

## **REVIEW**

By Prof. Dr. Adrian Georgiev, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

On the dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree DOCTOR

on the topic

**Performing Works by Kosovo Composers at Festivals of Classical Music**

**(From 2000 to 2018)**

**By Ismet Bexheti**

Ismet Bexheti holds a Master's degree from the Department of Music Studies at the State University "Cyril and Methodius", Skopje, North Macedonia (2017), a Bachelor's degree from the Faculty of Musical Arts, AAB University, Prishtina (2010) and also a Bachelor's degree from the Department of Albanian Language and Literature, University of Prishtina (1988).

His professional experience is related to the Faculty of Musical Arts, AAB University, Prishtina, where he is a lecturer. Member of the Board of Directors of the Public Radio of Kosovo - RTK (2012-2018), Chairman of the Board of Directors of Radio and Television of Kosovo (2014-2017), he was Director and owner of Radio and Television "Zeri I Kumanoves", Kumanovo, North Macedonia

(1993-1998 r.)

The research in this dissertation aims to reflect on the presence of original works at classical music festivals in Kosovo. The research is based on a survey covering the period 2000-2018 of all classical music events organised in Kosovo. In addition to the historical description of the festivals, special attention is paid to the editions and forums in the period 2000-2018, the participation of composers, their categorisation by country, as well as their original works.

A quantitative method was used for the number of festivals, performers, composers and the inclusion of their works. Periodic statistics were used to process the data. For the characteristics of the programming concepts of the festivals and the types of musical works, the qualitative method was used, or the statements of the organisers of classical festivals in Kosovo.

Based on the research conducted from 2000 to 2018, it was found that there is enough space for works by Kosovo composers in classical music festivals in Kosovo. For better festival conditions and incentives for composers for new creative works, these festivals need more financial support from institutions, as well as the construction of a missing opera and ballet hall in the country.

According to Ismet Bexheti, the topic of this dissertation undoubtedly addresses an unexplored problem in Kosovo.

The focus of the research is primarily on the interrelationship between artists and performers, i.e. the interrelationship between the composer's musical work and performance activities, and the research focuses only on the performance of original works at classical music festivals. Particular attention is paid to the inclusion of Kosovar composers in these classical music festivals.

The dissertation comprises 158 pages, a bibliography of over 38 main sources and a sufficient number of additional sources - festival brochures and internet resources.

The abstract accurately reflects the content of the dissertation (which is only available in English).

The study focuses on two main concepts: 'works of composers' and 'music festivals in Kosovo'. The concept 'works of Kosovo composers' includes all types of music performed at music festivals in Kosovo during the period 2000-2018. The concept 'music festivals' includes only classical music festivals in Kosovo.

I have a comment on the notion of "art" music, although it is very likely that the translation into Bulgarian will leave out the contextual description of the musical material.

Chronologically, the author gives information about the beginning of musical life in Kosovo, which started after the Second World War. Professional musical life began with the opening of the first radio station in Prizren in 1945. All musical activities were concentrated around this institution. The symphony orchestra and the professional choir started to work within the framework of the radio-television, which made a great contribution to the stage events, festivals and concerts in Kosovo during this period. The period after 2000 was marked by the establishment of the Kosovo Philharmonic Orchestra and the beginning of concert life and festivals in the country,

with the first international chamber music festival being held in that year. This festival, called Kosova Kamer Fest, is still an annual event and has become a tradition. Later, other festivals such as ReMusica, DAM Festival and Piano Chopin Fest were added to the classical music festivals.

Ismet Bexheti defines the following goals and objectives - how the festival(s) influence the composers' work. Each of them has its own character, which makes it different from the others. The aim of this study is to highlight these specific areas and to examine the participation and influence of festivals on composers' work.

In order to achieve this goal, the author sets the following tasks to be successfully completed:

- Find information about festivals in Kosovo from 2000 to 2018;
- Evidence of musical works by national and foreign composers performed by participants in the festivals;
- Reflect the musical genres in the festivals and their categorisation; • Research the musical works of Kosovo composers in the festivals;
- Gathering opinions and attitudes of composers, performers and festival organisers on the inclusion, role, importance and future perspective of composers and festivals in Kosovo.
- Database

Based on the above-mentioned aim and objectives of the study, the main method is analytical. For the characteristics of the total number of events and the music represented in these events, a quantitative method will be used through descriptive statistics. For the characteristics of the concepts of the events and other parties related to the composers, we use the qualitative method (here I have some remarks that I will reflect on later). Ismet Veheti notes that he expects the following results from the study

- A complete overview of works performed at music festivals in Kosovo from 2000 to 2018.
- Presentation of Kosovo composers.
- Influence of the events on the works of Kosovo composers in the definition of musical genres.

- Gain knowledge about the perspective of festivals in Kosovo and Kosovo composers. □  
To create a database that can be used for similar research in the future.

An in-depth analysis of the work of composers in Kosovo and their participation in the festivals studied during the period. In my opinion, what is lacking is the so-called qualitative research, i.e. an overview of the musical production as well as the programmes of the festivals. There is, however, one other research tool that I believe is important, and that is interviews with some of the composers involved in the festival programmes. This would have provided clearer feedback for assessing the research problem and, not least, would have confirmed the research hypothesis (which, however, is not clearly defined).

Contributions of the thesis. In the presented dissertation, for the first time, the classical music festivals in Kosovo and the possibilities for the participation of works by Kosovo composers in the period of 2000-2018 are investigated. The sources of research are the archives of the festivals, both printed materials (published) and information on their official websites. The analysis of the collected information shows that there are significant differences in Kosovo's classical music before the mentioned period and after 2000, but there is also a continuation of traditions. The works of Kosovar composers traditionally occupy an important place, and the performance of such works is often obligatory within these events, even for artists and ensembles coming from outside Kosovo.

Since 2000, there has been an intensive expansion of leading international festivals of national culture (the subject of this study). The focus of the festivals analysed is on the promotion and presentation of works by Kosovo composers. The characteristics of the festivals are discussed in chronological order: the Kosovar KamerFest, ReMusica, the DAM Festival and the Chopin Piano Fest.

Over the years, there has been a tendency to introduce stylistic, technical and artistic innovations, but each festival has always maintained its own physiognomy. All the festivals, in addition to the performing activities, develop many non-performing activities that have an educational and informative function, which is more than necessary for Kosovo.

The quantitative and qualitative methods used (*here again I note that I have a different understanding of these radically opposed methods of empirical research*) to analyse the study confirm the hypothesis that classical music festivals in Kosovo are an important forum for the

presentation of works by Kosovar composers. The numerical index and the percentage of works by composers in general and Kosovo composers in particular, as well as by performers from 2011 to 2018, also support this thesis.

There are large differences between the festivals in terms of the inclusion of Kosovo composers in their programmes. In this respect, ReMusica clearly leads with 127 composers over the period, which means a very large space for Kosovo classical music and especially for the realisation of young composers. The ReMusica festival has performed the highest number of works by Kosovo composers - 135. At the DAM festival, the number of works by Kosovo composers was 72. At the Chopin Piano Festival only 19 works were performed, and at the Kosova KamerFest the number of works performed was even lower. It is clear from these data that the festivals (Kosova KamerFest, Chopin Piano Fest, DAM Festival and ReMusica) are trying to stick to their programming concept in terms of continuity, which is a motivation for Kosovar composers. The festivals support and commission new world premieres, which motivates composers of the younger generation in particular.

The thesis draws serious conclusions that are very important for the musical culture in Kosovo:

- The annual cooperation of the festivals with the Kosovo Philharmonic Orchestra (which has supported these festivals from the very beginning) as well as with the Kosovo Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra and Choir is not sufficient, which makes these festivals suitable mainly for chamber music. The reason for this is the lack of suitable halls, i.e. the lack of infrastructural conditions for the performance of larger and large-scale musical stage works - operas, ballets, etc. The institutions must start as soon as possible with the construction of an opera and ballet hall, which is lacking in Pristina, Kosovo.

- Financial support for classical music festivals comes mainly from the Ministry of Sports and Culture and the Municipality of Pristina (where all the festivals are held). There are inconsistencies or other bureaucratic reasons that sometimes jeopardise their implementation and necessitate budget cuts. There is a need to find a fair and secure way of providing support that will lead to stable funding and larger festivals. This will contribute to the improvement of their quality as well as to the motivation of Kosovo composers.

In view of the above, and despite some remarks and recommendations I made to Ismet Bedjeti, I confidently give my high evaluation to the dissertation and recommend to the esteemed scientific jury to award the degree of Doctor of Education and Science.

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Prof. Dr. Adrian Georgiev