notes highlight the pain and longing associated with this deep wound in the Kosovar society.

Bash n'zaman të djelmënisë
 Originating from the city of Shkodra

Bash n'za man të djel më ni së

5 por sa mbu sha o nji zet vjet ko ka shkru prej

10 pe rën ni së me marr rru gën o për gur bet

I	II
N'bash t'zamanit të djelmënisë Për pa i mbushun 20 vjet Koka konë prej perendisë Me marrë rrugën për gurbet.	Ky gurbeti fort o i randë, Jabanxhi në dhe të hu'j Për pa njoft as hiq kërkend-e Një sahat më bahet një muj.
III	IV
U mundova gajret bana Mos me i shtu vetit siklet Der n'Triestë me shokët shkova E për mu o ilaq s'u gjet.	Dallëndyshe kah flut'roni Po ua la një porosi N'shehër timin kur kaloni Thu'ni ka vdekë qaj djal o i ri.

The selected musical material concerned addresses the theme of the loss of life experienced by migrants in foreign lands. Instances of death among migrants, attributed to various causes such as illnesses, challenging working conditions, and perilous journeys, are often intertwined with the typical experiences of jobs that do those who migrate. *This is one of the reasons that explain why songs about the loss of life among migrants frequently conclude with such themes, resonating even today as they evoke memories from the past* (Dibra, 2010:50). It is a well-recognized fact that songs often emerge from feelings of distress and sorrow. The loss of their sons, both historically and in contemporary times, is particularly profound, especially when it occurs while the migrant is away from home in migration.

Another musical example that naturally combines poetic form with musical expression is the song “*Kur prej teje u ndava*”, written and composed by the Gjakova artist Mazllom Mejzini, which exemplifies this harmony.

Kur prej teje u ndava

Lyrics by: Mazllom Mejzini

Composed by: Mazllom Mejzini

Kur prej te je u nda va qysh se në kur bet

5 Me gjithë se u lar go va a man një dash ni na mbet

I	II
Kur prej teje u ndava, Që për në kurbet, Megjithëse u largova aman, Një dashni na mbet.	Kur ti nga Gjakova, një letër ma çon, dhe unë një ta shkrova aman, ma nuk më harron.
III	IV
Kur erdhi pranvera, si stinë dëfrimtare, t'shikojsha kah dera aman si një arsimtare.	Por gjithnjë n'ty mendjen që e kam, lule lermë të vie aman, Bashkë me ty të jam.

The third musical example, selected through the focus on artistic figures, melody, and authentic musical expressions, induces a unique emotional state. The lyrics, melody, and carefully chosen musical expressions by the song's composer, Mazllom Mejzini, unfold in distinct stages, embodying the characteristics of a drama that conveys longing, worries, and the challenges faced by individuals living a life divided amidst.

Despite the passage of years, migration remains an integral aspect of Kosovar life and its sensitivities. The onset of a new and different life, marked by phenomena such as integration and adaptation to a different society, as well as the exploration of new cultures, customs, and traditions of another new country, are themes experienced by individuals who have undergone emigration, who consequently lead to specific emotional responses in them.

In conclusion of this paper, it can be asserted that the lyrics of migration songs, in their current application, largely preserve traditional artistic expression. These songs serve as a voice for its concerns rather than its tangible benefits. It was these songs that were instrumental in sustaining the painful anticipation of mothers, sisters, and women in the early last century. Furthermore, these songs act as a balm for the wounds that remain open for the Kosovar people even today. It is precisely these songs that flow from sources imbued with a remarkable sensitivity, akin to the magic of a legacy passed down through generations. When viewed in their entirety, migration songs not only depict a shared drama but, more importantly, they illustrate the individual struggles faced by each person who has endured the consequences and challenges of a life divided amidst.

Conclusion

In Kosovo music folklore, migration songs reflect the collective pain, work and emotional outlook of a people shaped by forced displacement. These Kosovo songs serve not only as a historical record but also as a powerful artistic expression

of loss, longing and strength in their cultural diversity. The lyrics of these songs, through simple yet profound lyrics and melodies, portray the roles of superiors who transmit personal and social trauma across generations. This study focuses on three traditional Kosovo migration songs: "Vaj, si kenka ba dyrnjaja" by Ndreke Vogli, "N'bash t'zamanit të djelmënisë" by Edi Furra and "Kur prej teje u ndava" by Mazllom Mejzini. Each song embodies emotional depth, cultural identity and personal migration narratives. As shown in this figure, migration pieces blend poetic and musical elements to give voice to those left behind and those who left. As a result, these Kosovar songs also provide emotional consolation to the lost cultural memory and the young Kosovar nation marked by constant separations and enduring hopes.

Biodata of Author



Dr. **Krenar Doli** was born in 1985 in Gjakova. He completed his primary and secondary education in his hometown. In 2007, he earned his bachelor's degree from the Academy of Arts in Tirana, Faculty of Music, Department of Musicology. In 2014, he completed his master's degree at the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Art Studies, Albanology Studies Center, specializing in Ethnomusicology within the Department of Ethnology-Folklore. In 2021, he obtained his PhD in Turkish Folklore from Hacı Bayram Veli University in Ankara. He currently works at the Albanology Institute in Pristina, in the Department of Folklore. His research interests include various musical practices in the Balkans and the multifaceted connections between music, art, and socio-cultural spheres. **E-mail:** krenar_doli@hotmail.com **ORCID:** 0000-0003-1506-6291i So far, he has published the following works:

Muzika në refleksitet e kohës, a selection of works, "Erpoprint," Gjakova, 2007.

Gjakova brenda muzikës, monograph, "Erpoprint," Gjakova, 2010.

Dasma në qytetin e Gjakovës, monograph, Albanology Institute, Pristina, 2015.

Tradita e muzikës sufiste në Kosovë, monograph, Albanology Institute, Pristina, 2022.

Critical Observations from Ethnomusicology, a selection of works in English, Eliva Press, Moldova, 2023.

Gjurmë të Qamilit të Vogël në muzikë, monograph, Artini, Pristina, 2024. Affiliation: Institute of Albanology of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo

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Review Article

An analysis of Avni Mula in terms of his contributions to Kosovo folk music

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Abstract

This study aims to thoroughly examine Avni Mula's contributions to Kosovan folk music. Methodologically, the research adopts a qualitative approach. The study analyzes Mula's life, artistry, and contributions to music from a historical perspective, drawing on biographical data and artistic works. Information regarding Mula's musical career—including his roles as a singer and composer—and his influence on the Kosovan folk music repertoire is explored in detail. The research is based on content analysis supported by literature review and historical documents. This methodological approach focuses on understanding Mula's musical aesthetics, his fusion of folk music with professional artistry, and the cultural significance of his works. Furthermore, data obtained from interviews and music critiques regarding his influence are used to assess his contributions more comprehensively. The findings aim to reveal Mula's lasting impact on folk music and his musical legacy. This method seeks to provide an in-depth analysis of both his singing and compositional careers. Mula's works modernize folk music by drawing inspiration from daily life and blending it with art. By establishing a strong connection between folk traditions and musical art, Mula made significant contributions to the preservation and enrichment of cultural heritage through music.

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Introduction

Avni Mula is a complex figure who embodies both interpretive and creative qualities at the highest level. Born in 1928 in the city of Gjakova, Kosovo, and raised first in Shkodër and later in Tirana, Mula always identified as a Kosovar, leaving a lasting mark on the music scene with his voice and artistic spirit, making significant contributions throughout his life. His artistic profile began to take shape in the cultural and artistic city of Shkodër, where the first encouragement toward music came from Shkodër-born composer Prenkë Jakova.

In 1947, he moved to Tirana and started working with the Popular Army Ensemble. In 1952, he was admitted to the P.I. Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow, where he was trained as a lyric singer. During his time in Moscow, he also began performing in concerts, and during one major event, he sang Simon Gjoni's famous song "Luleborë." This performance received much admiration and interest from the audience at the time.

After returning to his homeland, Mula became a baritone soloist at the National Theatre of Opera and Ballet (TOB) and also worked with the Folk Songs and Dances Ensemble. He performed with great success in many important roles, such as Rigoletto in Verdi's *Rigoletto*, Figaro in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*, and Gjeta in P. Jakova's *Mrika*.

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Photo 1. Avni Mula (Gjakovapress, 2025)

Avni Mula's career as a singer expanded further when he began composing. In the 1960s, he participated in a radio song festival for the first time with his piece "Këndoj." His compositions include vocal works, ballads, cantatas, poems, suites, stage works, and choreographic tableaux. He also composed operettas, with *The Carnival of Korça* being his most well-known. He produced significant works in ballet and opera as well, such as the ballet *Vajzat e Malësisë* (The Highland Girls) and the three-act opera *Borana*.

Special attention should be given to Mula's creative works written for the Folk Songs and Dances Ensemble. Some of these include:

- *Bareshat e gëzuara* (Joyful Shepherdesses – a choral couple's dance),
- *Valle festive* (Festival Dance with Choir),
- *Valle me motive kosovare* (Dance with Kosovar Motifs),
- *Valle myzeqare* (Dance with Myzeqara Motifs),
- *Valle me motive tropojane* (Dance with Tropoja Motifs).

These works left a significant mark on the ensemble's repertoire and were staged with great artistry and professionalism by choreographers such as F. Shaqiri, P. Agolli, V. Istrefi, and K. Dervishi. As the titles suggest, all of these dances include choral elements; vocal music was always an essential part of his creations. These works often featured songs performed either independently or alongside dance, paralleling folk songs.

In addition to these, Mula also composed orchestral and film music, although his strongest creative expression was most evident in his songs. He composed over 1,000 songs for both children and adults. Some of his most well-known works include:

- *Valsi i lumturisë* (Waltz of Happiness)
- *Shqipëri o vendi im* (Albania, My Country)
- *Nënë moj do pres gërshetin* (Mother, I Will Wait for My Braid)
- *Trëndelinë* (Trendyli)

and many others that were highly praised by both the public and critics. A profound understanding and grasp of the essence of folk music from north to south enabled a professional blending of its vocal, orchestral, and stage works—especially the dances composed for the Ensemble—with the folk music tradition. Avni Mula successfully utilized the motifs of Kosovo and Tropoja and integrated the folklore of the Myzeqare region with the pentatonic structure of the Tosk region. In one of his early interviews, A. Mula stated:

"Creating art for the people is impossible without the support of the people; it is like building a castle without a foundation" (Millosi, 1978). He further added: "Understanding the life of the people, their rich folklore, is vital for an artist. One must listen to its phonetic, visual, and verbal folk music. I was lucky to closely follow the folklore festival in Gjirokastra. I discovered what an incredible teacher it was" (referring to the most impactful folklore festival held in 1978).

Mula's aesthetic understanding regarding drawing inspiration from folk music was expressed as follows: "[...] *It is not possible to understand folk music by listening to it just once. You must feel it, live it, and love it. You can find it among the people, with shepherds, by the hearth, at weddings, in songs, and festivals. That is where the people's table is. Furthermore, you must integrate what you discover into your artistic and aesthetic consciousness—not superficially, but in the details*" (Gërcaliu, 2007).

In one of the interviews, when Avni Mula was asked, “You have sung many songs, but which one affected you the most?” he answered: “I have many songs that were also performed by others. But I left it to my people to decide which one was the best for me. Because I sang them all the same way, I wrote them all with great love” (Gazeta, 2011).

In this context, Avni Mula shares the view of the esteemed musicologist Professor Albert Paparisto. Paparisto stated, “The first step in creating national music was the stylization, elaboration, or use of the melody of folk songs. The value of this type of work arises from composers’ creations enriched with technical knowledge and their ability to generate new emotions from old folk music material” (Paparisto, 1970).

One of Mula’s most successful songs, *Të verdhat kaçurrela*, deserves special emphasis. This song has (personally) earned the title of a folk song. Furthermore, in Mustafa Gërcaliu’s book *Midis dy dashurive*, it is stated: “In 1975, a festival titled ‘Cultured Folk Songs Festival’ was organized. Among 32 songs, Avni Mula’s song *Korrieri partizan* (known among the public as *Të verdhat kaçurrela*), with lyrics by Fatmir Gjata, won the first prize” (Gërcaliu, 1970).

Gërcaliu also discusses how the song spread among the public: “[...] *Those who sang this song, played it on the flute, or murmured the line ‘Të verdhat kaçurrela’, spread it orally [...] reaching as far as Kosovo and Macedonia*” (Gërcaliu, 1970).

This song was performed by Avni Mula and accompanied by the orchestra and mixed choir of the Ensemble of Popular Songs and Dances. Though the song is simple and comprehensible, it resonates fully with all its complexity. A brief analysis shows that the song is in E minor and begins with a thematic instrumental introduction by the orchestra, highlighting folk instruments, such as clarinet and violin, which are commonly found in our orchestras. After the first and second refrains, a choir is added, creating a march-like atmosphere. This structure transforms the song into a typical piece based on folk intonations, enriched with a dance rhythm—consistent with the composer’s well-known stylistic approach. The merging of classical structure with folk music intonations has made this song one of the most professionally crafted and successful works, best reflecting Mula’s aesthetic. It demonstrates that the source must intertwine with creative consciousness to produce a lasting work over time.

The timbre of Avni Mula’s baritone voice (Ballata, 2013) was both naturally and professionally cultivated, adding strength to the songs he created or performed. For this reason, the “perfect” harmony in his interpretations is clearly observed between creation and performance—an attribute often found in singer-songwriters. His powerful voice combines vocal range, clear diction, rich technique, and a full, resonant tone. However, the most striking aspect is Avni Mula’s ability to instantly internalize the emotional intensity required for either an operatic character role or the narrative of light popular songs. This quality stands out in both his vocal delivery and stage presence.

Conclusion

Avni Mula will undoubtedly remain in our memory not only for his extraordinary acting skills on the opera stage but also as a singer whose performance abilities were equally evident on the concert stage. His innate talent, combined with the professionalism he acquired over the years, enabled him to masterfully establish a connection between his vocal expression—as the primary instrument of the human voice—and his inner voice as a composer, embodying the essence of a truly versatile artist.

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, UAR.T. 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 Ekphonic 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 UAR.T. 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 UAR.T.

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Book Review

A review of the book: *Gjurmë të Qamilit të Vogël në muzikë* ('Traces of Little Kamil')

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Abstract

The city of Gjakova, beyond its historical, social, and economic significance, is renowned for a range of cultural characteristics recognized both nationally and internationally. Among these, the Gjakovar aheng—a musical tradition deeply rooted in the city's cultural memory—occupies a prominent place. Originating in ancient times, this tradition symbolizes the sanctification of life and reflects the citizens' devotion to preserving their cultural heritage across generations. The aheng tradition embodies a synthesis of various artistic expressions, combining folk singing with instrumental music, dance, popular games, blessings, rituals, and ceremonies. It may be understood as a form of folkloric theater, wherein these elements interact to generate a symbolic code shared and interpreted collectively by participants and performers. This monographic study aims to analyze and bring to light specific characteristics of one of the most iconic figures of Gjakova's musical heritage: Qamili i Vogël (Little Qamil), whose contributions remain integral to the identity and continuity of this cultural tradition.

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Book Title: Traces of Qamili i Vogël in Music

Author: Krenar Doli & Bestar Vula

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This monographic study focuses on a prominent figure in Albanian musical heritage, exploring multiple dimensions of his contributions:

- as a composer,
- as a performer,
- as a collector and preserver of Albanian musical traditions, and
- as a mentor and supporter of the younger generation.

The selected topic is considered both important and timely, as it addresses an area that has not been sufficiently covered in a comprehensive academic format, despite existing contributions from various authors. The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in a broad range of literature selected from the fields of Albanian urban music, ethnomusicology, and cultural studies. In addition to published and unpublished sources that have informed specific

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sections of this monograph, extensive fieldwork and empirical research were also conducted. This study would be incomplete and less credible without the direct contact and conversations held with numerous individuals who continue to contribute to the preservation, enrichment, and cultivation of authentic Albanian musical traditions.

The choice of research methodology is crucial to the success of any academic investigation, especially when addressing a complex topic such as this. Given the ethnomusicological nature of the research, a qualitative approach was the most appropriate. Ethnomusicological studies are inherently qualitative due to their methodological tools, such as observation, data collection through interviews (structured, semi-structured, and unstructured), and the use of photos, audio, and video recordings that are later analyzed in detail.

Fieldwork was conducted to collect relevant materials using several methods:

- interviews and conversations with selected participants,
- the use of questionnaires (developed in collaboration with the co-author),
- direct observation, including active engagement and follow-up questions with the interviewees.

Participants were selected according to criteria widely recognized in folkloristic studies, and particular care was taken in applying appropriate techniques and methods during fieldwork. Musical materials of interest were recorded using both audio recorders and video cameras, and notes were taken where possible. Questionnaires were also used to collect additional data based on the researcher's areas of inquiry.

This monographic study is organized into four main chapters, excluding the introduction, bibliography, and name index. Each chapter functions as a standalone unit, examining specific themes and issues, while collectively contributing to the overall structure and content of the research.

Chapter 1

The first chapter provides the historical background within which the aheng (traditional music gathering) of the city of Gjakova developed over the years. It highlights the role of the local nobility in establishing musical societies and introduces the earliest representatives of Gjakova's aheng. It also discusses the first musical instruments introduced into this tradition, the emotional and ideological content of the musical materials, notable composers, and the influence of musical traditions from other Albanian cities such as Berat, Elbasan, and Shkodër on the development of aheng in Gjakova.

Chapter 2

The second chapter focuses on the life and contributions of Qamil Muhaxhiri, presenting him as a composer, performer, collector, and promoter of new talents. This chapter is structured around four main areas:

- an overview of his original compositions,
- an analysis of the songs he performed,
- a review of 11 pieces of musical documentation written and compiled by him,
- an exploration of his role as a discoverer and supporter of emerging performers.

Chapter 3

In the third chapter, ten prominent national and international figures are selected to share their perspectives on Qamili i Vogël and his contributions to the preservation, enrichment, and cultivation of Albanian musical traditions across all Albanian-speaking regions.

Chapter 4

The fourth chapter presents the most significant events organized in memory and honor of the multifaceted figure of Qamili i Vogël, as well as a selection of songs performed by various artists as tributes to him.

Conclusion

This monographic study offers a significant contribution to the documentation and interpretation of Albanian urban musical heritage through the lens of Qamili i Vogël's multifaceted legacy. By analyzing historical developments, musical practices, and ethnomusicological data, the work not only sheds light on the evolution of aheng in Gjakova but also

preserves the memory of one of its most iconic figures. The methodological approach, combining fieldwork, interviews, and archival materials, adds depth and credibility to the study. Furthermore, the emphasis on Qamil Muhaxhiri's roles—as composer, performer, cultural transmitter, and mentor—reveals the broader cultural impact of his life and work. This study will be valuable to scholars in the fields of ethnomusicology, folklore, and Albanian cultural studies, as well as to music educators and practitioners aiming to understand the roots and relevance of traditional music in contemporary contexts. It is both a tribute and a resource for future research.

Biodata of Author



Dr. **Albin Sadiku** was born on March 10, 1974, in Bujanoc. He completed his primary education in his hometown and pursued his secondary music education in Prizren. He graduated from the Faculty of Music in Prishtina, specializing in General Music Pedagogy. He later earned a second degree in Ethnomusicology from the same faculty. He continued his postgraduate studies at the Faculty of Music in Tirana under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Vasil Tole. In June 2006, he was awarded the title of Master in Musicology. Since 2003, he has been working as a researcher at the Albanological Institute of Prishtina, in the Department of Folklore, Ethnomusicology Section. He has published scholarly articles in various journals across Kosovo, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, and other countries. On October 23, 2014, he defended his doctoral dissertation at the Center for Albanological Studies in Tirana. In 2017, he published the monographic study "The Art of Children's Singing in Bujanoc and Presheva: Play, Song, Lullaby." In 2020, he released another monograph titled "The Role, Function, and Use of the Šarkija in Kosovo." Most recently, in 2023, he published "Female Singing in Albanian Wedding Traditions in Bujanoc and Presheva."

Book Review

An analysis of the book by Aluŝ Nuŝ, one of the important composers in Kosovo Music titled *The Voice of Our Ancestors in the Balkans: Compositions of Aluŝ Nuŝ*

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Genc Bilge (Young Wise) Publishing, Isparta, Türkiye

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Abstract

Kosovo music is one of the world's most beautiful musical cultures, known for its uniqueness, diversity, and intercultural aspects. Aluŝ Nuŝ, who lives in the city of Prizren in Kosovo, is one of Kosovo's prominent musicians. His book titled *The Voice of Our Ancestors in the Balkans: Compositions of Aluŝ Nuŝ*, which includes his compositions written as a Turk, consists of seven sections (Songs, Folk Songs, Hymns, Rubaiyat, Melodies, Children's Songs, Last Songs). I present an analysis of this book, which contains all of his compositions.

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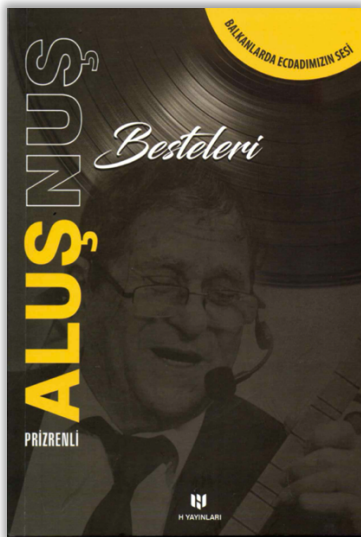
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Book Title: *The Voice of Our Ancestors in the Balkans: Compositions of Aluŝ Nuŝ*

Author: Aluŝ Nuŝ

ISBN: 978-605-7670-27-4

Publisher: H Publishing

Publication Place: İstanbul, Türkiye

Publication Date: 2020

Pages: 205

The author of the book, Aluŝ Nuŝ, in the introduction section, explains in detail how he started music in the region where he lived in Prizren (a city in Kosovo), his journey in this field, the establishment of the Balkan Turkish Music Association, and his subsequent work. The introduction ends with the following sentence:

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'Our goal is clear. Our goal is to apply Balkan Turkish Music to universal music, to move beyond the conventional forms and themes in Turkish music, and by addressing current societal issues, to promote and popularize our work in the Balkans, Turkey, and the Turkish World.'

Aluş Nuş, President of the Balkan Turkish Music Association, Prizren-Kosovo.

The book consists of seven sections:

First Section: Songs

In this section, the author provides the notes for 41 songs. Some of these songs describe Prizren, such as "Beautiful Prizren" and "Lillies Bloom in Prizren."

Second Section: Folk Songs

Here, the author presents the notes for 41 folk songs. Some well-known folk songs, such as "Nightingales in the Valley," are also included.

Third Section: Hymns

In this section, the author provides the notes for 11 hymns. Notable hymns include "Veysel Karani" and "Yunus Emre, You Are Everywhere."

Fourth Section: Rubaiyat

In this section, the author provides the notes for 11 rubaiyat. Beautiful works, such as "Usta Kamışlıkian," are featured.

Fifth Section: Melodies

This section features 16 melodies. One of the remarkable works is "Peace at Home, Peace in the World."

Sixth Section: Children's Songs

This section includes 12 children's songs, with works like "Nasrettin Hoca" being particularly noteworthy.

Seventh Section: Last Songs

In this section, the author provides the notes for 8 songs. "From the President's War to Balkan Peace" is one of the remarkable works.

Conclusion

Aluş Nuş, one of the significant figures of Kosovo music, has contributed greatly with his works as a result of his creative talent. This book, which explores his works, is considered to be an important source

References

Nuş, A. (2020). *Balkanlarda ecdadımızın sesi Aluş Nuş besteleri (the voice of our ancestors in the Balkans: compositions of Aluş Nuş)*. H Publishing

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