

Harmony and Characterization in the Overture of *Goca e Kaçanikut*: A reflection on Kosovo's Operatic Beginnings

Rreze Kryeziu Breznica[✉], Besa Luzha

University of Prishtina, Republic of Kosovo

Submitted: April 4, 2025. Revised: June 2, 2025. Accepted: September 10, 2025

Abstract

This paper examines the development of Albanian operatic creativity in Kosovo through a musical analysis of *Goca e Kaçanikut*, the country's first national opera. Employing a qualitative, score-based analytical approach, the study focuses on the overture as a structural and aesthetic gateway to the work, examining its form, harmonic language, orchestration, and incorporation of folk-derived elements. The findings demonstrate that harmony functions as a central expressive device in shaping character, dramatic tension, and narrative cohesion. At the same time, the integration of folkloric rhythmic and modal features contributes to the opera's national character. The study highlights the overture as a condensed representation of Kosovo's early operatic identity and argues that *Goca e Kaçanikut* establishes a foundational model for national opera within the broader European operatic tradition.

Keywords: national opera; Albanians; Kosovo; composers; operatic beginnings

How to Cite: Breznica, R. K., & Luzha, B. (2025). Harmony and Characterization in the Overture of *Goca e Kaçanikut*: A reflection on Kosovo's Operatic Beginnings. *Harmonia: Journal of Arts Research and Education*, 25(2), 265-282

INTRODUCTION

Art Music in Kosovo developed much later than in the majority of European countries and reflected upon its historical and socio-political context (Luzha, Kosovo: A struggle for national identity, 2016) (Kryeziu-Breznica, 2018; Kryeziu-Breznica & Luzha, 2024; Kryeziu-Breznica, 2023). Kosovo, a small country in the Western Balkans, has experienced profound political and socio-historical challenges over the centuries (Malcolm, 1999; Schmitt, 2008). The struggle for self-determination and statehood intensified between 1981 and 1999, particularly in opposition to the Serbian regime, which engaged in cultural suppression, forced acculturation, and,

ultimately, atrocities against civilians during the 1998-1999 conflict. In June 1999, NATO, leading a Western alliance, intervened to end the war and secure Kosovo's liberation. The country's formal independence was later declared in 2008.

These turbulent historical periods have significantly impacted Kosovo's musical landscape, leading to stagnation and slow development in professional musical institutions, as well as a shortage of trained personnel (Antoni, 1956; Luzha, 2015; Andreis, Cvetko, & Durić-Klajn, S, 1982). Despite a strong interest in cultivating vocal music and opera literature, the absence of adequate institutional and infrastructural support has hindered the realization of the operatic genre. Consequently, the

[✉]Corresponding author:
E-mail: rreze.kryeziubreznica@uni-pr.edu

limited output of operas by local composers reflects the broader challenges facing Kosovo's musical development. Only two operas have been completed in this period, and the two belong to the opus of composer Rauf Dhomí: "Goca e Kaçanikut" (1972) and "Dasma Arbëreshe" (1984), both of which have been fully performed on the domestic stage (Kryeziu-Breznica, 2025).

There is still no national opera house or stage for operatic performances in Kosovo, and the lack of conditions for the realization of the operatic genre may discourage composers from writing operas to this day. On the contrary, the audience loves vocal music and opera, as evidenced by the first performances of the newly established Opera Institution in Kosovo and by the interest in events that include vocal or operatic works. In the second half of the 20th century in Kosovo, several fundamental conditions for the emergence and development of this musical genre were met. However, it also highlights another critical factor: the absence of a national opera house, which significantly diminishes composers' motivation to create operatic works.

The first legal action to form the institution of Opera in Kosovo was conducted in 2004 as an extension to the already formed Kosovo Philharmonic, a public institution under the Ministry of Culture, with the Law No.02/L-59 on philharmonic, opera and ballet of Kosovo, adopted by the Kosovo Assembly (Kosovo Assembly, 2004).

The composer of the first Kosovo Opera "Goca e Kacanikut" and of the second opera "Dasma Arbëreshe" (Arbresh Wedding) served at the time as the Director of the Kosovo Philharmonic Orchestra and used this competence to add the Opera "wing" by creating a new institution named "Filharmonia dhe Opera e Kosovës" (Kosovo Philharmonic and Opera), as an unusual model. Part of this initiative also included the building of the Opera Theatre in 2006. After the adoption of the law, the project idea for the construction of the opera house was realized. However, the implementation of that project idea failed,

and a legal process was conducted at the time against the authorities of the time in the Ministry of Culture responsible for the project implementation (Kryeziu-Breznica, Luzha, Rexhepi, & Rexhepi, 2024).

At that period, the new combined institution managed to perform "Dasma Arbëreshe" (2003), "Carmen" (2004), and "Ali Pascha von Ianinna" (2004), in its concert or semi- complete form in 2009, the operas "Rita" and "Il Canto dell Amore Triofante" (2013) were also premiered in Kosovo with modified formats due to lack of the proper stage. These modest results paved the way for a more serious initiative. In August 2021, the new government submitted a proposal to the Kosovo Assembly to officially establish a separate institution, Opera e Kosovës (Kosovo Opera), modeled on the Kosovo Philharmonic (MKRS, 2021; Sinjali, 2021).

The new Kosovo Opera institution was founded yet again without adequate infrastructure. The opera is compelled to develop a program and recruit its professional personnel, with the hope that, in the meantime, they will perform in suitable facilities. In contrast, in the meantime, they improvise any possible space for their productions. 16 years after the first attempt to project and build the Opera Theatre, and following two other competitions organized until 2019, the most recent attempt was the International Competition for the project idea for the building of the Opera and Ballet Theatre. Bureaucratic procedures continue to impede the process. This renewed interest was reflected in the establishment of the Kosovo Opera and its inaugural production of *La Traviata* in 2022.

The second production of this institution was the first ever written and performed Kosovo opera composed by Rauf Dhomí (1945-) *Goca e Kaçanikut*, who, in a specific period, felt the need to express himself through the opera genre in order to "fill the void in local creativity with an operatic music" (Dhomí, 2010). Drawing on established definitions of national opera and comparative perspectives from va-

rious European contexts, this paper examines the development of national opera in Kosovo as a historically and institutionally distinct process, rather than as a direct extension of the Albanian national operatic tradition.

The analysis focuses on the socio-political conditions surrounding the opera's first performance and examines the work's aesthetic dimensions, employing an analytical approach that moves from the whole to the particular. Through this method, we will identify the characteristics that place the work in the national category, with particular attention to the opera overture.

Based on the aim of the research, three important research questions emerged: (1) How did the socio-political and historical conditions in Kosovo shape the development of its first national opera, despite the existence of an established national opera tradition in Albania? (2) How does the development of art music in Kosovo compare to broader European trends, and what factors contributed to its delayed emergence as a formalized genre? And, (3) What aesthetic and musical characteristics of *Goca e Kaçanikut* classify it as a national opera within the Kosovo context, particularly in its overture?

Conceptual & Historical Framework

The origins of opera can be traced back to Ancient Greek tragedy and comedy and the liturgical drama of the Middle Ages, before it acquired a more established musical-dramatic form during the Renaissance through the enrichment of thematic and musical elements that broadened its expressive power (Burkholder, Grout, & Palisca, 2018, p. 307). As one of the most complex performing arts, opera integrates various artistic components—music, drama, choreography, stagecraft, and vocals—whose synthetic nature has for centuries demanded high technical mastery and artistic skill from composers, while also opening up space for a variety of aesthetic and theoretical interpretations (Andreas, 1976).

The "National Opera" in Europe

In the study of opera history, the term "national opera" refers to musical works that integrate elements of folk music, language, and historical narrative to represent a nation's collective identity. Its emergence is closely related to the rise of national consciousness in Europe since the 18th century, which grew stronger in the context of Romanticism—a movement that emphasized emotional expression, the influence of folklore, and a break from Western classical conventions (Burkholder, Grout, & Palisca, 2018, p. 655; Lajosi, 2005). Alongside the transformation of the concept of the nation from an aristocratic entity to a cultural identity encompassing the entire society, national opera emerged as an effective artistic medium for constructing and affirming historical narratives and national unity, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe (Ritter, 2021; Richter, 2021). Various national opera traditions—such as those of the Czech Republic, Poland, and Russia—show how local idioms and historical themes were processed within the framework of European opera, as seen in the works of Janáček, Moniuszko, and Glinka, which later became an important foundation for the development of national opera in the region (Körner, 2020; Stringa, 2000).

Albanian "National Opera" as part of the Albanian Renaissance Movement

Less well known but of great importance for the region's musical and cultural history is the first national opera written and staged in Albania. The opera "Mrika," composed by Prenk Jakova, premiered in 1959 (Shupo, 2005, p. 151). The National Opera and Ballet Theater in Albania was established in 1952, later than in neighboring countries, such as Macedonia, where the National Opera Theater was established in January 1948 in Skopje. Ensembles on the musical stage have been working as part of the composition of the State Opera (Ortakov, 1982, p. 23). The first national opera in Macedonia (Northern Macedonia) was "Goce" by Kiril Makedonski, which

premiered in 1954. In Serbia, Stanislav Binicki's first domestic opera, "At dawn," was performed as early as 1903. Since 1920, when the Opera House in Belgrade was established, professional-level operas have been performed continuously. At the Croatian National Opera, "Love and Envy" by Vatroslav Lisinski was performed as its premiere in 1846 (Andreis, 1976, pp. 25-26).

New "National Opera" Trends in Europe and Beyond

In the early 20th century, national opera expanded beyond Central Europe to other regions, reflecting a broader effort to express cultural identity through the operatic form (Richter, 2021). Throughout the 20th century, opera served not only as a medium for articulating national values but also as a space for aesthetic experimentation, particularly in multi-ethnic societies, where national cultures were increasingly understood as hybrid (Taylor, 2004; Richter, 2021). Rooted in Herder's concept of *Volksgeist*, national opera served as an artistic symbol of nation-building, a function that continued to transform as opera was utilized in new cultural contexts beyond Europe (Ritter, 2022; Financial Times, 2025).

METHOD

This study adopts Axel Körner's interdisciplinary methodology, which integrates cultural history with musicological analysis (Körner, 2009; 2020). Building on Körner's examination of opera as a cultural practice embedded within broader socio-political contexts—rather than merely a vehicle of political nationalism—this research applies his approach beyond the Italian Risorgimento to the Kosovo context. Körner's framework emphasizes the dynamic interplay among musical structures, historical conditions, and cultural meanings, offering a transferable methodological model for analyzing opera across different national and historical contexts.

Accordingly, the present research focuses on a score-based examination of

the overture *Goca e Kaçanikut*, using both the original orchestral score and its piano adaptation, supported by interviews with the composer Rauf Dhomi and relevant archival documents. The musical analysis addresses harmony, melody, rhythm, orchestration, and the use of leitmotifs, while situating these elements within their cultural and historical significance. Particular attention is given to folkloric features, including asymmetrical rhythmic structures (5/8, 7/8, 9/8), modal inflections, and instrumental timbres that evoke traditional Albanian instruments.

By combining close musical analysis with contextual interpretation, this methodology enables a nuanced understanding of how operatic composition participates in processes of cultural expression and identity formation. Furthermore, the detailed reference to piano transcriptions and thematic development ensures analytical transparency and methodological replicability, consistent with Körner's interdisciplinary principles.

This study adopts a score-based musicological analysis informed by Axel Körner's interdisciplinary framework, with a systematically formulated analytical procedure to examine the structural, harmonic, and thematic dimensions of the musical works under study (Körner, 2020). Therefore, this study reiterates the steps of music analysis applied, namely: (1) analysis of the form and structure of the overture, (2) analysis of harmony and tonality, (3) thematic and motivic analysis, and (4) identification of folkloric idioms that include rhythmic patterns, modal features, and intervallic characteristics. The formulation of these analytical stages aims to clarify the research process, increase methodological transparency, and strengthen the rigor and analytical power of this article.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Starting from the conceptual framework of national opera and the historical context of its development in Europe, this analysis focuses on Kosovo's first national

opera, *Goca e Kaçanikut* by Rauf Dhomí. This work reflects an attempt to articulate cultural identity through musical language rooted in 19th-century historical narratives and the processing of musical elements connected to local traditions. Within the framework of national opera, the relationship between text, music, and drama is a determining element in the formation of artistic meaning. Therefore, this study specifically positions the overture as the main analytical entry point, because it condenses the aesthetic, structural, and symbolic characters that construct the opera's national identity.

An "Overture" to the Analysis: The Composer and his Musical Oeuvre

Rauf Dhomí is the first and only composer of opera works in Kosovo and one of the founders of the national style of vocal-instrumental forms. He is a representative of Kosovo's national cultural identity through vocal and vocal-instrumental music, for whom inspiration from folklore is a guarantee of national existence within the context of other European creative spaces. In various forms of collaboration between folklore and the composer, his approach is defined by the incorporation of the folklore idiom into his own musical language (Kolovski, 1983, p. 22).

Rauf Dhomí, born in Gjakova on December 4, 1945, is a distinguished Kosovar composer, professor, and initiator of musical life in Kosovo. Educated in composition and conducting at the Faculty of Music in Sarajevo under Professor Miroslav Shiler, he played a pivotal role in shaping Kosovo's artistic music, blending national identity with creative expression. Dhomí founded the Men's Choir in Gjakova in 1965, served as a professor at the Faculty of Music in Pristina, and was instrumental in establishing the Association of Composers of Kosovo in 1972. As director of the Kosovo Philharmonic (2003–2007), he further advanced Kosovar-Albanian music. A laureate of numerous awards, Dhomí was elected a member of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Kosovo in 1996, marking the pinnacle of his professional and societal contributions.



Figure 1. Rauf Dhomí (composer of the first Kosovo Opera)

Compositional Oeuvre

Vocal and vocal-instrumental works form the core of Rauf Dhomí's creative output, with notable contributions to stage music through his operas *Goca e Kaçanikut* and *Dasma arbëreshe*, as well as the ballet *E bukura more*. His repertoire spans a variety of forms, from solo songs to large-scale vocal-instrumental works and cantatas, with a particular emphasis on compositions for mixed choir that feature spiritual, secular, and folkloric-patriotic themes, often accompanied by piano or orchestra. In chamber music, Dhomí's works include sonatas for string quartet and piano, a rondo for cello and piano, and miniatures such as *Nocturna Albanese* for clarinet. Among his orchestral works, the *Orchestral Prelude* and *Symphonic Suite in Five Movements* stand out.

Stylistically, Dhomí adheres to late Romanticism, eschewing contemporary compositional techniques and remaining rooted in traditional classical forms. His music incorporates harmonic solutions and simple melodic lines inspired by Albanian songs and dances, reflecting a romantically oriented national style reminiscent of R. Mulliqi's first-generation composers. As Dhomí himself explains, his work serves as "a bridge between the establishment of professional music and the younger generations." (Dhomí, 2010).

Historical and Musicological Analysis of the First Kosovo Opera -"Goca e Kaçanikut" a National Music Drama

As already mentioned above, the first Albanian opera in Kosovo "Goca e Kaçanikut" by Rauf Dhomi reflects the cultural and artistic trends at a particular time when Kosovo music professionals were free to compose in the various music styles, without ideological influences that were evident in other European countries at the specific time. Yet they were neither free nor encouraged to explore themes related to the unified Albanian national identity. This work has never been presented in Kosovo due to the political situation at the time. The work has been presented only in fragments or in concert form, while its full premiere took place in Tirana (Albania) at the Opera and Ballet Theater in June 1979 (see Figure 2). It remained in this institution's repertoire for 10 years due to significant audience interest at the time.

The opera "Goca e Kaçanikut" was written for 8 soloists (soprano, alt, two tenors, three baritones, bass-baritone), mixed choir and symphony orchestra with 1950 measures in total. The musical style in the work is based on the veristic direction of the opera, highly emotional and intense, reflecting the deep emotions of the characters and it uses the dynamics and scenic dynamics and elements that are in the spirit of Albanian folk tradition and symphony orchestra. Veristic opera is a type of opera that emerged in Italy in the late 19th century, characterized by its realistic and gritty subject matter, and a focus on everyday people and their struggles (Rubinoff, 2023).

Considered a national opera, the main characteristic of the opera "Goca e Kaçanikut" is the application of rich harmonies and melodies stylized from folk music elements, characters from everyday life, such as peasants, workers, or individuals facing common challenges, often with a sense of urgency and passion. Famous composers associated with Verismo opera include Giacomo Puccini ("La Bohème," "Tosca," "Madama Butterfly") and

Ruggero Leoncavallo ("Pagliacci"). These operas are celebrated for their ability to evoke powerful emotions and offer glimpses into the lives and struggles of everyday people, such as national operas (Rubinoff, 2023).



Figure 2. The booklet from the premiere of the opera Goca e Kaçanikut, 21st of June 1979, 19.00 h

According to the program content of the dramatic action of the opera "Goca e Kaçanikut", the music develops in two directions: lyric-romantic and epic-dramatic and patriotic. At the same time, it is easily accepted and, in function of the text, typically memorable and melodic.

The text of the libretto is presented according to the melismatic principle, most often with a 1-3-tone syllable. In fact, the length and duration of syllables and their common relationships create the metrics, precisely the rhythmic frame of the work.

The overall drama shifts from the quiet combo song to a powerful vocal-instrumental scalding of text and music. In this gradation, there are also dynamic features in the lyrical moments that the composer has presented through the arias and

duets between the lovers to the ff in epic, in which the dramatic peak is realized with massive points of the choir, which, from a melodic-harmonic point of view, have been conceptualized in homophonic form and are simple for interpretation. The choir performances with soloists are on the only massive stage and, at the same time, more potent in the popular epic and hymn of human patriotism and heroism that concludes the work.

“Goca e Kaçanikut” is an opera in which a range of soloists, vocal and vocal-instrumental works, such as arias, duets, trios, as well as choir and instrumental performances, are featured. They are mostly distinguished by the timing, tonality, and implementation structure in accordance with the dramatic aspect. In some places before arias, we encounter recitals: as an old man, Rusbashi (page 131 of the transcript for the piano or example no. 1).

Example 1 demonstrates a recitative approach that emphasizes text articulation and dramatic realism, in keeping with the practice of verismo opera, in which recitative serves as the primary narrative medium, driving the plot and building character through musical speech patterns that approximate natural speech (Taruskin, 2005; Rubinoff, 2023).

At the end of the opera, in the Finale, the stage is well prepared and massive, with the entire performing team centered. This is the peak, the culmination of the act, in this case of all the work, which, according to its volume and dramatic content,

according to the tonic and scenic element, through which the dramatic action is emphasized, is reached by the structure of the musical drama. The elements are divided into stage performances and images, which are recomposed and intertwined directly, one after another.

During this period, periodization is bypassed; there is no distinct separation of cadence types and endings with which the uninterrupted musical flow in the work is ensured. This creates a continuous musical experience without conspicuous interruptions or divisions between different segments. As mentioned, in some places recitative passages are encountered, generally characterized by repetitive tones with scalar motion, through which the division between recitation and aria disappears, and the melodic vocal style emerges at both extremes, culminating in the arioso.

This is further evidence that this opera is strongly influenced by the elements of verismo opera, which often employs recitative (a more speech-like singing style) to advance the plot and convey dialogue in a naturalistic way. This helps to create a sense of immediacy and authenticity (Bartlam, 2020). By employing tonal and stage dynamics while avoiding strict periodization, it forgoes clear cadential and final breaks, ensuring a seamless musical flow throughout the work.

The musical unity of the dramatic work is precisely achieved by applying the technique of the leitmotif. In fact, the leitmotifs follow and comment on the dra-

Example 1. Rusbashi recitativ

matic action, transforming or combining. The leitmotifs, through their constant variations, serve as a unifying musical parameter of the music drama. However, they also offer thorough insight into the characters' psychological states, reveal information about the past, and anticipate future events.

Very often a leitmotif organically grows to another, warning with it even deeper connections to the work, such as Trimori and the same motif in the duo of Pafika and Trimori (p. 197 and 211 of the transcript for the piano or example no. 2).



Figure 3. Scene from the premiere of the opera "Goca e Kaçanikut", 1979, Tirana - Albania.
(Photo taken from the archive of the composer of the opera)

The orchestra "a 2" (à due) is expanded and enriched with additional instru-

ments, and in some passages it is also symphonized. The orchestra has an equal role with the vocal parts, because of which, in some places, the primary role is given in the exposure of musical content, more precisely, the motive, with the transfer of the thematic material from one instrument to another, with the so-called symphonizing. The concept of treating the vocal and orchestral elements equally, with the orchestra playing a significant role in conveying the opera's drama and emotions alongside the vocal parts, became more prominent in the 19th century with the rise of Romantic opera.

This approach is often associated with composers like Richard Wagner and Richard Strauss. Here are a few notable 19th-century operas where the vocal and orchestral elements are treated with particular equality: Wagner's operas, such as "Tristan und Isolde" and "Der Ring des Nibelungen" (The Ring Cycle), Richard Strauss's operas like "Salomé" and "Elektra" feature intricate orchestration and vocal lines that are closely intertwined with the orchestral music (Ching, 2018-2019) Hector Berlioz's grand opera "Les Troyens" is a notable example of the 19th-century approach to integrating vocals and

Example 2. Aria of Pafika and Trimor

orchestra, as is Giuseppe Verdi's "Otello".

These operas exemplify the development of 19th-century opera, in which composers sought to create a more integrated and immersive theatrical experience by treating the vocal and orchestral elements as equals in conveying the work's drama, emotions, and themes.



Figure 4. Scene from the premiere of the opera "Goca e Kaçanikut", 1979, Tirana - Albania.
(Photo taken from the archive of the composer of the opera)

The symphonic-instrumental component, together with the vocal, soloist, and choir components in the form of ario-

sity that rule over the recitative element, plays an important role in this musical drama. The scenes are clear; at times, they are separated by recitative and aria passages, as well as by the dynamics of the work's dramatic development. The instruments of the orchestra, as specified in a musical score, are: Flauto piccolo, 2 Flauti, 2 Oboi (II ob. Muta in Corno inglese), 2 Clarinetti in B (II Cl. muta in Clarinetto basso), 2 Fagotti, 4 Korna in F, 2 Trombe in B, 3 Trombone, Tuba, Timpane, Tamburo militare, Piatti, Violini I, Violini II, Viole, Violoncello, Contrabbasso.



Figure 5. Scene from the premiere of the opera "Goca e Kaçanikut", 1979, Tirana (Photo taken from the archive of the composer of the opera)

The entire opera is dominated by the style of the choir. The work is based on the

Example 3. Stylized folk song - augmented second interval in the melody and combined rhythms - odd meters

principles of the traditional major-minor harmonic system, with modulations to closely related tonalities, and the music is treated in the national musical style, introduced primarily in the instrumental parts.

These folkloric features have been prepared and stylized through the appearance of the many elements we will present during the analysis of the constituent parts, and in this context we will mention: the use of combined rhythms - 5/8, 7/8, 9/8, 10/8; the stylized appearance of some timbres of folk instruments, both in solo instruments and in a group of instruments; then the use of the augmented second interval in the melody as one of the most important features in the Albanian folk melody; the appearance of the folk song which is stylized in some sections that are entrusted to the choir's part (measure 417 of the transcript for the piano or example no. 3).

Example 3 (stylized folk song with augmented second) demonstrates the use of the augmented second interval as an Albanian folkloric idiom stylized into the musical language of opera, functioning as a marker of national identity through modal color that distinguishes the work from conventional Western tonal practice (Taruskin, 2005; Lajosi, 2005).

In fact, the composer does not use people's folk instruments, but for description, stylized through the emergence of various orchestral timbres; the use of ornaments in the melody, in a form of a pre-measure, etc.

In conclusion, "Goca e Kacanikut" is considered among the fundamental music-theatrical creations and the vocal-instrumental opus of Dhomí and throughout contemporary Kosovo-Albanian art music. The opera serves as a reflection of Kosovo's cultural and artistic aspirations at a pivotal moment in its history, where a national identity rooted in native language and traditions was asserting itself. This nationalistic endeavor, however, cannot be understood through a simplistic, linear view of operatic history.

As Axel Korner suggests in his analysis of nationalism in music, the develop-

ment of opera, especially in national contexts, should be seen not through the lens of inevitable nationalistic teleology but as a more complex, multifaceted process that involves a nuanced interplay of cultural, political, and social forces. Korner emphasizes that historical narratives must be free of the constraints imposed by idealized national ideologies that reduce the vibrancy of artistic traditions to a single national purpose.

Applying Korner's perspective, we can critically assess *Goca e Kaçanikut* not as a product of a narrowly defined national operatic tradition but as part of a broader movement in Eastern European music in which composers blended indigenous cultural elements with European operatic forms. The work's thematic depth, combining lyric-romantic and epic-dramatic motifs, reflects a significant attempt to represent Kosovo's national ethos within the global operatic framework.

Dhomí's fusion of nationalistic elements, drawn from Kosovo's folklore, with the veristic operatic style highlights a dynamic intersection between local cultural identity and the broader operatic canon. By employing distinct rhythmic structures, modal harmonies, and thematic development rooted in the region's cultural heritage, Dhomí's work stands as a significant milestone in the establishment of Kosovo's operatic voice.

Overture: An Introduction to an Opera

Overture, a musical composition with a rich history, serves as the orchestral introduction to various musical works, often lending a dramatic or thematic prelude to the main performance (The Encyclopædia Britannica, 2022). While commonly associated with operas, overtures have also been developed as independent instrumental pieces that captivate audiences with their musical prowess.

However, over time, they evolved and became seamlessly integrated into the broader structure of the opera itself. These overtures often played a dual role, not only setting the mood but also aiding

transitions between scenes or acts, thereby contributing to the overall coherence of the performance. Before the advent of the overture, operas began with a precursor known as the warning fanfare. An illustrative example appears in Claudio Monteverdi's 1607 opera "Orfeo," in which a trumpet heralded the opera's opening. Subsequently, a singer appeared in a prologue, employing a declamatory recitative to encapsulate the opera's essence in a few concise phrases. During this era, the instruments remained positioned behind the stage, playing a more supportive role.

In 1623, in Rome, the overture as we know it today made its debut. This instrumental introduction, a departure from the earlier fanfare-and-prologue approach, marked a significant shift in operatic composition. The first overtures adhered to a structured format, typically comprising three sections: Allegro-Adagio-Allegro. These Italian overtures not only provided a captivating prelude to operatic performances but also laid the groundwork for the earliest symphonies, featuring three distinct movements.

The pioneering composer Stefano Landini (1590 - 1655) is credited with being the first to incorporate an overture into an opera. His groundbreaking work "Saint Alex" is historically significant not only for introducing the overture but also for incorporating ballet as an integral part of the opera for the first time. This innovation marked a crucial turning point in the evolution of opera, highlighting the dynamic interplay between music, drama, and visual elements in theatrical performances.

As we delve further into the 19th century, we encounter a different breed of overtures known as concert overtures. These compositions comprised just a single movement and demonstrated versatility in their form, drawing inspiration from either the classical sonata structure or the more freeform style of a symphonic poem. Notable examples of concert overtures include Felix Mendelssohn's evocative Hebridean Overture and Elliott Carter's much later composition, the Hol-

day Overture. Johannes Brahms also made significant contributions to this genre with his celebrated Academic Festival Overture. It's worth noting that some overtures, like Beethoven's Overture to Goethe's "Egmont," originally served as preludes to spoken word plays rather than purely instrumental works. These overtures played a vital role in setting the stage for the dramatic narratives that followed, intensifying the overall theatrical experience (The Encyclopædia Britannica, 2022).

In summary, the world of overtures expanded over the centuries to encompass various styles and formats. From the rise of Italian overtures in the late 17th century to the evolution of concert overtures in the 19th century, composers employed these musical forms to captivate audiences and enhance dramatic storytelling in both operatic and non-operatic settings.

Overture of the Opera "Goca E Kaçanikut" - 4/2, F-Minor: The Aesthetic And Musical Analysis

The opening overture of an opera serves as a crucial artistic component, setting the emotional tone and foreshadowing the thematic elements that will unfold throughout the entire opera. So does the overture to the opera "Goca e Kaçanikut," which introduces the opera's emotional character through the repetition of certain thematic material. In fact, we witness the emergence of two thematic materials, *a* and *b*, which constitute short phrases that are exchanged and repeated sequentially. A characteristic of this section is the fragmentation in the form of two-beat measures as a fundamental principle in the construction of constituent parts (p. 1 of the transcript for the piano or example no. 4). However, there are also signs of a specific circularity within the structure itself.

Repetition is a common element in many worlds known opera overtures. In Mozart's opera titled "The Magic Flute" overture, you can hear certain musical motifs and phrases repeated, creating a sense of familiarity and anticipation for the audience.

While the specific details of the analysis may vary across operas and their overtures, elements such as thematic development, repetition, structure, and emotional character are common features of many well-known operas (p. 12 of the piano transcript or example no. 5).

The above-mentioned thematic materials are distinguished in terms of tonality, with part *a* found in the tonics' realms, while part *b* is in the dominant function. The character of part *a* is reflected by full solemn chords resembling a hymn. In contrast, part *b* is characterized by a melody that employs pre-measure (p. 12 of the transcript for the piano or example no. 5).

Following the overture is an entranc-

ce consisting of 16 measures, which can be divided as follows: 2+4+4+6 measures. In the first 2 measures, the entrance appears in the form of an accompaniment, and in the following 4 measures (2+2), the thematic material appears in the tonic key of F minor. In the next 4 measures (2+2), this thematic material is transposed to the key of B minor, within the subsequent 6 measures, which can also be divided into three pairs of two measures each, during which the melodic line returns to the basic key of F minor. As a characteristic, we would emphasize the melody in the lower registers, which primarily evokes folklore, mainly due to the specific augmented second used, appearing in measures 2, 3, 4,

Example 4. Fragmentation in the form of two-beat measures

Example 5. Thematic development

and 5 (page 12, figure-1, bars 1-3 from the piano transcription or example number 4).

Part a, in the fourth measure before Figure 2, consists of 8 measures and forms a phrase divided into 4+4 measures. It is in the basic key of F minor. Part b introduces new thematic material and consists of 6 measures, or it can be divided into three pairs of two measures each. It modulates to the realms of the dominant from the basic F minor tonality (p. 12 of the transcript for the piano or example no. 5).

Part a1, marked as figure-3, consists of 6 measures, which can be divided into three pairs of two measures each. In the final two measures, it deviates from its initial presentation. It is in the basic F minor tonality. Part b, consisting of 6 measures or three pairs of two measures each, is identical to its initial appearance and modulates to the dominant of the basic tonality.

Part a2, in the 3 measures marked as figure-4, consists of 6 measures divided into three pairs of two measures each and is in the basic F minor tonality. Its characteristic feature is that it represents an augmentation composed of the first measure of the thematic material, which was previously exposed in part A. Part b1, 2 measures before figure-5, consists of three measures, in the dominant function of the F minor tonality. In other words, this part is shortened compared to previous appearances in part b, while the melody is found in the middle registers. Part a3, one measure marked as figure-5, consists of 4 measures, divided into two pairs of two measures each and is shortened compared to previous appearances in part a, in F minor. Part b2 consists of 4 measures, divided into two pairs of two measures each and is also shortened compared to previous appearances in part b, modulating to the dominant function of the F minor tonality.

The transition, marked as "Poco più tranquillo," consists of 5 measures, divided into 2+3 measures. The basic tonality is C minor, the dominant of F minor. As a characteristic, we would emphasize the melodic part that resembles folklore, primarily due to the use of the augmented second -

in fact, the oboe's timbre is specific in itself (page 16, one measure before figure-6, bars 1-3 from the piano transcription or example no. 6).



Example 6. Oboe's timber, resembling folk music characteristics through augmented

Part c, "Comodo," is a new section that contrasts with the preceding part and introduces new thematic material. It consists of 10 measures (divided into a 4+6 measure phrase), where both phrases have similar thematic material. The difference is that the second phrase is expanded by two measures at the end, in C minor, with cadences that both conclude on the dominant (p. 16 and of the transcript for the piano or example no. 7).

The transition, marked as "Allegro," consists of two measures in C minor with similar thematic material from the preceding transition before part c.

Part B consists of 6 measures or three pairs of two measures each, identical to the first two appearances of Part B, modulating to the dominant function of the F minor tonality.

Part a 4, eight measures before figure-9, consists of 11 measures, which can be divided into 4+4+3 measures. The thematic material from part A is retained, but toward the end, it changes and expands over the final three measures. The basic tonality is F minor, and it cadences to the dominant at the end.

The transition, marked as figure 9, consists of 7 measures, divided into 2+2+3. This part is derived from the previous part a, more precisely from the second part of the previous a4, in which the melody appears in the form of a descending chromatic section.

Here, there is an interesting orchest-

ration technique in which the melodic line begins in the higher registers and, descending, moves to the lower registers. The basic tonality is F minor, and it cadences to the dominant at the end (see example no. 7).



Example 7. Cadenza in the dominant

Example 7 serves as a point of structural tension that delays tonal resolution, thus strengthening the dramatic drive toward the next section in the overture. By asserting the dominant's function without immediately reaching the tonic cadence, this section creates a sense of anticipation and musical continuity that supports the opera's dramatic flow, consistent with the practice of overtures in the Romantic and verismo operatic traditions that utilize tonal tension as a means of tying structure and dramatic expression (Burkholder, Grout, & Palisca, 2018; Taruskin, 2005).

The entrance into part d, marked as figure-10, with the tempo indication "sulbito accelerando," consists of 6 measures, divided into 4+2 measures. The basic tonality is F minor and concludes in B minor. A characteristic pedal tone in the key of F and a melody in the upper register are featured. As a notable characteristic, we would emphasize the melody with its embellishments as a compositional element, particularly in the lower registers of the cellos, which strongly resembles folkloric elements (page 19, Figure 10, bars 4-6 from the piano transcription or example number 8).

Part d consists of a two-part form with a total of 24 measures, composed of two smaller sections: d (11 measures) and d1 (13 measures). Part d is a contrasting new section with thematic materials and tonality that have not been presented before.



Example 8. Pedal tone and the lower registers of the cellos resembling folk music elements

The first part, d, consists of 11 measures divided into 4+2+5 measures. The basic tonality is B minor, with the first phrase cadencing in the dominant and the second in the tonic. As a characteristic, we would emphasize the melody played by the flute, which creates a folkloric atmosphere through the use of the specific augmented second in measure 2 (page 20, 4 measures before Figure 11, bars 1-3 from the piano transcription or example no. 9).



Example 9. Augmented second resembling a folk music atmosphere

The second part, d1, consists of 13 measures, divided into 4+2+4+3 measures. In this section, the thematic material presented earlier is exposed once again, albeit with variations. Towards the end of the phrase, it is expanded, in contrast to part d. The fundamental tonality is B minor, while the cadences are similar to the preceding part d, with the first one in the dominant and the second modulating to the dominant of the new key, C minor. The melody in the oboe strongly resembles folk music, as seen in part d, due to the specific use of an augmented second in its melody, which is prominent in the first and third beats. (Page 20, two measures before Figure 12, measures 1-2 from the piano transcription or example no. 9).



Example 10. Augmented second interval resembling folk music atmosphere

The Allegro passage, consisting of two measures, is characterized by thematic material that appeared in the two preceding passages: with Allegro tempo and the title "Poco piu tranquilo." The fundamental key is C minor. Section b3, comprising three measures, concludes with a dominant cadence in F minor. Thematically, it resembles b2, with the only difference being its shorter length. Section a5 consists of 4 measures, divided into two two-measure phrases, in the key of F minor. Thematically, it is similar to section a3, a one-measure phrase with figure-5. Section b, figure 14, (pg. 22 or example no. 10) consists of 6 measures or three two-measure phrases. It can be seen that it is identical to the first two presentations of section b and modulates in the dominant key of F minor.

Section a6 is very similar to section a4, with the difference being in the last three measures, which consist of 11 measures divided into 4+4+3 measures. The the-

matic material from section a is retained but changes and expands in the last three measures in the key of F minor, ending with a dominant cadence.

The transition, three measures before figure 16 (pg. 24, example no. 11) consists of 4 measures that can be divided into two two-measure phrases. It is similar to the three-measure transition with figure 9 before the entry of section d, but here it is shortened, while the starting measures are identical. The fundamental key is in F minor. Section a7, one measure with figure 16, is very similar to section a2, with 3 measures and figure 4, only in this presentation, the melody is given in the higher voices. Its characteristic feature is that it is an augmentation composed of the first measure of thematic material that was previously exposed in section a. It consists of 6 measures, divided into three two-measure phrases, with the fundamental key in F minor.

Example 11 (the transition part) serves as an aesthetic transitional space that smooths the transition between sections through textural condensation and thematic relaxation, thus maintaining musical continuity without creating a sharp formal break. Aesthetically, this transitional section affirms the principle of through-composed continuity, common in Romantic opera and verismo, where transitions are used to maintain dramatic intensity and



Example 11. The transition part



Example 12. Coda

structural cohesion rather than marking rigid formal boundaries (Taruskin, 2005; Burkholder, Grout, & Palisca, 2018).

Section b4 is similar to b1, two measures before figure-5, consisting of three measures, serving as the dominant function of the fundamental key of F minor. In other words, this section is shortened compared to previous presentations in section b, with the melody found in the middle voices. At the end, there is a Coda of 6 measures. Three two-measure motifs are intended to establish the fundamental key of F minor, while thematically utilizing elements from the piece, presented in the middle voices of the Coda (page 25 from the piano transcription or example no. 12).

Example 12 (Coda) serves as a thematic recapitulation that recaps the main musical material while simultaneously affirming the opera's national character through tonal affirmation and strengthening of melodic idioms rooted in local modal color. Aesthetically, this coda not only formally closes the overture structure, but also plays a symbolic role as an affirmation of musical identity, in accordance with the practice of national operas in Europe, where the closing section is used to consolidate the theme and ideological meaning of the work (Taruskin, 2005; Lajosi, 2005).

CONCLUSION

The first and the only national opera in Kosovo-Albanian music so far, "Goca e Kaçanikut" composed in the 70's, reflects the cultural and artistic aspirations of its people at a pivotal time, addressing the need for the affirmation of national identity through the use of the native language, broadening audience engagement, and creating opportunities for participation in new musical-scenic activities. This delayed development occurred despite an established national opera tradition in Albania, underscoring that the absence of opera in Kosovo was shaped primarily by socio-political and institutional constraints rather than by a lack of cultural continuity or artistic aspiration. Cultural suppression, the late establishment of professional musical institutions, and the persistent absence of a dedicated opera house significantly delayed the formation of an operatic tradition. Despite these constraints, a strong public interest in vocal music and opera has endured. The establishment of the Kosovo Opera and the realization of its first full production represent important milestones, demonstrating that institutional perseverance and audience support remain key drivers in the continued development of Kosovo's operatic life.

In comparison with broader European operatic traditions, the emergence of art music and opera in Kosovo occurred considerably later and under markedly different conditions. While European national operas developed within relatively stable institutional frameworks during the 19th century, Kosovo's operatic beginnings were fragmented and institutionally fragile. Nevertheless, *Goca e Kaçanikut* aligns conceptually with the European national opera model through its emphasis on historical themes, national symbolism, and the use of native language, situating Kosovo's operatic development within a wider European context despite its delayed realization.

From an aesthetic and musicological perspective, *Goca e Kaçanikut* constitutes a foundational work of Kosovo-Albanian art music. The analysis of the overture demonstrates how harmonic language, folkloric modal and rhythmic elements, and thematic development contribute to the opera's national character. Through the integration of folk-derived musical features within a veristic stylistic framework, Rauf Dhomí establishes a model for national operatic expression that balances local identity with broader operatic conventions. As such, the opera plays a crucial role in shaping the foundations of Kosovo's operatic tradition and underscores the importance of sustained institutional support for future creative development.

REFERENCES

Andreis, J. (1976). *Povijest glazbe* [History of music]. Mladost.

Andreis, J., Cvetko, D., & Durić-Klajn, S. (1982). *Historijski razvoj muzičke kulture u Jugoslaviji* [Historical development of musical culture in Yugoslavia]. Školska knjiga.

Antoni, L. (1956). *Folklori muzikor shqiptar* [Albanian musical folklore]. Miladin Popović.

Bartlam, P. (2020). Is *La Bohème* a verismo opera? *Musical Offerings*, 11(1), 1-15. <https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1098&context=musicalofferings>

Blaukopf, K. (1992). *Musical life in a changing society: Aspects of music sociology*. Amadeus Press.

Burkholder, J. P., Grout, D. J., & Palisca, C. V. (2018). *A history of Western music* (10th ed.). Yale University Press.

Dhomí, R. (2010, September). Interview (Interviewer: R. Kryeziu).

Financial Times. (2025). For the first time, a grand opera made in Saudi Arabia. <https://www.ft.com/partnercontent/ksa-opera/for-the-first-time-a-grand-opera-made-in-saudi-arabia.html>

Frolova-Walker, M. (1998). "National in form, socialist in content": Musical nation-building in the Soviet republics. *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 51(2), 331-371. <https://doi.org/10.2307/831978>

Gerothanasi, S. (2013). *Compositional techniques and the folk element in the music drama: The Afternoon of Love of Marios Varvoglís* (Master's thesis). National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. https://www.tatjanamarkovic.eu/PDF/Proceedings_total_3.pdf

Gongh, T. L. (2024). Cultural identity and historical narration: An analysis of the expression of national consciousness in Chinese ethnic opera works. *Revista Electrónica de LEEME*, (54). <https://leemejournal.com/menu-script/index.php/>

Körner, A. (2009). *Beyond Nationaloper: For a critique of methodological nationalism in reading nineteenth-century Italian and German opera*. UCL Discovery. https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10107953/3/Korner_RPS.pdf

Körner, A. (2020). Beyond Nationaloper: For a critique of methodological nationalism in reading nineteenth-century Italian and German opera. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 25(4), 402-419.

Kosovo Assembly. (2004). *Law on Philharmonic, Opera and Ballet of Kosovo*. Kosovo Assembly.

Kryeziu-Breznica, R. (2018). General overview of art music in Kosovo: Social and political impact. *Musicologist*, 2(2), 127-149.

Kryeziu-Breznica, R. (2023). Art music of Albanians in Kosovo: First steps towards initiation and development phase division. *Rast Müzikoloji Dergisi*, 11(1), 1-29.

Kryeziu-Breznica, R. (2025). Art music in Kosovo: An overview of existing literature (1975-2015). *Journal of Kosovo Music and Culture*, 1-5.

Kryeziu-Breznica, R., & Luzha, B. (2024). The analysis of the development of artistic music in Kosovo from the historical and educational perspective. *RAST Musicology Journal / Rast Müzikoloji Dergisi*, 12(1).

Kryeziu-Breznica, R., Luzha, B., Rexhepi, F. G., & Rexhepi, B. R. (2024). An analysis of the economic impact potential of the art music scene in Kosovo: Is it a burden or an additional value for society? *International Journal*, 5(5), 460-474.

Lajosi, K. (2005). National opera and nineteenth-century nation building in East-Central Europe. *Neohelicon*, 32(1), 51-69.

Lajosi, K. (2008). *Opera and nineteenth-century nation-building: The (re)sounding voice of nationalism* (Doctoral dissertation). Universiteit van Amsterdam.

Lingsen, G., & Wang, T. (2008). *A plan to safeguard the Kunqu Opera tradition of Jiangsu Province*. UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000162081>

Luzha, B. (2015). *Music education in post-war Kosovo: Generalist and specialist teachers' identities, beliefs and practices* (Doctoral dissertation). UCL Institute of Education.

Luzha, B. (2016). Kosovo: A struggle for national identity. In R. S. Gordon Cox (Ed.), *Origins and foundations of music education*. Bloomsbury.

Malcolm, N. (1999). *Kosovo: A short history*. New York University Press.

Ortakov, D. (1982). *Muzichkata umetnost vo Makedonija* [Music art in Macedonia]. Makedonska Revija.

Ritter, R. (2021). The idea of national opera in the 18th century. *Musicology Today*, 12(1), 45-58. <https://doi.org/10.2478/muso-2021-0004>

Rubinoff, N. (2023). Verismo opera: The gritty and realistic side of Italian opera. *IPA Source*. <https://www.ipasource.com/verismo-opera-the-gritty-and-realistic-side-of-italian-opera>

Schmitt, O. J. (2008). *Kosovo: Kurze Geschichte einer zentralbalkanischen Landschaft*. Böhlau.

Shupo, S. (2005). *Biographical dictionary of Balkan composers*. ASMUs.

Steen, M. (2003). *The great composers*. Gutenberg Press.

Stringa, H. (2000). *Historia e muzikës shqiptare* [History of Albanian music]. Libri Universitar.

Taruskin, R. (2005). Nationalism. In *The Oxford history of Western music* (Vol. 3, pp. 15-66). Oxford University Press.

Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2022). Overture. <https://www.britannica.com>