

REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. Borislav Alexandrov Yassenov

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By Order No. 3- RK-48 of 29.10.2024 of the Rector of New Bulgarian University, Sofia, I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury to provide a procedure for the defence of a dissertation entitled: "*The contemporary flute repertoire of the emerging Kosovar composers compared with the 21st century world composers*", for the purpose of obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor", in the field of higher education 8. Arts, professional field 8.3. Music and Dance Art, Doctoral Programme in Musicology and Music Art. The author of the dissertation is **Zane Abazi**, a PhD candidate at the Department of Music of the NBU in Sofia, with scientific supervisor **Prof. D. Yavor Konov** and academic advisor **Prof. Dr. Luisa Sello**. The set of materials provided to me includes the following documents: CV, dissertation, abstract, and list of concerts.

Zane Abazi commenced her flute studies at an early age. She completed her primary and secondary music education in Peja and Prishtina under the tutelage of Svejla Bruti- Zhuri. She subsequently graduated from the Hasan Prishtina University of Prishtina with a Bachelor's degree, where she was a student of Professor Venera Mehmetagaj, and later obtained a Master's degree under the supervision of Professor Eremira Çitaku. She has participated in master classes led by several distinguished flutists.

The Ph.D. candidate's artistic activity is notably prolific. She is a soloist with the Naonis Donatello Orchestra in Grado, Italy, the Sofia Symphony Orchestra in Bulgaria and the Kosovo Philharmonic Orchestra. Notably, she has performed as principal flute in the inaugural performances of *La Traviata* by Giuseppe Verdi and *The Apothecary*, an opera buffa by Joseph Haydn, marking her debut appearances with the Kosovo Philharmonic Orchestra. She is a member of the Kosovo Youth Orchestra, the European Summer Academy Orchestra and Le Agane, a flute ensemble based in Italy. Since 2021, she has been a member of the Agane ensemble. Abazi is the Principal Flutist of the Kosovo Opera and also serves as a substitute flutist for the Kosovo Philharmonic Orchestra. Her artistic versatility is further demonstrated by her participation in various musical projects, ranging from solo performances to chamber ensembles and orchestral engagements. She has participated in numerous festivals, including DAM Fest, Flute Sounds, Sofia

Music Weeks, and Orpheus International Music Academy, Chamberfest in Pristina, Skopje and Tirana, Computer Music Festival in Sofia, Campus Music Udine, Darte Festival, Balkan Composers Competition in Pristina and "Udine Castle Festival", Italy.

Please refer to the attached list of concert activities from 2022 to 2024, as well as a recording of B.'s works. These include Dubovci's "As You See Me" (2023) and the "W" trio for flutes (2022). The following aspects of the dissertant's pedagogical and scientific activity are worthy of particular note: The following lectures were delivered: two at the NBU, Sofia (2023) on "Advanced flute techniques in contemporary computer music" and "Advanced flute techniques" at the International Flute Competition "Moyses", and one at the Academy of Arts, Tirana, Albania, Freimont Festival (2024) on "New and advanced techniques in the flute repertoire"; and a masterclass in chamber music with students from the Prenk Jakova School of Music, Prishtina, Kosovo (2023).

Abazi's research demonstrates an affinity for innovations in the sound production of the flute in contemporary music, with an emphasis on the work of Kosovar composers. The performance practice that has emerged from this research is also evident. The research has focused on modern flute interpretation, analysing and promoting works by Kosovar composers of the 21st century.

In the first section, entitled "The Music Community in the 2000s in Kosovo and its Relationship to the Music Community in the World", the PhD candidate examines the social preconditions and phenomena in the music society in Kosovo and chronologically presents prominent figures in the emergence of classical music art in the country. Notable among these figures are the first-generation composers Lorenz Antoni, whose creativity is deeply connected to the musical heritage of Albania, and Rexho Mulliqi, a founding figure who significantly contributed to the growth of subsequent generations of composers.

The present study sets out to explore the influence of world composers on the artistic and musical development of Kosovar artists, as generated by their studies abroad. In addition, it aims to identify the most influential composers in the country in the 20th century. In the mid-twentieth century, the dissertation reports two trends in the second generation of composers. The first of these is characterised by a strong interest in contemporary musical styles, driven by education abroad. Composers such as Rafet Rudi (who studied in Paris and Belgrade), Zeqirja Ballata (who studied

in Slovenia) and others demonstrate this. The second of these is an affinity for traditional Albanian music in artists developing in Kosovo, such as Bashkim Shehu, Esat Rizvanolli and Fahri Beqiri.

Rafet Rudi is presented as a composer with an outstanding contribution to the flute repertoire in the country, as evidenced by his work *Dialogues Perdu* for flute, string trio, piano and tape recorder, which is regarded as one of the first avant-garde compositions for flute. Another notable work is the cycle of works *Afresk Arbëresh*, which features Albanian melodies and Arbëresh motifs.

This study examines the oeuvre of a third generation of composers in the late 1980s, a period that witnessed a substantial renaissance in the domain of classical music. The following composers are examined: Mendi Mengjiqi, who studied in Poland with Penderecki, adopting elements of the avant-garde compositional style and experimenting with the timbre of instruments and vocals. His work *Fantasia* for flute and harp is more akin to impressionism, with Mengjiqi also turning to Albanian folklore. Other significant compositions from the general repertoire are also examined, with brief characteristics provided. Valton Beqiri is a graduate of the Faculty of Arts in Prishtina, and his flute work *Miniatures* for flute and piano is influenced by Albanian folk music. The analysis also encompasses the works of composers Baki Jashari and Ilir Bajri.

The contribution of Venera Mehmetagai, a flute professor at the Faculty of Arts in Prishtina, to encouraging interest in contemporary flute repertoire in Kosovo is duly acknowledged. The socio-cultural situation in the country in the early 2000s is characterized in musical terms. The text goes on to discuss the global influence of contemporary music, the lack of institutional or other support for active musicians, and the establishment of the Kosovo Philharmonic Orchestra and festivals to attract famous figures from the world of classical music.

In the second section, entitled "Advanced Techniques in the Flute Repertoire of Kosovar Composers in the 2000s in Comparison with the Flute Repertoire of World Composers," the compositional and stylistic characteristics of the country's artists and their performance by local flutists are examined. The establishment of a composition class at the Academy of Arts in Prishtina in 2000, led by Mendi Mengjiqi, is also noted. This class taught the fourth generation of composers in Kosovo, including Dafina Zeqri Nushi, Drinor Zymeri and Kreshnik Aličkaj. This generation also includes Donika Rudi, who received her training in Geneva and subsequently specialised in Belgium.

The doctoral student found that many instrumentalists in the country were beginning to study and perfect the new flute techniques used in the works of the above composers.

The present study will focus on national works created between 2000 and 2010, and the avant-garde techniques used in them. A comparative analysis is made of the experimental techniques and effects used in some of the works of the composers with contemporary works from around the world. These include "Atmospheres" for flute and piano by Dafina Nushi, "Voice" by Toru Takemitsu, "Sequenza" by Luciano Berio, "Ectasy" for flute and string orchestra by Zymeri and "Pierrot" by R. Bischoff. It has been noted that Zymeri uses traditional music in a number of his compositions, for example in 'Scherzo', a work for two flutes. Other works by the composer are presented, where the influence of his teacher Mengjiqi is evident. Examples of this influence include Kreshnik Aliçkaj's Viotar, which draws upon Albanian Folklore, and Donika Rudi's Image for flute and magnetic tape, which draws inspiration from the oeuvre of her father, Rafet Rudi.

Abazi's research revealed that the adoption of contemporary flute techniques was pivotal to the oeuvre of subsequent composers in Kosovo, melding modern technological advancements in music with traditional musical forms.

In the third section, entitled "Kosovar Composers from 2010 to the Present," the dissertation delves into the emergence of a new generation of composers, the adoption of advanced techniques, and their practical implementation by flautists in Kosovo. The dissertation goes on to highlight the merits of educational opportunities and online courses. The progress of digitalisation is reported, opening up new opportunities to learn about advances in classical music worldwide. This has led to the awareness and development of compositional approaches, the use of new approaches in flute compositions and the enrichment of the instrument's repertoire.

Abazi's findings indicate that the work of those who trained in Kosovo is characterised by common features, while those who graduated abroad demonstrate greater diversity in aspects such as compositional style, techniques employed, motifs and influences from Albanian folklore.

The composers who are examined in this study include Bardh Dubovci, Ylli Daklani, Leutrim Sahiti, Ersan Januzi, Fjollë Gashi, Liburn Jupolli, Diar Zasella, Anda Kryeziu and others.

The following discussion will present a concise characterisation of Leutrim Sahiti's oeuvre, with a particular focus on his composition entitled 'Quartet for Four Flutes', a contemporary work

that explores the sonic potential of the flute. A comparative analysis is then presented, drawing parallels between the treatment of sound in the works "Density 21.5" by Edgar Varèse and "Zoom Tube" by Ian Clark, as well as other works influenced by their teachers, composers of previous generations.

Composers such as E. Januzi and J. Daklani who use modern techniques in works for flute are presented, as well as a characterisation of Januzi's stylistic approach and an analysis of his composition for flute, Search II. The general tendency in the use of techniques, which is also characteristic of Polish composers, is noted.

The work of young composers is entirely in the sphere of the contemporary musical style. The works of B. Dubovci "TAH" in a comparative analysis with the composition of I. Clark "Zoom Tube", "W" with the work of the Greek composer Kokoras "Cycling", "Mary Magdalene" with "Mixoiridia IV" of the Croatian composer T. Oliver, especially in terms of the effects used.

Techniques present in Dubovci's compositions are also used by Daklani in the work "Wet Dreams", where the modern treatment is realised through an ensemble approach.

Daklani's flute works Vortex and Wet Dreams are examined, noting the development in his creative approach and the growing interest in the sonority and timbre of the instruments in his more recent works.

The Ph.D. candidate finds that electronic music and tape, introduced by Kosovar composers in 2000, are absent from works for flute from 2005-2006 to 2017.

Compositions with flute and electronics are examined, such as "Golden Horizons" by the composer Liburn Jupoli, "As You See Me" by Bardh Dubovci, "Grosse Reise in entgegengesetzter Richtung" by Anda Kryeziu.

The dissertation reports an evolution in the work of composers in Kosovo over the last 25 years, driven also by an increase in the number of artists, compositional activity and interest in new and expanded techniques, especially in the repertoire for flute. The dynamic artistic environment in the country helps to define the cultural and artistic identity of the country. The alternation and synthesis between tradition and innovation contributes to the creativity of Kosovar artists in contemporary music.

In this study, the author uses a comparative analytical approach to examine contemporary compositions for flute by local composers. Innovative techniques, both compositional and sonic, in relation to performance issues are touched upon. The unique combination of traditional Albanian music with the innovations of modern creativity, the incorporation of advanced techniques, will stimulate interest in contemporary works for flute. The chronological study of generations of Kosovar composers and their creative endeavours will contribute to the enrichment of knowledge in cultural, historical and creative aspects.

The above will lead to the promotion of the cited composers as well as their works for flute, illuminating their importance for the musical art. The performance questions will be based on the personal professional experience, routines and theoretical knowledge of the doctoral candidate, justifying the interpretation and analysis of the works.

The present dissertation employs two distinct yet complementary methodological approaches: a chronological one and an empirical one. The chronological approach explores the historical development of the works of Kosovo composers, examining different generations of composers with a focus on flute works and their analysis. In contrast, the empirical approach focuses on the interpretation of these works. These two approaches are united in an integrated approach, helping to conduct the research in a more comprehensive manner. The performance issues explored and the methodological guidelines given will contribute to the improvement of competencies and approach in teaching the instrument. It is argued that this may create a prerequisite for the development of new technical exercises, helping to improve the quality and innovativeness of flute teaching and enriching the performance capabilities of musicians. The highlighting of modern techniques of sound interpretation and compositional novelties in the works of Kosovar composers will help to realise the stylistic, aesthetic and musical expressive features of the works. The aforementioned justifies the contributory nature of the development.

The relevance of the topic of the dissertation is conditioned by the dynamic development of contemporary musical art, in particular the flute, and the need to familiarise and analyse contemporary works and innovations in the interpretation of sound and compositional approach. These innovations will contribute to the improvement of interpretive possibilities and the renewal of teaching methodology, as well as the building of a performance-creative model and the enrichment of the theoretical-practical skills of flutist performers. The aforementioned points

substantiate the contribution of the research. The dissertation is structured over 98 pages, incorporating 95 figures (music examples), and the bibliography comprises 14 sources, 7 websites, 33 musical scores, and 6 audio recordings from YouTube.

The contributions of the thesis are as follows:

Firstly, a catalogue of works for flute by Kosovar composers is provided, thus enriching the reader's knowledge of contemporary music. **Secondly**, innovative extended techniques and effects in flute interpretation, as well as compositional techniques, are discussed. **Thirdly**, through the integration of the compositions examined, students will become familiar with the contemporary flute repertoire. **Fourthly**, analysing the traditional components of national music will help preserve the country's musical heritage and provide a resource for teaching and inspiring the next generation of musicians. The dynamic musical traditions of Kosovo are highlighted, predisposing young musicians to engage in the ongoing evolution of the country's musical environment. Exploration of the collaboration of traditional Albanian folk motifs with new and expanded flute techniques will promote modernity and national identity. A comparative analysis of stylistic approaches and compositional techniques in the musical language of young Kosovar composers with those of world composers of the 21st century is also provided. The flute compositions from Kosovo that have been examined and contribute to the expansion of knowledge regarding the interplay of local and global influences in the country's evolving music scene, representing a significant contribution to musicology, with an emphasis on the flute repertoire. The development will encourage young musicians to experiment with the approaches under consideration in their compositions, adding to the flute repertoire in Kosovo, and will also enrich their knowledge and motivate them to contribute to the development of the country's contemporary music scene.

The development is characterised by a dual theoretical-practical orientation, applicable in both performance and pedagogy, thereby substantiating its contributory nature.

The abstract provides a concise overview of the content and the primary outcomes of the dissertation.

In conclusion, it is important to note that the dissertation entitled "The contemporary flute repertoire of the emerging Kosovar composers compared with the 21st century world composers", authored by Zane Abazi, impresses with the issues addressed, the comparative approach to

novelties in the compositional plan and the treatment of sound in the flute, substantiated with appropriate examples, helping to further clarify the perception of the subject under study. The dissertation is notable for its theoretical and practical contributions, as well as its applied character. In light of these observations, it is respectfully submitted to the esteemed scientific jury that Zane Abazi be awarded the educational and scientific degree of Doctor in the professional field of Music and Dance Art, Doctoral Programme in Musicology and Music Art.

29.12.2024.

Reviewed by: (Prof. Dr. Borislav Yasenov)