

The adaptation of folk songs in the choral works of Kosovar composers

A adaptação de canções folclóricas nas obras corais de compositores kosovares



Arsim Kelmendi

Department of Music, Haxhi Zeka University, Peja, Kosovo

kelmendiarsim2@gmail.com

<https://unhz.eu/en/team/arsim-kelmendi/>

Abstract: This study examines the structural, tempo-rhythmic, and textural models of folk-song adaptation in choral music and traces the transformation of folk melody within professional choral writing. The research was conducted in three stages: a comparative analysis of choral arrangements of folk songs from Central, Western, and Southern Europe; a reconstruction of the historical conditions that shaped the formation of choral culture in Kosovo; and a structural and analytical examination of four choral works by Kosovo composers, namely 'Posht' mizorët', 'Ani Çilma Derën', 'Gush Sharavelli' and 'N'mjedis t'ballit', based on folk melodies. The study identifies several stable European models of choral folklore adaptation, including the Hungarian model, characterised by the accurate transfer of field recordings into choral texture with varying harmonic complexity, the Moravian model, which emphasises irregular phrase structures and the preservation of linguistic and intonational formulas, and the English approach, oriented toward four part harmonisation and the dual national and universal function of the repertoire. It is shown that choral singing in Kosovo developed at the intersection of ancient polyphonic practices, Byzantine and Catholic liturgical traditions, and the post-war Yugoslav educational system, resulting in the close integration of folk song material into professional choral language. Analysis of

Kosovo works reveals a typology of local adaptation approaches ranging from simple homophonic harmonizations for educational choirs to polyphonic strophic forms with asymmetrical meters, while also demonstrating a consistent dependence of compositional decisions on the modal, rhythmic, and textual characteristics of the folklore source.

Keywords: harmonization; textural organization; rhythm; vocals; ensemble; melody.

Resumo: Este estudo examina os modelos estruturais, rítmicos, de andamento e texturais da adaptação de canções folclóricas na música coral e traça a transformação da melodia folclórica na escrita coral profissional. A pesquisa foi conduzida em três etapas: uma análise comparativa de arranjos corais de canções folclóricas da Europa Central, Ocidental e Meridional; uma reconstrução das condições históricas que moldaram a formação da cultura coral no Kosovo; e um exame estrutural e analítico de quatro obras corais de compositores kosovares, a saber, 'Posht' mizorët', 'Ani Çilma Derën', 'Gush Sharavelli' e 'N'mjedis t'ballit', baseadas em melodias folclóricas. O estudo identifica diversos modelos europeus estáveis de adaptação coral do folclore, incluindo o modelo húngaro, caracterizado pela transposição precisa de gravações de campo para a textura coral com complexidade harmônica variável; o modelo morávio, que enfatiza estruturas frasais irregulares e a preservação de fórmulas linguísticas e entonacionais; e a abordagem inglesa, orientada para a harmonização a quatro vozes e a dupla função nacional e universal do repertório. Demonstra-se que o canto coral no Kosovo desenvolveu-se na interseção de antigas práticas polifônicas, tradições litúrgicas bizantinas e católicas, e do sistema educacional iugoslavo do pós-guerra, resultando na estreita integração do material de canções folclóricas à linguagem coral profissional. A análise das obras do Kosovo revela uma tipologia de abordagens de adaptação local que variam de harmo-

nizações homofônicas simples a coros educacionais, e de formas estróficas polifônicas com métricas assimétricas, demonstrando também uma dependência consistente das decisões composicionais em relação às características modais, rítmicas e textuais da fonte folclórica.

Palavras-chave: harmonização; organização textural; ritmo; vocais; conjunto; melodia.

Submitted on: February 11, 2026

Accepted on: April 7, 2026

Published on: April 2026

1. Introduction

Kosovo represents a unique test case within European ethnomusicology and choral studies, not only because of its regional significance but also due to its distinctive fusion of isopolyphonic traditions, Byzantine and Catholic liturgical practices, and the socialist-era institutionalization of music education. The interaction of these elements in Kosovo's choral heritage provides an insightful lens for examining the broader European typologies of folk song adaptation. As such, Kosovo's choral traditions offer a valuable opportunity to explore the intricate processes of folklore transformation within the context of European choral practices, particularly in relation to the interface of modal, rhythmic, and textural structures as well as the integration of socio-political influences.

The need to study choral adaptations of folk songs in Kosovo arose from the fact that folklore heritage has long served not only as an aesthetic resource but also as a means of preserving identity, while the mechanisms of its transformation within the choral environment have remained only fragmentarily described. Against the background of the intensification of academic choral practice in Kosovo and the growing interest in polyphonic traditions, the problem emerged of determining how folklore models of intonation, rhythm, and strophe have been transformed into professional forms of choral thinking. The lack of systematic musical-analytical research that combines historical context, folklore prototypes, and compositional practice has demonstrated the need for a comprehensive approach. The interaction between folklore and choral culture has attracted the attention of various researchers, allowing us to outline a certain degree of elaboration of the topic. In the work of Y. Meng and M. Liu (2023), the concept of the continuity of values revealed through folklore singing and choral performance was presented. The authors concluded that the transition of folk melodies into a polyphonic environment ensured the preservation of symbolic structures and facilitated

the transmission of cultural models. Their approach demonstrated that choral practice can integrate traditional musical meanings into new communicative forms, though it did not offer an in-depth analysis of specific adaptation techniques.

From a different perspective, J. Khodjayev (2022) focused on the specifics of adaptations for a cappella choirs. He stated that the successful transfer of folk melodies into a choral context depended on the coordination of ranges, textural parameters, and rhythmic organization. The researcher established that harmonization plays a key role in preserving authenticity if it adheres to the modal regularities of folklore. K. Doli (2023) examined the Sufi musical tradition of Kosovo in interaction with other cultural layers. The author concluded that spiritual musical practices formed a long continuum of modal thinking and rhythmic cyclicity, which later penetrated the folklore and academic repertoire. The study emphasized that the musical traditions of Kosovo did not develop in isolation but existed in constant dialogue with ritual and church models, although the issue of choral adaptations was addressed only indirectly. For instance, the authors did not provide score-based parameters, nor did they specify a clear texture typology or map the transition from modal prototypes to voice-leading structures in the choral settings.

Of great importance for reconstructing the history of the Kosovo musical environment was the work of A. Gjikolli (2024), which outlined the role of women in the formation of professional musical culture in the period 1972-1990. The author established that choral groups became one of the leading environments of creative activity, where folk and academic models of singing were combined. She emphasized the role of pedagogical institutions in consolidating choral culture but did not analyze the musical fabric of specific arrangements, which required further clarification. A view of the influence of folklore on academic creativity was offered by B. Luzha and R.K. Breznica (2024). He determined that Kosovo composers actively adopted intonational patterns from folk music, and the key parameters of influence were the modal basis, rhythmic

irregularity, and strophic repetition. His conclusions confirmed that folklore functioned as a structural framework for the composer's language, although the mechanisms of transition of these patterns into choral works remained insufficiently specified. A survey perspective on Albanian folklore traditions was presented in the study by A. Kelmendi and H. Nimani (2024). The authors established that modal systems, iso-polyphony, and regional forms of two- and three-part singing constituted a stable intonational foundation that was transmitted into the professional musical environment. Their study identified important characteristics of the Albanian musical language but did not analyze specific compositional adaptation techniques, which left room for further exploration.

Of analytical interest were also the results of A. Sadiku (2025) emphasized the role of the Albanological Institute in the recording and scientific study of the musical folklore of Kosovo. The author noted that the systematic collection and archiving of field materials created a powerful foundation for further compositional creativity. However, his work focused on the historical-ethnographic dimension and lacked a musical-analytical component. Relevant to this study was the review by V. Shkodra (2021), which documented the scientific and organizational directions of the work of the folklore and ethnological departments of the Albanological Institute. The author noted the expansion of the archival base and the intensification of field research, which helped preserve many local forms of singing. Another aspect of the influence of folklore on professional music was highlighted by D. Bizhga (2020). He found that the melodic models of Albanian folklore determined the nature of arrangements and original compositions of the twentieth century, and that folk intonations became a key marker of national stylistics.

A review of the above works established that the scientific discourse had already covered broad aspects of folklore heritage – from value transmission to compositional stylistics and archival practices. At the same time, there was no comprehensive musicological study that would simultaneously address European

models of folklore processing, the historical stages of the formation of Kosovo choral culture, and the musical-technical analysis of specific works.

The aim of this study was to determine the structural, intonational, and textural principles by which the folk song material of Kosovo was transformed into choral sound. To achieve this goal, the following research tasks were formulated: to outline common European approaches to folklore processing and to determine which of them correlated with the Kosovo tradition; to reconstruct the historical stages of the formation of Kosovo's choral culture and outline their connection with the folk song heritage; and to carry out a musical and analytical examination of selected choral works by Kosovo composers, identifying the guiding principles of their adaptation.

2. Materials and Methods

The process of this research combined historical and documentary analysis, structural and analytical processing of scores, and genre and typological comparison. The total duration of the work was nine months (January-September 2025). At the first stage (January-April 2025), a comparative analysis of choral adaptations of folk songs was conducted across three cultural regions: Central Europe (Hungary, Czech Republic (Moravia)), Western Europe (Great Britain), and the Balkans (Albania, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Serbia). The choice of these regions was determined by the presence of established compositional schools in which folk melodies were systematically integrated into choral practice; the availability of representative musical sources and scientific analytical materials; and their relevance for comparison with the Kosovo tradition through typologically similar (Balkans) or contrasting (Central and Western Europe) models of folk song processing. The task of this stage was to develop an analytical matrix of parameters, which was subsequently applied to the Kosovo materials. For the Hungarian tradition, the source

was the work of Béla Bartók, which contains field recordings and corresponding choral processing (Folk Music in Bartók's Works, 2026), as well as analytical works on modal organization and polyharmony (Szalay, 2020; Pintér-Keresztes, 2025). In the Czech-Moravian segment, research on the choral language of L. Janáček was used, enabling the tracing of the transfer of linguistic and intonational formulas from Moravian folklore into the polyphonic choral texture. The English model was represented by materials on choral arrangements by R. Vaughan Williams and his principles of harmonising folk melodies. In parallel, a review of Balkan sources was conducted: Albanian isopolyphony (Albanian folk isopolyphony..., 2020), Bulgarian diaphony and professional female choral arrangements (Grozdev-Kořacińska, 2020), and rhythmically asymmetrical folklore of North Macedonia (Primorac, 2024).

The second stage (May-July 2025) aimed to identify the historical prerequisites that led to the combination of folk song heritage with institutionalized choral art in Kosovo. The region came into focus because, unlike neighboring countries, its choral practices emerged at the intersection of the isopolyphonic tradition and the Yugoslav educational infrastructure, creating a unique synthesis of folklore and professional choral writing. A historical-documentary approach was applied, with extensive use of ethnomusicological, archival, and institutional sources. Historical explorations covered the period from the Middle Ages (10th century) to the end of the 20th century, since it was within these limits that the main models of polyphony and the institutional conditions of choral life were formed – conditions necessary for a full reconstruction of the evolution of vocal practices that influenced the Kosovo tradition. For the ancient stages of development, works were used that linked the polyphonic forms of Epirus and Southern Albania with Thracian-Illyrian and Byzantine origins (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2026), as well as studies devoted to the role of Ioan Cucuzeli as a reformer of the psaltic tradition (Alexandru et al., 2018). For the 19th and early 20th centuries, works on the choir of the Zonja Ndihmëtare Cathedral

in Prizren (Breznica, 2023) were used, documenting the existence of stable polyphonic practices in confessional centres. Special attention was paid to local centres – Prizren, Peja, and Gjakova – based on materials about the activities of the cultural and artistic society Agimi and the ensemble Collegium Cantorum.

The third stage (August-September 2025) involved a direct analysis of four key works representing different models of choral adaptations: *Posht' mizorët* by Zekirja Ballata; *Ani Çilma Derën* by Lorenc Antoni; *Gush Sharavelli* by Bahri Mulliqi; and *N'mjedis t'ballit* by Esat Rizvanolli. The four works selected for analysis: "Posht' mizorët" by Zekirja Ballata, "Ani Çilma Derën" by Lorenc Antoni, "Gush Sharavelli" by Bahri Mulliqi, and "N'mjedis t'ballit" by Esat Rizvanolli were chosen based on several criteria. These include their representativeness of Kosovo's choral music, the availability of scores for detailed analysis, the coverage of different choir types (children's, female, male, and mixed choirs), and their relevance to the themes of folk song adaptation. Additionally, the selection reflects compositional diversity, with works from both early and later generations of composers, as well as the presence or absence of asymmetrical meters, a key feature of Balkan folk song adaptations. These criteria were designed to avoid convenience sampling and ensure a well-rounded exploration of Kosovo's choral practices. A structural-analytical method was applied: for each work, formal parameters (strophic structure, periodicity, type of endings), ladotonal models, metrorhythmic structures, texture type (homophony, polyphony, canonicity), distribution of the melodic function between voices, vertical interval organization, and the nature of harmonization were determined. The structure of the text was studied separately: homophonic presentation, heterometric shifts, use of neutral syllables, and the interaction of solo and tutti episodes were recorded. Based on the comparison, a typological system of four adaptation models was developed (homophonic harmonization; homophonic-harmonic model; motivic-variational type; polyphonic strophicity with asymmetrical meters). This generalization enabled correlating local approaches with the broader European and Balkan models identified in the previous stages.

3. Results

3.1. European models of folk song adaptation in choral music

Reinterpretation of folk melodies in a choral environment involves the transfer of authentic folk material into a professional polyphonic texture through harmonization, polyphonisation, and structural transformation of the primary theme. When considering “authenticity” in the context of folk song adaptations, it is essential to distinguish between different forms of authenticity. Melodic authenticity refers to the preservation of the original melodic contour, performative authenticity concerns the manner in which the piece is presented and interpreted in a performance context, and archival authenticity refers to the accurate representation of the folk song as documented in historical records or field recordings. This conceptual framework helps clarify the varying levels at which authenticity is maintained or transformed in Kosovo’s choral arrangements. Composers from different regions process folk melodies while preserving their intonational profile but assigning them a new textural organisation, an expanded range, and a polyphonic vertical (Bobul, 2022). Such practice enables folk melodies to function within professional choral performance, combining local musical traditions with established norms of European choral technique. At the same time, adaptation is not a direct reproduction of folklore: it involves interpreting rhythmic structures, modal systems, and form-generating models in accordance with the capabilities and requirements of the choral ensemble (Tkach, 2025; Winston and Uppunda, 2024).

European practice in the choral arrangement of folk songs has produced several stable models. In the case of Béla Bartók, choral and vocal-choral arrangements account for over a third of his catalog: a new digital database of the Budapest Bartók Archive shows that the composer consistently used specific documented melodies traceable to field recordings and transcriptions (Folk Music in Bartók’s Works, 2026). This means that choral works on

folk themes are not stylizations in the spirit of folklore, but precise transformations of specific field samples. In many arrangements, Bartók preserves strophic form and modal organization (Dorian, Mixolydian, pentatonic modes), while the harmonization ranges from elementary triads to polyharmonic complexes with subtle shifts of supporting tones (Pintér-Keresztes, 2025). A separate group consists of choral pieces such as Four Hungarian Folk Songs (Bartók, 2026), in which the folklore material is adapted for a mixed choir with piano accompaniment, intended more as a “rehearsal piano” than as an equal element of the texture (Szalay, 2020). The homophonic-harmonic style dominates here, but within each stanza the composer varies harmony, texture, and dynamics, creating dramatic development without altering the melody. In later pedagogical and concert practices, these works became a model of “double addressing”: on the one hand, they preserve the authentic profile of the folk song; on the other, they demonstrate complex harmonic and textural solutions oriented towards professional choirs.

In the work of Leoš Janáček, the adaptation of folklore into choral language is based not only on melodic borrowing but also on the transfer of linguistic, intonational, and rhythmic models from folk songs. The collection, publication, and analysis of Moravian songs radically changed the composer’s style, making irregular phrase structure, variable metre, and modality central parameters of his music (Skoumal, 2020). For male and mixed choirs, this shift led to a move from classical-period structures to speech-derived structures, in which accents, syncopations, and asymmetrical rhythms directly imitate the natural declamation of the text. In his arrangements of Moravian songs, Janáček often combines psalm formulas with folk melodies, creating polyphonic textures in which the melody may “spread” between voices or be duplicated in different registers.

In the English tradition, Ralph Vaughan Williams offers a different model of choral treatment of folk song material. The composer wrote and/or arranged over two hundred tunes, many

of which are of folkloric origin; he adapted them for congregational singing through clear four-part harmonization, limited range, and predominantly diatonic harmonies (Onderdonk, 2025). In later collections for mixed choirs, his melodies and arrangements are presented as a repertoire of “double identity”, in which the works function both as carriers of the English national tradition and as universally acceptable choral material. In this context, it is important that Vaughan Williams tends to maintain the strophe, but within each stanza, the texture varies (moving the melody from soprano to tenor, introducing imitative entries, changing the density of the chordal texture).

The Balkans offer another, no less revealing, layer of adaptation of folk songs to choral forms – primarily through polyphonic traditions that historically emerged outside the framework of professional compositional schools but were actively incorporated into the academic choral repertoire in the second half of the twentieth century. In Albanian tradition, the key model is isopolyphony, which combines two solo lines (melody and countermelody) with a sustained choral drone (iso). This singing style is considered a standard of intangible heritage, with clearly defined roles of soloists and ensemble and a stable modal basis (Albanian folk iso-polyphony..., 2020). In modern choral arrangements by Albanian composers, iso-polyphony is often translated into mixed choir by preserving the drone in altos and basses and distributing solo lines between sopranos and tenors (Hashani and Dugolli, 2024). This enables the acoustic effect of traditional group singing to be combined with a controlled score structure.

The Bulgarian model demonstrates a different trajectory: here, the meeting of “archaic diaphony” (traditional rural two-part singing) with professional composers’ arrangements for female and mixed choirs (Çetik, 2025). Studies of the phenomenon of “Bulgarian voices” show that composers of the 1950s-1980s created a specific choral style that preserved characteristic intervals (particularly augmented seconds and fourths), parallel voice movements, and an open vocal technique, while at the same

time introducing complex polychordal harmony, unconventional cadences, and staged dramaturgy (Grozdev-Kołacińska, 2020; Belova and Georgieva, 2025). In North Macedonia and Serbia, polyphonic folklore is often associated with asymmetrical metres (7/8, 9/8, mixed formulas such as 2+2+3, etc.) and a complex rhythmic hierarchy. Studies of traditional rural singing in North Macedonia document the coexistence of archaic parallel lines (usually in thirds and sixths) with upper voices ornamenting the main melody improvisationally (Primorac, 2024). It is the rhythmic organization – the transitions from isochronous to free structures – that becomes the main challenge in adapting folklore for choir, as the composer must balance the precision of ethnographic rhythm with the need for ensemble coordination.

3.2. Historical development of the choral tradition in Kosovo in the context of folk song heritage

In the historiography of polyphonic singing in Epirus and Southern Albania, it is observed that the polyphonic forms of the region are associated either with ancient Greek and Thracian–Illyrian origins or with the Byzantine era; in both cases, this reflects an extremely long process of crystallization of local singing models with distinct modal and rhythmic features. It is in this area that Albanian iso-polyphony, with two solo voices and a long choral drone, is formed (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2026). Thus, even before the formation of any institutionalized choirs in the modern sense, stable folk practices of polyphonic singing in this territory established the intonational, modal, and structural framework for later development. In the Middle Ages, the leading role in shaping the professional vocal tradition was played by the Byzantine singing school, within which Ioan Cucuzeli's activities stand out. He is characterized as a composer, singer, teacher, and reformer of the late Byzantine psaltic tradition (Alexandru et al., 2018). Cucuzeli's reforms, particularly the introduction of complex melismatics and expanded modal thinking, influenced the entire Orthodox

Balkan space, including Albanian territories. Through this tradition, formalized models of polyphonic organization in liturgical singing entered the region, later coexisting with folk polyphony.

An important layer of continuity concerns the interaction between folk polyphony and the church tradition. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Zonja Ndihmëtare Cathedral Choir in Prizren was already functioning, regularly performing polyphonic sacred works and cultivating stable ensemble-singing skills among the local Albanian population (Breznica, 2023). This example shows that pre-war choral art was primarily associated with Catholic structures, as church choirs were an integral part of the Catholic Church's educational and cultural mission in Kosovo and served as the main centers of polyphonic singing in conditions of limited access to other forms of artistic music. The Ottoman period significantly influenced the configuration of musical life in the region, primarily through the transformation of educational, confessional, and administrative systems (Sağlam and Baydağ, 2026). Until the twentieth century, there was no stable tradition of professional instrumental or vocal-symphonic creativity, and organized forms of polyphonic singing were concentrated mainly in church centers (Feldman, 2020; Bayramova, 2025). At the same time, folk song practice – both monodic and polyphonic – continued to flourish in villages and small towns, ensuring the continuity of local melodic models, modal systems, and rhythmic formulas, which would later be incorporated into the repertoire of choral groups.

The twentieth century was a turning point for the choral life of Kosovo, during which the institutions necessary for the development of organised singing were gradually formed. In 1944, four military brass bands were established in Pristina, Prizren, Gjakova, and Mitrovica, regularly performing concerts and thus inaugurating a new stage in the region's musical life; these ensembles served as a basis for a community of musicians who would later work with vocal groups (Perkola, 2024). Shortly after the Second World War, the first music schools were opened in Pristina and Prizren, laying the educational foundation for training choral

singers and conductors. In the 1950s-1970s, many young Kosovo Albanian musicians studied in Belgrade, Sarajevo, Ljubljana, and other centres of the former Yugoslavia and subsequently returned to Kosovo, where they contributed to the creation of choirs in cultural and artistic societies, educational institutions, and radio broadcasting (Palokaj, 2022). A particularly important place in the history of professional choral practice is occupied by the choir of Radio and Television of Pristina (RTP), established in 1980 and formed mainly from graduates of the Faculty of Music of the University of Pristina (Perkola, 2025). This choir became one of the leading professional vocal ensembles in Yugoslavia during the 1980s, making recordings and festival appearances and performing both Western European and local repertoire. After the RTP choir was liquidated in the early 1990s, its functions were later assumed by the Kosovo Philharmonic State Choir, which officially positions itself as the legal successor to the professional RTP ensemble (Figure 1). Thus, a line of continuity was established between the early professional initiatives in broadcasting and the subsequent formation of the philharmonic infrastructure.

Figure 1. Kosovo philharmonic choir



Source: compiled by the author based on Kosovo Philharmonic Choir, Kosovo (2021).

Against the background of these general processes, urban centers played a key role – primarily Prizren, Peja, and Gjakova. In Prizren, the cultural and artistic society Agimi, founded in November 1944 by the Albanian intellectuals Anton Ceta and Zekirija Rexa, became one of the first secular centers where choral singing assumed a regular and organized form (Breznica, 2023) (Figure 2). For decades, this collective maintained a mixed repertoire of folk songs, stylized arrangements, and fragments of European classics, and its choir performed, among other things, choral parts of operatic works in Prizren even before the emergence of a full-fledged opera stage. In Pristina, the formation of choral culture is associated, on the one hand, with the activities of church and school groups, and on the other, with the work of semi-professional ensembles such as Collegium Cantorum, which since the late 1960s has combined a chamber approach to the repertoire with active festival participation (Palokaj-Perkola, 2025).

Figure 2. Choir at the Agimi cultural society, Kosovo



Source: compiled by the author based on SHKA Agimi wants the building and its activities to be protected by law (2017).

The first examples of art music in Kosovo were *a cappella* works that consisted of stylized arrangements of folk songs; only later did

original compositions appear, although these too often relied on folklore material (The history and culture..., 2026). In the absence of a long-standing compositional tradition, it was the folk song fund that provided the necessary melodic and modal material for the formation of the local choral language: composers mainly worked with already known melodies, harmonizing them, polyphonising individual phrases, and adapting asymmetrical rhythms to the capabilities of the choir (Dhoska and Adami, 2024). Iso-polyphony and other regional forms of polyphonic singing remain the “identifying core” of musical experience, and their features – drone, close intervals, modal sequences – penetrate art genres in one form or another. Choral singing in Kosovo continues to serve as a means of preserving the folk song heritage. For example, children’s choral repertoire still includes a significant proportion of arrangements of folk songs, which teachers perceive as tools for shaping collective memory and cultural identity (Kelmendi and Pajaziti-Drançolli, 2025). In the broader context of the development of music education, the historical stages of the formation of music pedagogy in Kosovo – from church and catechetical forms to state music schools – relied on folk repertoire as the basic teaching material for choral classes.

In conclusion, the historical development of the choral tradition in Kosovo is closely linked to the folk song heritage at all levels – from the Illyrian and Byzantine origins of polyphony and early Christian models of communal singing to the cathedral choirs of the nineteenth century, the cultural and artistic societies of the twentieth century, and modern professional broadcasting and philharmonic groups. Folk song not only provided melodic, modal, and rhythmic material for composers but also shaped a specific vocal thinking – centred on drone undertones, asymmetrical metres, and modality – that determines the character of the choral language of Kosovo Albanians in artistic, educational, and amateur contexts.

3.3. Analysis of folk song adaptations in choral works by Kosovar composers

The two-part work “Posht’ mizorët” by Zekirja Ballata is a typical example of a choral arrangement for a children’s choir with a text on a revolutionary theme (Figure 3). The song is written in the key of G major, in 2/4 time, with a moderato tempo and a character of movement that suggests an energetic but controlled performance. The vocal ranges of both voices – from d’ to d’’ in the first and from b to g’ in the second – provide a comfortable register for the children’s choir, while at the same time allowing for the creation of a feeling of a certain pitch tension in the climax zones. Formally, the work consists of eight-bar phrases; the first phrase begins with the unison of two voices for the first three bars, after which the voices diverge: the first voice takes on the leading melodic line, the second serves as harmonic accompaniment.

Figure 3. Fragment of “Down with the Tyrants” (Posht’ mizorët)

harm. Zekirja Ballata
(1988)

Me hov $\text{♩}=108$

1. **6**
Posht' mi - zo - rët pa - drejt' - si - a Të - rë

2. **6**
Posht' mi - zo - rët pa - drejt' - si - a Të - rë

1. **9**
po - pu - lli thë - rret Ik - ni prej nesh mi - zo - ri - na

2. **9**
po - pu - lli thë - rret Ik - ni prej nesh mi - zo - ri - na

1. **15**
po af - ro - het di - ta jon' Ik - ni prej nesh mi - zo -

2. **15**
po af - ro - het di - ta jon' Ik - ni prej nesh mi - zo -

1. **17**
ri - na po af - ro - het di - ta jon', di - ta jon'.

2. **17**
-ri - na po af - ro - het di - ta jon' di - ta jon'

Source: compiled by the author.

This construction creates a clear dramaturgy: the unison at the beginning marks the collective gesture of expression (emphasizing the shared, “choral” subjectivity of the text), while the subsequent division into two voices highlights the melodic contour and simultaneously stabilizes the harmonic support. The second phrase, beginning on the second crotchet of bar eight, continues the main melodic line in the first voice; the second voice remains accompanying, and the phrase is repeated with an added measure-lengthening at the end. The entire texture is organised homophonically: the text is articulated synchronously in both parts (the “note-against-note” principle), which greatly enhances clarity of diction and makes the work suitable for pedagogical use with children’s ensembles. Vertical interval relationships are primarily based on traditional consonances, but an important element of micro-dramaturgy appears in episodes featuring an augmented fifth resolving to a sixth. This dissonant point functions as a transitional element in the harmonic movement, introducing a brief deviation from diatonic normality while preserving overall tonal stability.

Given that most of Ballata’s choral and orchestral works are characterized by a more complex rhythmic and harmonic structure – particularly non-standard meters and extended tonality – the composer’s conscious return to a classical harmonic model is evident (Çipa, 2022). Functional simplicity (reliance on tonic, dominant, subdominant), regular phrase periodicity, and a limited number of harmonic deviations are combined with minimal dissonant clusters that act as expressive accents rather than structural disruptions.

Given the harmonic simplicity and regular phrase periodicity, this places the work in the homophonic harmonization model because of its clear, straightforward texture and functional tonal plan, focused on pedagogical use and rhythmic regularity.

The arrangement of the folk song “Ani Çilma Derën” for female choir is by Lorenz Antoni and was first published by the Composers’

Union of Serbia in Belgrade in 1970 (Ramadani, 2025) (Figure 4). Antoni occupies a significant position in the history of Kosovo music as one of the first professional composers and, simultaneously, as a key ethnomusicologist who systematised Albanian folklore and transferred it into the sphere of choral and orchestral music.

Figure 4. Fragment “Oh, Don’t Open the Door” (“Ani Çilma Derën”) Lorenc Antoni

The musical score is written for five vocal parts: Soprano Solo, Soprano I, Soprano II, Alto I, and Alto II. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor) and the time signature is 2/4. The score is divided into systems, with measures 6-12, 13-17, 18-22, and 23-27. Tempo markings include quarter note = 66 and quarter note = 88. Dynamic markings range from *mf* (mezzo-forte) to *ff* (fortissimo). The lyrics are in Albanian and describe a scene where a woman asks not to open the door to a man who has come from the city.

Lyrics (Albanian):
 ma-ji mo-llat nuk t'i du-e, Lam-ta-ra-ni - ne, lam-ta-ra-ni - ne, ta-ra-ni-no
 ma-lit te no-na me shku-e. f
 ma-ji mo-llat nuk t'i du-e, Lam - ta-ra, lam - ta-ra, ni - no -
 ma-lit te no-na me shku-e. f
 nuk t'i, mo-llat nuk t'i du-e, Lam - ta-ra, lam - ta-ra, ni - no -
 na me, te no-na me shku-e. f
 nuk t'i, mo-llat nuk t'i du-e, Lam - ta-ra, lam - ta-ra, ni - no -
 na me, te no-na me shku-e. f
 Pa-sha mujn e Se më ka ra
 ve. p A-ni çil-ma de - rën se po t'jap qur-shi-ja. mf (bocca chiusa)
 ve. p A-ni çil-ma de - rën se po t'jap qur-shi-ja. mf
 ve. p A-ni çil-ma de - rën, moj. mf
 Lam-ta-ra-ni-no-ve. p A-ni çil-ma de - rën, moj. mf
 ma - jii qur-shi - jui s'i du - e, f
 ma - lli te ba - ba me shku - e. f
 Oj, f
 Oj, f
 marc. sempre
 Lam-ta-ra-ni - ne, lam-ta-ra-ni - ne, ff
 marc. sempre
 Lam-ta-ra-ni - ne, ff
 Oj, poco cresc. ff
 Oj, poco cresc. ff
 ta - ra ni-no ve, Lam-ta-ra-ni ne, lam-ta-ra-ni ne, ta - ra ni-no - ve. poco cresc. ff
 lam-ta-ri-ni-no - ve. Lam-ta-ra-ni ne, lam-ta-ra-ni-no - ve. ff
 Antacca

Source: compiled by the author.

The arrangement of “Ani Çilma Derën” is based on a stylised folk melody in the key of G minor, in 2/4 time, with several clearly defined four-bar phrases that are repeated. The main melodic line is carried by the first soprano in the first two phrases and is mostly accompanied by the second soprano in parallel thirds. The alto voices provide harmonic support, situated in the middle register and built mainly on the principal triads and their substitutes. Already in this initial configuration, Antoni’s typical procedure is evident: the leading voice remains as close as possible to the folk prototype, while the other voices supply vertical compaction without radically altering the modal basis. In the third phrase, the first soprano continues the melodic line, but the accompanying voices gain greater independence: short motivic responses in soprano II and the altos create an echo-like effect, intonationally grounded in the main melody but rhythmically offset. The fourth phrase repeats the first, but in the second bar, the alto parts introduce chromatic tones that create a momentary harmonic intensification. Chromaticism in the middle register does not undermine the G-minor tonal center but produces a brief “darkening” effect that enhances the expressiveness of the textual climax. The fifth phrase returns to the material of the second, again concentrating the main melody in the first soprano and providing accompaniment through stable tonic and subdominant functions. The sixth phrase (eight bars) is a variation of the third: the main melody is now assigned to the alto voices (first alto I, then alto II in imitative entries), while the sopranos assume an accompanying role with sustained tones and short ornamental gestures. Thus, within the strophic form, Antoni employs a simple but effective technique of internal variation – a shift in the melodic carrier and a redistribution of functions between registers.

The texture is predominantly homophonic, but in some episodes – particularly where short motivic imitation appears – elements of polyphonic thinking emerge. The textual relationships

between the voices are characterized by heterometry and heterorhythm: individual syllables are lengthened or compressed across voices, creating slight shifts in accent while preserving overall rhythmic clarity. This type of textual deployment corresponds to the tendency, described in recent scholarship, to combine folk strophicity with discreet polyphony in Albanian choral arrangements – where the melody retains its recognizable folk contour and polyphony primarily enhances sonority and shades harmonic color. In conclusion, “Ani Çilma Derën” demonstrates a model in which the adaptation of a folk song for a female choir involves preserving the strophic structure, relying on parallel thirds in the upper register, balancing the use of chromaticism, and flexibly distributing the melodic function between the soprano and alto parts.

The arrangement of the folk song “Gush Sharavelli” for male octet, created by Bahri Mulliqi in 1988, represents a different type of adaptation, focused on combining the solo-ensemble principle with elements of staged performance (Perkola, 2025) (Figure 5). Mulliqi belongs to a generation of composers formed within the already established system of musical education in Kosovo; in reviews of the art music of Albanians in Kosovo, he is regarded as one of the leading figures of the post-war school of composers, whose work is rooted in transformed folklore material.

Figure 5. Fragment of the musical score of the folk song “Gush Sharavelli”

Gush Sharavelli

B. Mulliqi

Tenor I: Tja-ra-nam e na-na na

Tenor II: Tja-ra-nam e na-na na

Baritone: Tja-ra-nam e na-na na

Bass: Tja-ra-nam e na-na **SOLO** Gus'sha-ra-ve-li ja - ra ve - li gush sha-ra va - ta

2

T. I: gu - sha sha - ra ve - li ja - ra ve - li. gu - sha sha - ra ve - li ja - ra ve - li.

T. II: gu - sha sha - ra ve - li ja - ra ve - li. gu - sha sha - ra ve - li ja - ra ve - li.

Bar.: gu - sha sha - ra ve - li ja - ra ve - li. gu - sha sha - ra ve - li ja - ra ve - li.

B.: gu - sha sha - ra ve - li ja - ra ve - li gu - sha sha - ra ve - li ja - ra ve - li

15

T. I: Gush sha - ra vel mos u nger - dhes se ta fus ni fla - ka - resh

T. II: Gush sha - ra vel mos u nger - dhes se ta fus ni fla - ka - resh

Bar.: Gush sha - ra vel mos u nger - dhes se ta fus ni fla - ka - resh **SOLO** Gush sha - ra ve - li.

B.: Gush sha - ra vel mos u nger - dhes se ta fus ni fla - ka - resh Gush sha - ra ve - li

20

T. I: 1. ja - ra ve - li ja - ra ve - li ja - ra ve - li

T. II: ja - ra ve - li ja - ra ve - li ja - ra ve - li

Bar.: - - -

B.: ja - ra ve - li ja - ra ve - li ja - ra ve - li

Source: compiled by the author.

The version of “Gush Sharavelli” for male octet is written in the key of D major, in 2/2 time. The vocal ranges (tenor I: f’-f”, tenor II: f’-d”, baritone: f-a, bass: A-a) provide a balanced vertical field in which the extreme voices outline the supporting frame while the middle voices create internal harmonic fullness. The work opens with a two-bar tutti introduction, followed by the first eight-bar period, constructed from two-bar motifs repeated four times with different text. The main melody in this section is performed by a bass solo, while the accompanying voices sustain pedal tones derived from the principal tonal functions. The text in the accompanying

parts is reduced to a syllable, functioning essentially as a sonic “phoneme” that performs purely harmonic and rhythmic roles. In the second period (also eight bars), the material is repeated but now in tutti: the main melody is taken over by tenor I, while the other voices continue to provide harmonic support, maintaining the principle of two-bar motivic articulation. Further development includes a solo episode (baritone and bass in unison), after which the ensemble returns to tutti. The ending is organised according to a prima/seconda volta scheme: in the first instance, the baritone sustains a long A while the other voices complete the period; in the second, the first three bars reproduce the configuration of the first ending, but the motif is repeated twice, the final note is reduced to a crotchet, and the baritone is silent – creating the effect of a “compressed” coda. The entire composition is built around a single two-bar motif that acts as the thematic core. This concentrated motivic organization is combined with narrow vocal ranges in all parts and a homophonic texture (both harmonically and textually), which ensures relative ease of performance. However, within this simplicity, Mulliqi introduces significant expressive elements: gradual dynamic intensification in the second period, alternation of solo and ensemble episodes, and the use of a “neutral” syllable in accompanying voices, which contrasts with the text-bearing solo line. In “Gush Sharavelli”, the humorous, light character of the song is achieved not through complex harmony or rhythmic disruption, but through clear formal organization, solo/tutti contrast, the effect of collective syllabic singing, and gradual dynamic expansion.

Esat Rizvanolli’s choral composition “N’mjedis t’ballit” for mixed choir belongs to a group of works in which the adaptation of a folk song is associated with the use of asymmetrical metrorhythmic patterns characteristic of the Balkan region (Figure 6). Rizvanolli appears in musicological reviews as one of the first professional composers of Kosovo, alongside Lorenc Antoni, Rexho Muliqi, and others, whose work shaped the canon of choral and vocal-instrumental repertoire based on folklore (Breznica, 2018).

Figure 6. Sheet music for the choral composition “N’mjedis t’ballit” (In the Middle of the Forehead) by Esat Rizvanolli

Esat Rizvanolli

Moderato cantabile $J = 60$

SOPRANO
mf N'mjedis' r'ba-llit ma... ke... nit... pi - kë, shta - tin moj
 si sel vi vi hoj, *mf*

ALTO
mf
 shta - tin moj si sel - vi si - sel - hoj, *mf*

TENOR
 N'rojedis' r'ba - llit. ma... ke - oji pi - ke,
 shta - tin moj si sel - vi si - sel - hoj, *mf*

BASS
mf
 shta - tin moj si sel - vi si - sel - hoj, *mf*

11
mf hoj, hoj *f* p'cka i ke çit dash - no - rit
mf hoj, hoj, *f* p'cka i ke çit dash - no - rit

16
 na - ze kur - i del *f* o... moj si pe - rri rri - hoj
 o moj o moj si pe rri - hoj
 na - ze kur i del *f* o moj si pe rri hoj

21
 rri do - la n'pen - xhe - re sy - nin kur ta pash
 rri *f* Do - la n - pen - xhe sy - nin kur ta pash
 rri *f* Do - la n - pen - xhe sy - nin kur ta pash

26
 pi - va i got' ra - mar - sha - lla të thashë. *p* Do - la... n - pen - xhe
 pi - va i got' ra - mar - sha - lla të thashë... *p* Do - la

31
 sy - nin kur ta pash' *mf* prej me - ra - kur
 sy't moj vashë *f* mar - sha - lla të thash' *ff* mar - sha - lla të thash'
 do - la n'pen xhe - re sy - nin sy - nin kur... tapash' prej me - ra - kur... *mf*
 tyt moj vashë mar - sha - lla të thash' *ff* mar - sha - lla të thash' *ff* rit.

2. *tempo 1* 3. *Coda rit.*

Source: compiled by the author.

Formally, “N’mjedis t’ballit” belongs to the category of strophic songs with the structure a+b+c (chorus)+coda. Part a consists of an eight-bar phrase, repeated twice, in 7/8 time, Moderato cantabile tempo, and the key of F minor. The main melody is introduced by the soprano, supported by the alto in diatonic harmony; the

tenor and bass join in the second bar. An important feature is the canonic deployment of the text: the soprano and alto move together on one line, while the tenor and bass move together on another, forming a two-layered polyphonic texture in which the text accents are partially offset from each other. Part b also comprises eight bars, followed by an additional three-bar continuation that is repeated twice. The first bar of this continuation uses 5/8 time, while the next two return to 7/8. Part c (the refrain) shifts to Allegro giocoso, 2/4 time, with modulation to A major. Here, a different strategy is employed: the refrain is built from two-bar motifs, first introduced by the tenor and bass in parallel thirds, and then taken up by the soprano and altos with ornamental figures. The first four bars demonstrate a distinctly polyphonic organization of the text: individual phrases enter in different voices with temporal displacement, forming a dialogic structure. The eight-bar chorus is then repeated with different text, followed by a short two-bar forte coda that summarises the accumulated energy of the preceding development.

The harmonic language preserves clear tonal centers (F minor in parts a and b, A major in part c), while the modal coloring of the melody in sections with asymmetrical meter refers to Balkan modal patterns with characteristic stepwise seconds and stable supports on subtonic degrees. A significant factor in the reception of the work is its accessibility for amateur choirs: despite the complex metro rhythm, the harmony is largely based on stable functional progressions and avoids excessive dissonance; the strophic organisation facilitates memorization; and the expressive contrast between the minor, somewhat plaintive parts a/b and the major, playful refrain c provides clear emotional and structural architectonics. It is precisely the combination of Balkan metro rhythms, textual canonicity, and an expressive refrain structure that contributed to the work's popularity and its inclusion in the repertoire of amateur mixed choirs, through which elements of more complex rhythms in asymmetrical metres were gradually introduced.

A comparative analysis of the four works discussed allows several typological models of folk song adaptation in the choral music of Kosovo to be identified (Table 1).

Table 1. Typological models of folk song adaptation in choral music of Kosovo

Type of adaptation	Work/Composer	Key musical features	Stylistic techniques
1. Homophonic harmonisation with minimal complexity (children's and educational choirs)	<i>Posht' mizorët</i> , Polyphonic strophicity with asymmetrical meters (mixed choirs) Zekirya Ballata	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular periods - Simple functional tonal plan - Parallel textual presentation - Local dissonant intervals as transits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct melody harmonisation - Educational orientation - Rhythmic regularity
2. Homophonic-harmonic model with elements of polyphony (female choirs)	<i>Ani Çilma Derën</i> , Lorenz Antoni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leading melody in the first soprano - Parallel thirds in the upper register - Chromatic deviations - Internal variability of phrases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Redistribution of melodic function between voices - Combination of folk melody with harmonic restraint
3. Motive-variation model (male ensembles)	<i>Gush Sharavelli</i> , Bahri Mulliki	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One two-bar motivic core - Homophonic texture - Pedal supports in accompanying voices - Alternating solo and tutti episodes - Humorous character 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formal and textural contrasts - Sequential structure of motif repetitions - Use of "neutral" syllables
4. Polyphonic strophicity with asymmetrical meters (mixed choirs)	<i>N'mjedis t'ballit</i> , Esat Rizvanolli	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asymmetrical time signatures (7/8, 5/8)+2/4 in the refrain - Canonical textual presentation - Polyphonic dialogue of voices - Minor-major contrast - Modal modulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Combination of strophicity with polyphony - Modal-rhythmic organization typical of Balkan folklore - Ornamental motifs in the upper voices

Source: compiled by the author.

The analysis of the four types of choral arrangements shows that Kosovo composers have developed a number of stable approaches to the treatment of folk melodies, which differ in structure, textural organization, and performance purpose. In works intended for children's and educational groups, the emphasis is on textural transparency and stability of harmonic movement,

allowing folklore material to serve as a pedagogical resource. Arrangements for female choir demonstrate a gradual increase in complexity: while the melody retains its traditional intonational features, it acquires new expressive qualities through internal variation and local chromatic inflections. In male ensembles, the construction of forms based on motivic cyclical movement predominates, whereby repeated two-bar units become the basis of the dramaturgy. Mixed choirs, by contrast, offer a field for more complex experimentation – particularly in the realms of rhythmic asymmetry and polyphonic text organization – bringing these arrangements closer to broader Balkan traditions (Guliyeva and Kopanitsa, 2024). This differentiation testifies to the flexibility of the local choral tradition and to composers' ability to adapt folk material to the capacities of specific choral formations.

Common features across all four examples include: reliance on a clearly recognisable folk melody as the principal structural element; the predominance of strophic forms with repeated phrases and periods; the use of a limited set of harmonic functions (tonic, subdominant, dominant) with localised enrichments (chromaticism, passing dissonances); and the presence of rhythmic patterns associated with dance-like or march-like models (2/4 for children's and women's choirs, 7/8 and 5/8 for mixed choirs). The differences relate primarily to the level of polyphony, the extent of the use of asymmetrical metres, the method of distributing the melodic function among the voices, and the treatment of the text (ranging from complete homophony to intricate heterorhythmic layering). In this sense, one can observe an evolution of the choral language – from relatively simple harmonization of a folk song for children's or women's choir to more complex forms of stylization, in which folklore material is integrated into a professional choral texture with polyphonic organization, asymmetrical meters, and modal variability.

4. Discussion

The choral adaptations of folk songs in Kosovo present unique characteristics when compared to broader European models. Firstly, Kosovo's institutional framework for folk song adaptation is significantly shaped by education and choral structures, particularly within educational choirs, which serve as the key vehicle for preserving and transmitting the cultural heritage. Secondly, the use of asymmetrical metres in Kosovar choral works, such as 7/8 and 5/8, emerges as a primary marker of local identity, distinguishing Kosovo's adaptations from more standardized European models. Finally, the polyphony in Kosovo's choral arrangements often serves as a compositional device, evolving from the region's traditional practices. These features highlight how Kosovo's choral adaptations blend historical traditions and innovative musical processes, creating a distinctive path within the European context.

The results demonstrated that the adaptation of folk songs in the choral environment of Kosovo operated as a system of multi-level technical and stylistic procedures, in which folklore functioned simultaneously as a source of melodic material, a historical model of polyphony, and a mechanism for the formation of cultural identity. Such structuring enables us to assess how folklore moved from the sphere of everyday singing into the academic context and how the extent of its transformation changed. This multidimensionality correlated with discussions about the nature of authenticity in folklore, which became central in the works of L. Hagmann and F.A. Morrissey (2020). These researchers interpreted the folk song as an object comprising multiple layers of authenticity – everyday, staged, archival, reconstructed.

Compared with this approach, the findings from the Kosovo material demonstrated that the composer's adaptation functioned not as a loss of authenticity but as the creation of another form of it, based on controlled polyphonisation and the adaptation of metrorhythm. The difference lay in the focus: in the Kosovo examples, authenticity was preserved primarily through melodic

and modal profiles, while the model proposed by L. Hagmann and F.A. Morrissey (2020) concerned rethinking authenticity as a socially constructed category. However, both approaches converged on the key point that folklore in choral performance acquires a new function, not as a “copy” of the original source, but as a meaningful transformation.

Another important aspect of the results concerned the continuity of the polyphonic tradition, which could be traced from early Illyrian-Byzantine models through the church singing centers of the nineteenth century to the institutionalized music education of the twentieth century. This long historical process showed that choral art in Kosovo was formed not only within academic institutions but also in social environments linked to confessional structures, urban self-government, and cultural and artistic societies. A parallel to this interpretation can be found in the study by I. Šentevska (2020), which analysed the emergence of neofolklore in Yugoslavia and the way musical practices functioned as instruments of social advancement. Although I. Šentevska did not examine choral music but a popular folklorised genre, the correspondence lay in the idea that musical models acted as social markers. Nonetheless, unlike Yugoslav neofolklore – whose aim was to modernise peasant song for the ideological needs of the socialist state – the Kosovo choral tradition maintained continuity primarily through educational and church institutions rather than through a politically oriented genre.

A further aspect revealed by the results concerned the choir’s role as an instrument for preserving and transmitting cultural identity, particularly in children’s and amateur repertoire. Works such as “Posht’ mizorët” demonstrated that even the simplest arrangements served not only pedagogical but also identificatory purposes – through a recognisable melody, a collective gesture of unison, and homophonic diction. A similar interpretation of the cultural function of choral singing was substantiated by F.R. Paz et al. (2023), who examined the relationship between choral performance and the construction of identity through media.

They demonstrated that the choir creates a communicative space in which tradition is preserved and reproduced publicly. In the Kosovo material, this thesis was confirmed: folk arrangements functioned not only to preserve the melody but also to integrate it into collective memory. The difference was that the digital dimension emphasised by F.R. Paz et al. was not decisive for the Kosovo choral tradition, where educational and concert platforms remained the primary channels of transmission.

The question of the transformation of folklore in changing cultural environments formed the basis for analyzing asymmetrical meters and modal-rhythmic models in "N'mjedis t'ballit". The asymmetry of 7/8 and 5/8, the polyphonic organization of the text, and the alternation of minor and major sections demonstrated that the rhythmic component in Kosovar arrangements was not incidental but served as a key marker of stylistic identity. This phenomenon partly echoed the conclusions of S. Ping et al. (2024), who examined the evolution of traditional Chinese "small songs" in the context of cultural change. The central idea of their study was that preserving rhythmic structure enables folklore genres to function in new social conditions without losing their essential identifying features. The Kosovar material confirmed this pattern: the preservation of uneven metre acted as a marker of local tradition even in choral works with a developed compositional structure. At the same time, whereas rhythmic evolution in the Chinese samples was associated with medialisation, in the Kosovar case it was linked to the transition from monody to choral polyphony.

Also important for the analytical section was the study of the motivic-variational principle embodied in "Gush Sharavelli". Its concentric structure, built around a single two-bar motif, and the alternation between solo and tutti demonstrated how folklore serves as a foundation for staged interaction and cyclical dramaturgy. This approach partially correlated with the conclusions of Y. Gong et al. (2024), who analysed the characteristics of Baihu folk songs and their formal organisation. They emphasized that cyclical motif repetition functions as a mechanism for stabilizing

form and transmitting collective emotionality. In the Kosovar arrangements, a similar principle was used to achieve internal structural coherence within the choral work. The difference lay in the function of repetition: in the Bai context, it fulfilled a ritual role, whereas in Kosovo it served formative and dramaturgical purposes.

Another aspect of the results concerned the boundary between didactic and professional forms of stylisation, most clearly observable in the contrast between the simplicity of “Posht’ mizorët” and the complexity of “N’mjedis t’ballit”. This spectrum enabled tracing the evolution of the local compositional school and the growing demand for more complex forms of choral writing. A similar developmental logic was identified by A. Tkach (2021) in his study of the stylisation of Ukrainian folk songs, where he emphasised that elementary harmonisations gradually gave way to more elaborate polyphonic constructions. The Kosovo material corroborated this thesis, as the development of choral language proceeded from homophony towards polyphonisation. The difference lay in the primary catalyst for increased complexity: in Kosovo, it was asymmetrical metre that drove this evolution, whereas in the Ukrainian material the modal-melodic component played a dominant role (Sachok, 2023).

Another dimension of the results concerned the interaction between folklore and authorial style, particularly in the context of female and male choirs. This issue may be compared with S. Kotrikadze’s (2022) observations on the transformation of Georgian folklore in authorial song. S. Kotrikadze demonstrated that authorial interpretation inevitably alters the modal-intonational profile of the song, while still preserving the key identifiers of the tradition. The Kosovo material showed a similar dynamic: composers allowed internal variability and changes in the distribution of functions between voices, yet left the main melodic line almost untouched. The principal difference lay in the role of polyphony. In the Georgian material, polyphony was primary; in the Kosovo material,

it was secondary – created within the framework of compositional adaptation rather than inherited as an original structural feature.

The dimension of musical education acquired particular significance in interpreting the results. The findings showed that choral singing in Kosovo was integrated into all levels of education – from children’s choirs to professional philharmonic ensembles – thereby creating conditions for the continuity of the choral tradition. This aligns with K.’s conclusions. Howard (2020), who explored changes in educational practices within choral pedagogy. K. Howard demonstrated that pedagogical models evolved from normative choral discipline towards approaches emphasising cultural diversity and the interpretation of tradition. Against this background, the Kosovo experience appears to be a system in which tradition was embedded in education from its inception rather than incorporated later. Thus, the Kosovo model demonstrates vertical continuity, whereas the models described by K. Howard address the horizontal expansion of cultural repertoires.

Therefore, the study’s results are important for understanding the development of choral culture in countries with strong folklore traditions. They indicate that the adaptation of folk songs is not a fixed process but a variable pattern, sensitive to historical, social, and genre factors. Comparison with other studies has shown that the Kosovo material fits within broader trends of folklore transformation, while retaining unique features related to metrorhythm, modality, and the role of female and male syllables.

5. Conclusions

As a result of the conducted research, it was established that the adaptation of folk songs in the choral music of Kosovo is a multi-level process in which folklore sources are viewed through the prism of professional intonational, textural, and form-building models. The analysis of European approaches to the choral processing of folklore showed that the Kosovo tradition correlates with several established practices – homophonic harmonisation,

the polyphonisation of strophic structures, and the use of modal-modal models that preserve the authentic profile of folk melodies. A comparison of these directions confirmed that, in the Kosovo context, the leading principles remain the preservation of the melodic contour, reliance on modal prototypes, and the adaptation of rhythmic formulas to a particular choir's performance capabilities.

The results confirmed the presence of clear typological differentiation in choral adaptations. In children's and educational choirs, transparent homophony, regular periodicity, and stable harmonic movement dominate, reflecting the pedagogical orientation of these works. In female choirs, a gradual increase in textural complexity was revealed through phrase variability, parallel intervals, and localized chromatic shifts, which create heightened expressiveness without departing from the folkloric foundation. Male ensembles were shown to be a field for the application of the motivic-variational technique: the findings demonstrated that their construction is based on the cyclical organization of two-bar elements, the alternation of solo and tutti episodes, and the use of neutral vocal syllables as structural markers. The analysis of works for mixed choir demonstrated that asymmetrical metrorhythmic patterns and polyphonic organization of the text serve as key means of stylization and, simultaneously, as mechanisms for preserving Balkan musical traditions.

The analysis also showed that the historical development of Kosovo's choral culture has a consistent and stable character. Byzantine melodies, Catholic choral and pedagogical traditions, the military orchestras of the mid-twentieth century, and the formation of professional radio and television choirs collectively created the multi-layered infrastructure necessary for the adaptation of folk material. It was established that the structural constancy of iso-polyphony, archaic diaphony, and traditional polyphonic models formed the prerequisites for the effective involvement of folk melodies in professional choral composition. An important aspect of the final synthesis was the identification of common characteristics in adaptation strategies. The results showed that,

regardless of the differences between choral compositions, all four adaptation types share the following features: preservation of folkloric strophicity, a limited number of harmonic functions, a stable tonal centre, and the use of texturally simple yet intonationally recognisable elements. This demonstrated that the Kosovo choral school adheres to a principle of careful stylisation, in which the transmission of an authentic melodic profile is paramount.

However, the study has certain objective limitations. First, the analysis covered only four representative works, allowing the identification of typological patterns but not enabling a quantitative assessment of the prevalence of each model. Second, the absence of digital archives for part of Kosovo's musical heritage complicated broader comparative analysis with regional traditions. Prospects for further research lie in expanding the corpus of analyzed works, which would allow for a quantitatively substantiated mapping of choral adaptation models; in introducing ethnographic and audio-analytical methods to study performance practice; and in creating digital repositories of Kosovo choral arrangements to support the systematization and accessibility of the material.

The results of this study provide important information for the creation of choral music education programs, especially in Kosovo. The identified models of folk song adaptation can help educators create more varied and culturally relevant choral programs by providing guidance on repertoire selection criteria. Additionally, creating structured learning pathways for choral ensembles can be facilitated by the pedagogical progression from homophonic harmonization to more complicated forms, such as polyphonic strophicity with asymmetrical meters. Folk customs must be preserved through digital repositories and annotated editions in order to preserve cultural heritage and provide easily accessible materials for choral settings in both professional and educational settings.

References

- Albanian folk iso-polyphony 15 years in UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage list. 2020. <https://invest-in-albania.org/albanian-folk-iso-polyphony-15-years-in-unescos-intangible-cultural-heritage-list>.
- ALEXANDRU, M., DELIOS, A., GORGOLITSA, A., KANAKIS, S., SPANOUDAKIS, D., PAPATZALAKIS, D., CHALEPLIDOU, M. 2018. "Traditional innovation" in Byzantine Chant: The case of kalophonia. **Journal of the International Society for Orthodox Music**, 3, 39-63. <https://journal.fi/jisocm/article/view/88715/47881>.
- BARTÓK, B. 2026. **Four Hungarian Folk Songs**. New York: Boosey & Hawkes. <https://www.schott-music.com/en/four-hungarian-folk-songs-no11955.html>.
- BAYRAMOVA, A. 2025. Traditional musical instruments in the light of museum interpretation. **Asian-European Music Research Journal**, 15, 102-109 <https://doi.org/10.30819/aemr.15-10>.
- BELOVA, G., GEORGIEVA, G. 2025. A Brief Overview of the History of Journalism in Bulgaria (1878-1944). **Historia I Swiat**, 14, 267-276. <https://doi.org/10.34739/his.2025.14.16>.
- BIZHGA, D. 2020. The influence of folklore on the cultivated Albanian music of the XX century. **European Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies**, 5(3), 47-55. <https://doi.org/10.26417/237vbd89w>.
- BOBUL, I. 2022. World music at the crossing point of global and ethnocultural ones. **Notes on Art Criticism**, 22(1), 108-115. <https://doi.org/10.32461/2226-2180.41.2022.262986>.
- BREZNICA, R.K. 2018. General overview of art music in Kosovo: Social and political impact. **Musicologist**, 2(2), 127-149. <https://doi.org/10.33906/musicologist.475994>.

BREZNICA, R.K. 2023. Art music of Albanians in Kosovo: First steps towards initiation and development phase division. **Rast Musicology Journal**, 11(1), 1-29. <https://doi.org/10.12975/rastmd.20231111>.

ÇETIK, Ö. 2025. An analysis of Bulgarian music and Bulgarian folk songs in terms of Makam and Usûl. **Yegah Musicology Journal**, 8(4), 3720–3738. <https://doi.org/10.51576/ymd.1813849>.

ÇIPA, I. 2022. Music language of Zeqirja Ballata in piano work “Echi Delle Montagne Maledette”. **Journal of Positive School Psychology**, 6(3), 5097-5104 <https://journalppw.com/index.php/jpsp/article/view/2721/1747>.

DHOSKA, A., ADAMI, E. 2024. Understanding Albania’s musical landscape: An overview of current trends and influences. **Journal of Arts and Humanities Science**, 1(1), 1-6. https://jahs.al/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/JAHS_1.pdf.

DOLI, K. 2023. Investigation of Sufi music tradition in Kosovo in the 21st century with intercultural approach. **Journal of Music Theory and Transcultural Music Studies**, 1(1), 23-51. <https://jmmtms.com/index.php/jmmtms/article/view/2>.

FELDMAN, W.Z. 2020. Researching musical relations between city, town, and village in the Southern, Central and Northern Balkans, from the 18th to the 20th centuries. **Musicology Today: Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest**, 11(4(44)), 243-257. <https://musicologytoday.ro/back-issues/nr-44/studies/researching-musical-relations-between-city-town-and-village-in-the-southern-central-and-northern-balkans-from-the-18th-to-the-20th-centuries/>.

Folk Music in Bartok’s Works. 2026. Folk music in Bartók’s compositions. <https://bartok-nepzene.zti.hu/en/introduction>.

GJIKOLLI, A. 2024. Kosovar women and their contribution to the development of artistic music in Kosovo in the period 1972-1990. In: E. Hajrizi (Ed.), **Proceedings of the 13th Annual**

International Conference International Conference Modern Music and Audio Production. Prishtine: UBT-Higher Education Institution. <https://knowledgecenter.ubt-uni.net/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4712&context=conference#page=46>.

GONG, Y., JIRAJARUPAT, P., ZHANG, Y. 2024. Music form and performance techniques of Bayu folk songs. **International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies**, 12(3), 50-57. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1435020>.

GROZDEW-KOŁACIŃSKA, W. 2020. The phenomenon of "Bulgarian voices" – from archaic diaphony to contemporary choral music. **Music**, 65(3), 122-149. <https://doi.org/10.36744/m.571>.

GULIYEVA, I., & KOPANITSA, L. 2024. Folklore in contemporary music: Revival of cultural traditions. **Interdisciplinary Cultural and Humanities Review**, 3(2), 24-34. <https://doi.org/10.59214/cultural/2.2024.24>.

HAGMANN, L., MORRISSEY, F.A. 2020. Multiple authenticities of folk songs. In: T. Claviez (Ed.), *Critique of Authenticity* (pp. 183-206). Wilmington: Vernon Press. <https://vernonpress.com/book/926?srsId=AfmBOorCuDWvss7ugTZpQfpK3qpxlXRLzsdXSxDImDACtc5RoBW4pGB>.

HASHANI, Y., DUGOLLI, B. 2024. The National Defense Committee of Kosovo and the Albanian state towards the displacement of the Albanians of Kosovo in 1918-1924. **Historia I Swiat**, 13, 371-382. <https://doi.org/10.34739/his.2024.13.22>.

HOWARD, K. 2020. Knowledge practices: Changing perceptions and pedagogies in choral music education. **International Journal of Research in Choral Singing**, 8, 2-21. <https://researchonline.stthomas.edu/esploro/outputs/journalArticle/Knowledge-Practices-Changing-Perceptions-and-Pedagogies/991015132069003691>.

KELMENDI, A., NIMANI, H. 2024. Musical folklore of Rugova: Perspectives on Song, dance, and cultural heritage of the inhabitants of the mountains of Kosovo. **Music Today**, 24, e.77208. <https://doi.org/10.5216/mh.v24.77208>.

KELMENDI, A., PAJAZITI-DRANÇOLLI, M. 2025. Children's choral songs as a socio-cultural tool in shaping collective consciousness. **Music Today**, 25, e82418. <https://doi.org/10.5216/mh.v25.82418>.

KHODJAYEV, J. 2022. Adaptation of folk songs for the acappella choir. **International Journal of Social Science & Interdisciplinary Research**, 11(2), 46-50. <https://gejournal.net/index.php/IJSSIR/article/view/215>.

Kosovo Philharmonic Choir, Kosovo. 2021. <https://ohridskoletto.com.mk/en/events/kosovo-philharmonic-choir-kosovo>.

KOTRIKADZE, S. 2022. The issue of folklore in contemporary author's songs in Georgian folk music. **Musicologist**, 6(2), 210-223. <https://doi.org/10.33906/musicologist.1079964>.

LUZHA, B., BREZNICA, R.K. 2024. The analysis of the development of artistic music in Kosovo from the historical and educational perspective. **Rast Musicology Journal**, 12(1), 27-45. <https://doi.org/10.12975/rastmd.20241212>.

MENG, Y., LIU, M. 2023. Exploring the inheritance and historical evolution of cultural values from the perspective of folk songs and chorus. **Heritage**, 6(2), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.52152/heranca.v6i2.794>.

ONDERDONK, J. 2025. Ralph Vaughan Williams's original hymn tunes: Congregational aesthetics and a revised works list. **Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle**, 1, 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1017/rrc.2025.10005>.

PALOKAJ, K. 2022. Music practices in Kosovo (before 1950s): On the background of amateurism and cultural-artistic societies activity's.

In: **UBT International Conference**. Lipjan: UBT-Higher Education Institution <https://knowledgecenter.ubt-uni.net/conference/2022/all-events/53>.

PALOKAJ-PERKOLA, K. 2025. Mark Kaçinari and the “Collegium Cantorum” choir: An important chapter in the musical history of Kosovo. <https://www.koha.net/en/shtojca-kulture/mark-kacinari-dhe-kori-collegium-cantorum-nje-kapitull-i-rendesishem-ne-historine-muzikore-te-kosoves>.

PAZ, F.R., MASUNAH, J., MILYARTINI, R. 2023. Cultural identity in choral performance through digital media. In: **Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Arts and Design Education** (pp. 426-436). Dordrecht: Atlantis Press. https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-100-5_57.

PERKOLA, K. 2024. **History of Art Music and Musicology in Kosovo from 1945 to 2020**. Zagreb: University of Zagreb. <https://dr.nsk.hr/en/object/ffzg:11855>.

PERKOLA, K. 2025. The presence of Kosovo’s art music and performers at some major Yugoslav music festivals (1950s-1980s): A historical overview. **Art of Music**, 56(1), 153-175. <https://hrcak.srce.hr/en/334241>.

PING, S., CHUANGPRAKHON, S., SANTAVEESUK, P., YOU, L. 2024. The evolution of Dong small songs and cultural change in Chinese folk music. **Journal of Ecohumanism**, 3(3), 1530-1540. <https://doi.org/10.62754/joe.v3i3.3335>.

PINTÉR-KERESZTES, I. 2025. Scores of a folksong: From collection to music textbooks. **Studied at Babeş-Bolyai University, Music**, 70(1), 169-183. <https://doi.org/10.24193/subbmusica.2025.spiss1.09>.

PRIMORAC, J. 2024. Forerunners and pioneers: Research of traditional rural singing in North Macedonia from 1861 till 1967. **Advances in Historical Studies**, 13(3), 177-204. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ahs.2024.133009>.

RAMADANI, B. 2025. Analysis of Lorenc Antoni from a musicological perspective. **Journal of Kosovo Music and Culture**, 1(1), 7-13. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15512625>.

SACHOK, V. 2023. Vocal training of foreign students: Artistic and pedagogical approaches and practices. **Notes on Art Criticism**, 23(1), 139-144. <https://doi.org/10.32461/2226-2180.43.2023.286851>.

SADIKU, A. 2025. The role, importance, and contribution of the Albanological Institute in the genuine and professional study of Kosovo's musical folklore and cultural. **Journal of Kosovo Music and Culture**, 1(2), 41-45. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17366879>.

SAĞLAM, G.E., BAYDAĞ, C. 2026. Metaphorical structures and emotional expressions in Turkish folk music: a textual and melodic analysis of the Türkü "İnsan Kisim Kisim Yer Damar Damar". **Yegah Musicology Journal**, 9(1), 21-40. <https://doi.org/10.51576/ymd.1837308>.

ŠENTEVSKA, I. 2020. The long march to the top of the social ladder: Neo-folk music in socialist Yugoslavia and post-socialist Serbia. In: T. Peddie (Ed.), **The Bloomsbury Handbook of Popular Music and Social Class** (pp. 387-409). London: Bloomsbury Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781501345395.ch-020>.

SHKA Agimi wants the building and its activities to be protected by law. 2017. <https://www.kultplus.com/trashegimia/shka-agimi-qe-ndertesa-dhe-veprimtaria-e-saj-te-mbrohet-ligj/>.

SHKODRA, V. 2021. Scientific chronicle of the activities of the Albanological Institute for 2021 – Department of folklore and Department of ethnology. **Albanological Research**, 51, 327-331. <https://albanica.al/gjurmealbanlogjike/article/view/6838/10111>.

SKOUMAL, Z. 2020. **The Music of Leoš Janáček: Motive, Rhythm, Structure**. Rochester: University of Rochester Press. https://api.pageplace.de/preview/DT0400.9781787449176_A43370287/preview-9781787449176_A43370287.pdf.

SZALAY, Z. 2020. "From Pure Source Only"–Collection of Hungarian folk songs project. **Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov. Series VIII: Performing Arts**, 13(62(2)), 277-286. <https://doi.org/10.31926/but.pa.2020.13.62.3.30>.

The history and culture of Albanian traditional folk music. 2026. <https://www.ffmpeg.co.uk/the-history-and-culture-of-albanian-traditional-folk-music/>.

TKACH, A. 2021. Contemporary stylization of Ukrainian song folklore. **Bulletin of the Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts. Series: Music Art**, 4(2), 201-208. <https://doi.org/10.31866/2616-7581.4.2.2021.245795>.

TKACH, M. 2025. Global soundscapes: Cultural diversity and innovation in world music. **Interdisciplinary Cultural and Humanities Review**, 4(2), 37-47. <https://doi.org/10.59214/cultural/1.2025.37>.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. 2026. Albanian folk iso-polyphony. <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/albanian-folk-iso-polyphony-00155>.

WINSTON, J.S. UPPUNDA, A.K. 2024. Musical Feature Perception: A Comparative Study Among Musicians, Dancers, and Non-musicians. **Asian-European Music Research Journal**, 4, 13-24. <https://doi.org/10.30819/aemr.14-2>.

Publisher

Federal University of Goiás. School of Music and Performing Arts. Graduate Program in Music. Publication in the Portal of Periodicals UFG.

The ideas expressed in this article are the responsibility of their authors, and do not necessarily represent the opinion of the editors or the university.