

## **REVIEW**

**By Professor Dr. Momchil Lyubenov Georgiev**  
of the **National Academy of Music "Prof. Pancho Vladigerov"**  
professional field **8.3 "Music and Dance Art"**

for obtaining the scientific degree

**"Doctor in the professional field 8.3 "Music and Dance Art"**

**Candidate Ismet Bexheti**

**Thesis topic:**

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

**(From 2000 to 2018)**

**Pursuant to the order No. 3-RC-282/02.07.2024 of prof. Plamen Doynov,**

**Rector of New Bulgarian University**

**Research supervisor Prof. Dr. Milena Shushulova-Pavlova**

Ismet Bexheti holds a Master's Degree in Music Studies from the Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, North Macedonia (2017), and previously completed two Bachelor's Degrees - at the Faculty of Musical Arts at the AAB University in Pristina (2010) and at the Faculty of Albanian Language and Literature at the University of Pristina, Kosovo (1988). He is a lecturer at the AAB University in Prishtina since 2017 until now, served as a member of the Board of the Radio and Television of Kosovo (RTK) from 2012 to 2018 and was the Chairman of the same Board in 2014-2017. Between 1993 and 1998, he was the director and owner of Zeri I Kumanoves Radio and Television in Kumanovo, North Macedonia. He has participated in festivals, films, conferences and round tables; he has written articles, scientific reports and presentations; he is the author of the music of 110 and the lyrics of 120 songs in the popular genre and children's songs. Between 1990 and 2012 he has released eight CDs of popular folk songs and recorded 20 solo songs and duets; he has written the music for 4 documentary films and has been member of professional panels at numerous folk, popular and children's festivals and competitions.

The proposed dissertation contains a total of 150 pages, organised into an Introduction, three sections/chapters, with Conclusions and Contributions at the end. It contains 46 tables and 140 footnotes. A list of sources and references used is attached in 3 pages (in Albanian, Serbian, Romanian and English). The abstract consists of 23 pages of concise text.

All the essential points of the dissertation are presented compactly; it corresponds to the main points and contributions and I have no remarks to it.

From the point of view of the history of art and musicology in Kosovo, the **relevance of this study** is undeniable, **as such has not been done before**. The introduction sets the context and introduces us to the issues, not least by noting the reasons for the research and the author's interest in it (this interest is obviously a natural progression of his extensive musical and professional career). The background to the problem, the subject matter and methodologies of the research, its aim and objectives, and its significance **are stated and well explained**, along with the expected results.

**The first chapter (and otherwise the second section according to the numbering of the work), is dedicated to the composers of Kosovo** with a historical overview of the development of music in the country and its influence on the work of Kosovar composers. This is followed by sections dedicated to the pioneers of music in Kosovo and the second, third and fourth generations of Kosovar composers, as well as the youngest generation of the early twenty-first century, with examples of works in different musical styles by local composers.

The **next chapter** is about festivals in Kosovo, again with the necessary historical overview of musical life there, focusing mainly on two periods, 1990-1999 and 2000-2010. Next are discussed four significant festivals and one competition contributing to the performance of Kosovar composers: the *KamerFest* (together with the *Ar sKosova* youth music competition that is part of it), *ReMusica*, the *DAM* Festival and the *Chopin Piano Fest*. All festivals have interesting cuts through the prism of: international performers; local performers; collaborative performing as artistic interaction and exchange of experience; non-performance activities; foreign and Kosovar composers and works performed at the festival.

**Chapter Three** specifies the activities of the classical music festivals in the period 2011-2018 with an analysis of the results of each festival on an individual basis and finally with an

overall analysis for all festivals. Very precise statistics with absolute values in figures and percentages are made, and the quantitative characteristics of these analyses are presented in a tabular form.

Logically, the structure leads us to the conclusions, findings and contributions of the paper. Here it can be said that the tasks set at the beginning of the paper have been successfully accomplished and the following contributions should be highlighted:

1. The present dissertation is the first to examine the classical music festivals in Kosovo and the possibilities of including works by Kosovar composers in the period 2000-2018. The archives of the festivals were used as sources of research: both printed materials (published) and information on their official websites. Interviews with organisers (online or in official media), which festivals use to inform the public and market the events, were studied. Printed and electronic brochures about the festivals were collected and studied.

2. An analysis of the information collected shows that there are significant differences in the classical music of Kosovo before and after 2000, but also a continuation of traditions. The works of Kosovar composers have traditionally had 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 the leading international festivals of national cultural importance (the subject of this study). The focus of the festivals analysed is on the promotion and dissemination of works by Kosovo composers.

3. The particularities of the festivals are discussed in Kosovo KamerFest, ReMusica, DAM Festival and 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. In addition to the performing activities, all festivals develop many non-performing activities with an educational and informative function, which is more than necessary for Kosovo. The role of the youth competition is highlighted, which, by including obligatory Kosovo works, stimulates their creation and performance.

4. The quantitative and qualitative method used for the analysis of the study confirms the hypothesis that classical music festivals in Kosovo are an important forum for the presentation of works by Kosovo composers. The numerical index and the percentage of works by

composers in general and Kosovo composers in particular, as well as the performers from 2011 to 2018, also prove the thesis.

5. There are big differences between the festivals in terms of the inclusion of Kosovo composers in their programmes. In this respect, ReMusica clearly leads with 127 composers during 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.

6. It is clear from these data that the festivals (Kosova KamerFest, Chopin Piano Fest, DAM Festival and ReMusica) try to stick to their programming concept in terms of continuity, which is a motivation for Kosovar composers. In general, the festivals strongly support and commission new world premieres, which motivates composers of the younger generation in particular.

The thesis draws strong **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, making these festivals suitable primarily for chamber music. The reason for this is the lack of suitable venues, i.e. there are no infrastructural conditions for the performance of larger musical and theatrical works - operas, ballets and so on. The institutions must start as soon as possible with the construction of an opera and ballet hall, which is lacking in Pristina.

- Financial support for classical music festivals comes mainly from the Ministry of Sport 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 help to improve their quality, as well as increase the motivation of Kosovo composers.

**Conclusion** - The dissertation skilfully combines research and practical aspects in its set aims and objectives, demonstrating a high level of professional competence in the descriptive and research parts. The study meets the requirements for a dissertation, has significant contributions and shows that the candidate has in-depth knowledge and experience, being able to process and analyse a large volume of material.

In view of the above, I consider that the dissertation submitted to me justifies my confidently proposing to the Honourable Jury that **Ismet Bexheti** be awarded the educational and scientific degree of Doctor.

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