

# КЛАСИЧЕСКИ МУЗИКАЛНИ ФЕСТИВАЛИ В КОСОВО В ПЕРИОДА 2000–2017

ИСМЕТ БЕДЖЕТИ<sup>38</sup>

## FESTIVALS OF CLASSICAL MUSIC IN KOSOVO IN YEARS 2000–2017

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*Резюме:* Докладът описва фестивалите за класическата музика в Косово от 2000 г. до 2017 г. В допълнение към кратката история на музикалния живот в Косово, във фокуса на нашето проучване са доказателствата за фестивалите за класическата музика в Косово от 2000 до 2017 г., броят на проведените му издания, характерът на тези фестивали. Въз основа на събраните данни, в периода от 2000 до 2017 година са се състояли шест фестивала. Фестивалите имат международен характер. Два от тях са и с конкурсен характер. Въз основа на организацията, съдържанието на фестивалите и тяхната концепция можем да кажем, че от 2000 г. досега фестивалите за класическа музика отразяват специален период от историята на фестивалите в Косово. Тъй като в Косово няма концертна

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зала и достатъчно финансова подкрепа за тези фестивали, държавата трябва във възможно най-кратки срокове да изработи подходяща институционална политика за музикални дейности.

**Ключови думи:** концертен живот, фестивал, традиционен, музикални произведения

**Summary:** This report describes the inclusion of festivals of classical music in Kosovo from 2000 to 2017. Besides the short history of musical life in Kosovo, in our focus is the evidence of classical music festivals in Kosovo from 2000 to 2017, the number of editions held, the character of these festivals. Based on the collected data, for the period from 2000 to 2017, six festivals were evident. These festivals have an international character. Two of these festivals have also a competitive character. Based on the organizations, festivals' content and in their concept, we can say that from 2000 until now, classical music festivals reflect a special period in the history of festivals in Kosovo. In the absence of a concert hall in Kosovo and the necessary financial support of these festivals, Kosovo should have as soon as possible a proper institutional policy on music activities.

**Keywords:** concert life, festivals, traditional, musical creations

In Kosovo, the music life and that of concerts and festivals commences after the end of the World War 2. Immediately after the end of the war, with the establishment of new institutions, music life was preceded by the foundation of the new artistic institutions, media, and educational institutions. As the first artistic institutions were the cultural-artistic societies. Immediately after the liberation of developed cities of Kosovo, cultural-artistic societies were created. Within these societies were regular sections such as the section of songs and folk dances. Some of those societies had other sections such as choral ensembles, drama section and even the ones dedicated for painting. Those societies were promoting and affirming national folkloric values

and served as a possibility for the development of new artists in many of the fields in arts. One of these societies was Sh.K.A. (cultural-artistic society) Agimi from the city of Prizren which was founded in November of 1944 and was the first cultural-artistic society in Kosovo. The Agimi society from its commencement among its many sections, created also its ensemble of choir, whereas among orchestral formations also founded the chamber orchestra, becoming the only society of such type. „This chamber orchestra became the core and the main pillar of the creation of the Symphonic Orchestra of the city which started its work in the beginning of year 1950“ [Berisha 2004, p. 24].

With these societies the organized musical and concert life started and very soon the first festivals were organized, which were initially of a folkloric character as a means of promoting the local and national folk music. „These festivals became annual events such as in the case of Pristina with the Festival of National Culture of Kosovo Nations and the Festival of the Syndical Society of Kosovo; in Mitrovica the Musical Festival of Kosovo, the Festival of Musical Societies of Kosovo, the Popular Choral and Orchestral Festival of Kosovo, etc“ [Berisha and Shiroka 1994, p. 67].

A great contribution in the further advancement of the musical life was given by the creation of media, educational institutions and ensembles music society. „There were founded institutions, such as Radio (1946), high schools (in Prizren and Pristina) and elementary musical schools (in Prizren, Mitrovica, Pristina, Gjakova)... Section of Kosovo Compositors (1969), ensemble of songs and dances „Shota“(1969), Ensemble of choir“ [Ballata 1987, p. 225]. „As a part of the Radio Television of Pristina the orchestra of folkloric music was founded and later also the Symphonic Orchestra along with the professional choir“ [Berisha 1997, p. 21].

This triangle of establishment and functioning of institutions in media, education and ensembles was a driving force for the advancement of music even to the point of commencing classical festivals. „This is also shown by their coordination for the finalization of an array of musical festivals in Kosovo, such as: Akordet e Kosoves (Kosovo Chords) (from year 1963), Festivali Krahinor I Koreve të

Fëmijeve (The Provincial Festival for Kids' Choirs) (1968), Takimet Krahinore të Muzikës (Provincial Musical Meetings) (1972), Kosovarja Këndon (The Kosovan Sings) (1973), Skena Muzikore e Prishtines (the Musical Scene of Pristina) (1973), Ditet e Muzikës Kosovare (Days of Kosovo Music) (1979), etc“ [Ballata 1987, p. 228].

This period lasting for four and a half decades was interrupted in the year 1990. The Government of Serbia on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 1990 abolished the autonomy of Kosovo and as a first step towards this decision was the invasion of the Radio Television of Pristina which was continued with the closure of other institutions in Kosovo. As such, the musical life was paralyzed almost entirely with the interruption of the work of musical institutions for 10 years, starting from 1990 until 1999.

After this forceful decade-long interruption, from year 2000 a great interest was shown to revive the cultural and musical life in Kosovo. Although not all composers, conductors and soloists of classical music return to the post-war Kosovo, professors of music and composers belonging to old generations took incentives and found the support also from younger musicians for the revival of musical activities.

Also, during the same year, the Philharmonic Orchestra of Kosovo was created, a part of which was also the ensemble of choir. This institution was shown to be very important for the musical progress and perspective in Kosovo. The Philharmonic Orchestra of Kosovo have held its regular monthly program including numerous organized concerts, and it have been also a supporter of many other festivals. Furthermore, the ensemble „Vivendi“ was founded and was comprised of many instrumentalists who graduated from world-renown universities.

Although with a lacking institutional policy and without proper financial support for musical activities and artistic music, the year 2000 marks a significant activity in the related fields. „A great number of concerts were concentrated in only two events, in the Week of Bach which was being held in May and the International Festival of Chamber Music (its first edition) which was held in October“ [Rudi 2002, p. 262].

Concert life started to progress on the right way in this new period, with the addition of new music events and especially festivals which

were becoming more frequent and as such also obtaining a traditional character.

**Kosova Kamer Fest** is the first festival organized in the post-war Kosovo in October of year 2000 and has held 18 editions up to 2017. Kamer Fest is now a traditional event and continues with the same format with the performing of creations of world-renown and Kosovo composers. In this festival, starting from its first edition, a great number of artists and instrumentalists from Europe and the rest of the world participate. This is an attempt for bringing of new values and exchanging local and international artistic values. Aside from concerts throughout the entire month, also are held master-classes with renown names of classical music and instruments.

A characteristic and the purpose of the festival is the joint performance of music, where the local and international instrumentalists are combined in an ad-hoc formation and jointly play select musical creations. Also, the winning instrumentalists of another festival, known as *ArsKosova Music Competition for Youth* hold a joint concert with the chamber ensemble Kamer Fest. The ensemble which holds the name of the festival was especially created for this purpose and performed for the first time in the year 2007.

Starting from its first edition of the festival, a wide array of world-renown instrumentalists performed, such as the pianist Gunter Ludvig, the flute player from France, Pierre Yves Artaud; Militiades Cassaras from Greece, pianist Gertrand Giraud, Pavel Vernikov from Italy, Derek Han from the United States, Frank S. Dodge in violincello, etc. Also the soprano Inva Mula with a long international career, the violinist Tedi Papavrami who lives and works in France also performed in the festival. Local instrumentalists with a long history of local and international concerts such as the violinist Sihana Badivuku, the pianist Mizbah Kaqamaku, violinist Blerim Grupi, flute player Venera Mehmetagaj were also present in the festival.

In Kosovo there is still not a concert hall in existence. In its absence, Kamer Fest organizes its concerts in various locations, which do not even nearly fulfill the conditions for the organization of a musical concerts, starting from acoustics and other factors. For almost

two decades this festival, like the others, was followed by financial difficulties as a result of a non-sufficient support. This concern was also expressed by the organizer of Kamer Fest, Ms. Sihana Badivuku. „It is a sin that such festivals are being modestly supported even today, as I remain true to the principle of the first edition, which says that Kosovo should „smell“ like Europe and we are working in that direction with the entire team and the artists who are invited in the festival“ (Dy vepra...).

**Remusica** started with the first edition in the year 2002, becoming a traditional festival. It was organized every year until today and has held 16 editions up to 2017. Remusica started with a physiognomy of creating a fusion of musical styles from various epochs, including the Baroque, Classical and Romantic epochs along with the styles of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The main purpose of the festival is to conduct the presentation of the musical creations from the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until today, especially with contemporary music which has a special attention in the affirmation of new expressions in the musical arts.

This festival has in a special focus the creations of Kosovo composers while bringing the repertoire of world-renown performers and also creations of authors from Kosovo. Until now it has showcased the creations of Kosovo composers from all generations, especially the young ones. A great part of young composers have commenced their careers in these festivals.

Organisers of Remusica attempt to bring to the Kosovo audiences renown artists from the Balkans, Europe as well as from other continents. International artists who perform in these traditional festivals mainly come from countries such as Bulgaria, Macedonia, Albania, England, France, Switzerland, Spain, Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, Canada, Japan, etc. In addition, Kosovo performers who play at the international level in the most prestigious international scenes are or have been a part of the festival as well.

In this festival the dominating creations are the ones of composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as the creations of Bartok, Stravinsky, Hindemith, Messiaen, Ligeti, Scelsi, Penderecki, Takemitsu, Nishimura,

Xenakis, Nancarrow, Rzewski, Parmerud, Murail, Dusapin, Radulescu, Clarke, etc.

Creators, soloists and instrumentalists who have performed earlier or have developed their skills in various European schools, upon their return in Kosovo after the year 2000 have participated and shared their experiences also in this festival.

What makes this festival even more characteristic from the others is the presence of electronic and acousmatic music through the creations of the new Kosovar creators. Recently, Remusica offers to the public also the new methods of composing music, through the utilization of new technological achievements and new innovative audio-visual methods.

The organizer of this festival is the Kosovo Centre for New Music which is a member of the ECPNM – The European Conference for the Promotion of New Musicians.

**DAM Festival Pristina** – The international Festival of Young Musicians is a festival founded by students of the University of Pristina – Department of Arts. Its first edition was held in 2006 with a modest number of international artists and a greater one of local performers. Since the first edition there was a huge interest of the public. The event is organized on annual basis while always expanding the project with new additions. As such, this festival became traditional and continued until today by constantly increasing its importance. „The second DAM Festival, organized in 2007 was one of the most expensive projects organized by the Music Art Center DAM, this because of the many workshops taking place parallel to the festival. International professionals and tutors offered master classes and lectures for the Faculty of Arts of Pristina students.“ [DAM Festival Pristina]. In the third edition of the festival, around 200 local and international artists performed various musical creations and showcased a premiere. „More than 50 artworks of Albanian and international composers, premiered in front of the audience of the third edition of DAM Festival“ [DAM Festival Pristina].

Initially, the performances were conducted mainly by students from academies such as Academy of Music in Kraków from Poland,

Zurich University of the Arts from Switzerland, Academy of Music – University of Zagreb (Croatia), Faculty of Music in Skopje (Macedonia), Academy of Arts in Tirana (Albania) and of course the students of the Department of Arts of the University of Pristina.

Very soon the festival started to expand beyond its student framework through introducing world-renown artists and ensembles. Through executing and premiering world-class creations in Kosovo was also performed the 840-minute creation „Vexation“ of the composer Erik Satie. In its further editions, Dam Festival managed to offer to its audiences many composers and instrumentalists with an international fame, as is the recent case of the violinist Iskandar Widjaja.

DAM Festival Pristina has held 16 editions up to 2017.

**Chopin Piano Fest Prishtina** is a festival which had its first edition in the year 2010, becoming a traditional festival. „Formed only to celebrate the 200th birth of Chopin, the festival was a great success and was greatly appreciated by the Kosovan audience. The festival continues to be organized annually, becoming a traditional piano festival held in spring every year“ [Chopin Piano Fest Pristina].

This festival offers to the public the most renown local and international pianists where besides the creations of Chopin, those of other well-renown composers of classical and contemporary music are also executed. Among them was the classical pianist from Great Britain, Peter Donohoe and the Canadian pianist Janina Fialkowska. Furthermore, the soloists such as the tenor Ramë Lahaj who conquered the opera halls of the world, also performed in the festival. With the purpose of promoting new talents in this festival, a special night is dedicated to the Kosovo pupils and students.

Thus, although the Chopin Piano Fest was established to celebrate the anniversary of Chopin, it does not end only with that, but the festival expands with the organization of master classes with students, symposiums and roundtables and as such becoming an ever-growing treasure of musical life in Kosovo.

Chopin Piano Fest Prishtina has held 8 editions up to 2017.

**Peja International Guitar Festival** is a festival founded in 2014 in Peja and has held 3 editions up to 2017. As a part of this festival,

concerts with world-renown guitarists are held. In various editions of this festival, the guitarists who have performed are: Hubert Käppel (Germany), Ehat Musa (Kosovo, France), Margarita Escarpa (Spain), Petrit Çeku (Kosovo, Croatia), Thomas Offermann (Germany), Pia Gazarek Offermann (Germany), Julia Zelinski (Germany), Christian Zelinski (Germany), Alejandro Córdova (Mexico).

Besides the planned concerts for the festival, master classes are organized along with competitions of guitarists which are separated into four categories and sub-categories. In these competitions participate also guitarists coming from abroad.

This festival is organized in the city of Peja and is the only one which is not organized in the capital of Kosovo, Pristina.

**ArsKosova Music Competition for Youth** is organized by the ArsKosova Foundation which is a non-governmental and a non-profitable organization. This event has commenced as a competition in the year 2003. ArsKosova is also a part of EMCY (European Union of Music Competition for Youth). „The European Union of Music Competitions for Youth (EMCY) is a European umbrella organisation for about fifty national and international music competitions for young people. Founded in the 1960s in order to develop the musical education of young Europeans, EMCY arranges concerts (with and without orchestra), broadcasts, tours, award ceremonies, master classes and courses for outstanding competition prize winners throughout Europe.“ [European Union of Music Competitions for Youth].

This festival includes youth from the ages of 5 until 26 from the categories of pupils and students. The festival has a competing character where the participants who are separated in seven categories, compete in five disciplines.

ArsKosova Music Competition for Youth has held 13 editions up to 2017.

As we can see, all the festivals are traditional. This means that these festivals have their editions that are held every year. A festival edition includes several concerts, round table, symposiums and master classes which festivals hold within a month or more.

Based on the organizations, participants and concepts of festivals of classical music in Kosovo in the years 2000 – 2017, it can be clearly inferred that these festivals have their own specifics but also their similarities which comprise a musical mosaic different from the earlier periods of the musical life in Kosovo.

All festivals of this period have an international character, which is something that earlier festivals of the pre-war Kosovo did not have. This characteristic among others, is making possible the exchange of experiences and the promotion of musical creations of Kosovo composers with a tendency of promoting new musical expressions.

All organizers of festivals as non-governmental organizations deal with financial difficulties which can have an impact not only in their quality but also in their normal functioning. The difficulties that are present in such events include also non-adequate spaces for concerts, there are no concert halls in Kosovo. These are some of the indicators pointing towards the necessity of genuine institutional policies and support for musical activities.

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