

The right choice of choral repertoire - a weakness or good opportunity for encouraging students' musical talent development

Adhurim Rasimi *

Armend Xhoni **

* Assist. Prof. Dr., University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo.

Email: adhurim.rasimi@uni-pr.edu ORCID: 0000-0002-3493-2899

** Corresponding Author, Student in Master's Studies, University of Arts, Tirana, Albania.

Email: xhoni51@hotmail.com ORCID: 0000-0002-3978-6237

DOI 10.12975/rastmd.20221042 Submitted September 12, 2022 Accepted November 29, 2022

Abstract

This study investigates the views and practices of teachers on the way of selecting the choral repertoire and the opportunities that this repertoire offers for encouraging musical development of from primary and lower secondary schools students within the framework of general education in Kosovo. In this aspect, the experiences during the practical work of choir teachers and the technical or professional difficulties they encounter during the selection of choral songs have been studied. Among other things, the research aims to identify and analyze these factors, through which it is intended to pave the way for further improvement in this matter. The design of this research was carried out through semi-structured interviews, including the detailed analysis of choral songs, both in terms of musical content and pedagogical aspects. The research was carried out with choir teachers of different schools in Kosovo and satisfactory results were achieved, which highlight the real situation regarding the selection of the repertoire, its quality in terms of musical and textual content and the opportunities it offers to students in encouraging and developing musical talent. The recommendations from this study are addressed to the relevant institutions which should aim to encourage and support the work with choral ensembles and the improvement of practices regarding work with choir within general education.

Keywords

choir teacher, choral repertoire, choral singing, chorister, musical talent development

Introduction

Undoubtedly, the selection of the repertoire is one of the most important tasks on which the entire course of work with the choir depends, from the rehearsals to the final performance (Jones, 2012) in front of the audience. For choral teachers, the appropriate selection of songs is both a sensitive and challenging task (Jansson, Eslatd, & Døving, 2019), as the selection of quality literature is a major test of a musician's skills and a time-consuming task (Batey, 2002). Since the selection of the repertoire is of particular importance, choir teachers are often faced with the dilemma of which song to choose, and at this point, many criteria are presented

on which they must focus. First of all, the repertoire should be multi-dimensional of varied character and content, with artistic musical and textual-content requirements in order to stimulate creativity and develop the further musical education (Frizzell, 2021) as well as the general education of the choristers.

The selection of the choral repertoire depends on many factors, whether professional or technical (infrastructural), such as: the experience of the choral group, the level of interpretation, the size of the group, working conditions, etc. In the first stages of the work the selection of musical materials should be made taking

into account the maturity of the singers (McRae, 1991), is true and at this point, songs should be chosen that are appropriate depending on the age and performance level of the choristers, but over time and as their experience increases, the level of repertoire requirements also increases to a more challenging degree. Among other things, the way of selecting the repertoire should include different songs (Cruz, 2017), with requirements from the simplest to the more complex songs that contain a variety of styles and different periods of the national culture and other cultures around the world (Shaw, 2012), which offer a balanced range of styles and levels of complexity, the qualities of which should always challenge and motivate musical learning (Doreen, 1993).

Literature Review

Choice of Choral Repertoire

Culturally responsive teaching, with its student-centered focus, suggests that we begin the repertoire selection process by considering our students rather than reading a publisher's catalog or reading through a stack of them (Shaw, 2012). In the selection of the repertoire, the choir teacher should be guided by the principles of choosing songs that have genuine musical-artistic and aesthetic values that are representative because "when the quality of the repertoire is excellent, the teaching potential is unlimited" (Doreen, 1987). The quality of the songs in question must be of significant value of musical expression in the melodic, rhythmic, harmonic aspect and also the content-textual aspect must be at a satisfactory artistic level (Bull, 2002), because sometimes the most beautiful music has the most horrible text, and vice versa (Minton, 2002).

There are different opinions regarding the choice of the choral repertoire, where some of the choral teachers argue that songs offer the chorister's opportunities for musical development should be chosen, and songs that will quickly fade from their memory or music that "is here today and

gone tomorrow" should in no case be chosen. While on the other hand, some choir teachers are of the opinion that before determining which choral songs they will perform with the choir, they should take into account the audience, where according to them the listener must be an integral part of the concert-choral performance experience (Batey, 2002) as usually a diverse audience is part of the public, or as Hohweiler (2002) states "when selecting music make sure to use a variety of styles that will appeal to all audience and give your group experience with contrasting literature".

In some cases, the choir teachers are influenced by peripheral things and try to create a varied repertoire "something for everyone" so that the songs can be adapted to the tastes of the choristers, thinking that this way the rehearsals will become more attractive for the students. But the student will indeed enjoy rehearsals when we make them enjoyable, and at this point, it should in no case be the repertoire what makes the rehearsal "fun" (Holcomb, 2002). The repertoire should offer the choir members what is truly beautiful: music that has good content and is intellectually significant because, among other things, the choice of repertoire has a profound influence on the formation of musical tastes (Eric, 2007), and often offers its participants a lifelong curiosity and desire to be part of choral performance (Broeker, 2000), and on the other hand, to help students develop understandings or concepts and enable them to grow in empathy (Apfelstadt, 2000). Based on these practices, choir teachers should not limit themselves to selecting songs that are simple, easy to perform, and entertaining, but should select songs that are lasting and will help choristers develop as much as possible musically.

Although the repertoire should represent a variety of styles and periods (Núñez, 2012), a good opportunity for enriching the repertoire is also the selection of folk songs - traditional songs (Kastner & Menon, 2019), because

through them we can offer students a more complete knowledge of the choral heritage and a better and more comprehensive appreciation of choral art (Guy, 2001), and as Kodaly states “these songs are the musical ‘mother tongue’ of our students” this kind of music from the oral tradition provides a rich material for learning about the history of our country and the daily life of our ancestors (Wilson, 2003). However, folk songs should be carefully selected to reflect high quality. Not all of these songs are worth learning from a musical point of view, especially those that have survived over time, provide acceptable educational experiences for children (Wilson, 2003). In this aspect, those songs that stimulate and create opportunities for further musical and general development of students should be chosen.

During the selection of the repertoire, in addition to the musical and artistic aspect, extra attention should be paid to the substantive aspect of the song so that the choristers can experience and understand its textual meaning. The text must represent the best in poetic standards: freshness, originality, be direct and substantive, which means that quality choral music must have texts that have value as meaningful poetry (Batey, 2002). At this point, the text must be well constructed, have poetic merit, literary integrity and artistic value. As Fred says “When I select a piece of music, I want to make sure the text has something to say that is relevant to myself and to my students” (Ritter, 2002). Among other things, the textual content should be adapted to the level and age of the choristers, because symbolic thinking does not develop until the age of eleven and that, especially for the young child, the most appropriate texts are laid out in concrete language (McRae, 1991). If choir teacher when choosing a song manages to adhere to the requirements of the content, then for the chorister’s meaningful music with strong lyrics will stay with them for years to come (Bull, 2002). The right choice of the choral repertoire with all the musical and content components is the

key to the success of a choral group, because such songs will help the choristers to develop and educate themselves musically and in general. Also, the quality repertoire will cultivate the musical taste of the choristers that will potentially influence their future to be music lovers and potential cultivators of genuine artistic music.

Research Problem

Our study aims to investigate the practices of teachers on how to select the choral repertoire and the opportunities that this repertoire offers for promoting the all-round musical development of students within general education. The research aims to identify and analyze these factors, through which it is intended to pave the way for further improvement in this matter. To conduct this research, we have raised the research questions of the study;

- How does practices of teachers on the way of selecting the choral repertoire?
- Which songs have performed with the choir in the last programs?
- What opportunities does choral repertoire offer to choral students for encouraging and all-round musical talent development?

Method

Research Model

This research was carried out through the qualitative method, through which data were collected that enabled the detailed analysis of the matter. Initially, data was collected through semi-structured interviews were conducted with choir teachers. Further, we processed the qualitative data and the detailed analysis of the songs that were performed with a choir. We performed the analysis of the songs in the musical, textual-content and pedagogical aspects.

Participants

The study focuses on music education teachers in general public education in

Kosovo. To address this topic, we collected research data through a semi-structured interview with music teachers in Kosovo, total of 18 teachers.

The interview was confidential and the

interviewed teachers were named as choir teachers. Table 1 show the codes used for each participant; for example, ChT1-M-37 refers to Choral Teachers; P1 - for the enumeration of participant; F/M gender and 25 - age.

Table 1. Structures of participants

No	Gender	Age	Work Experience	Codes
P1	Female	25	3 years	ChT1-F-25
P2	Male	37	9 years	ChT2-M-37
P3	Female	45	22 years	ChT3-F-45
P4	Female	32	8 years	ChT4-F-32
P5	Female	34	10 years	ChT5-F-34
P6	Male	27	4 years	ChT6-M-27
P7	Female	30	7 years	ChT7-F-30
P8	Female	34	8 years	ChT8-F-34
P9	Female	55	29 years	ChT9-F-55
P10	Male	63	34 years	ChT10-M-63
P11	Female	28	4 years	ChT11-F-28
P12	Male	46	22 years	ChT12-M-46
P13	Female	44	20 years	ChT13-F-44
P14	Female	36	11 years	ChT14-F-36
P15	Female	34	8 years	ChT15-F-34
P16	Female	39	11 years	ChT16-F-39
P17	Male	58	32 years	ChT17-M-58
P18	Female	48	26 years	ChT18-F-48

Data Collection Tools

This study aims to understand the views and practices of teachers on how to choose choral repertoire and the opportunities that this repertoire offers in the musical development of students. To address this topic, we collected research data through a semi-structured interview with choir teachers in Kosovo. To get the opinions of teachers, open-ended questions were included in the semi-structured interview.

Semi-structured interview form

The interviews were administered by the authors of this research. The semi-structured interview consists of a total of 6 questions, which aim to provide information about way of selecting the choral repertoire and to

identify the opportunities that this repertoire offers for encouraging and developing the musical talent of students in elementary schools (see Appendix 1). The interviews were conducted with 18 choir teachers from primary and lower secondary schools, which were recorded and transcribed, always guaranteeing the anonymity of the interviewees.

Data analysis

Data analysis was performed through qualitative method and the technique of musical and textual content analysis where the musical parts of songs have been analyzed in detail with all musical and content components such as formal structure, the way the melody and rhythm are organized,

the importance of the theme/rhythmic material, the voices, the high points of the phrases, the harmonic structure and the textual and content aspect of the songs. To ensure transferability in this research, participants' views were described in detail and direct quotations were included for reliability in qualitative research; it means stability or permanence (Neuman, 2014). After collecting the data from the research with the qualitative method, we coded them according to the target variables of the research; we generated them through special qualitative categories, age, gender, work experience, which we coded with separate numbers.

Documents

In the next phase, the musical parts of songs (See Appendix 2, 3) were analyzed in detail with all musical and content components. These songs (music sheet of songs) were selected since the research shows that they are mainly performed by choral groups, the examples of the songs were collected during the stage of the realization of interviews, or in some cases the same were sent by email to the address of the researchers.

Ethics

This study was approved by Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI). Obtaining permission was done after our request for research, they gave the permission on February 03, 2022. All study participants were formally invited and voluntarily participated in this research. All methods were performed in accordance with the relevant instructions and regulations.

Procedures

The data collected during the first phase present summary descriptions of the views of the interviewees regarding the research. The interview allowed the participants to express themselves freely the views and practices on the way of selecting the choral repertoire, since choir teachers were interviewed separately. After the

interviews were transcribed, the answers of the teachers that they provided through interviews were compared. The interview took place in the period February-April 2022 in the schools where the interviewed teachers are employed. In addition to the analysis and data comparison, during period May-June 2022 the parts of choral songs (music sheet) were also analyzed in terms of musical, textual-content and pedagogical content. First, the list and arrangement of the songs that were performed in the last three appearances before the audience was made, from which the songs that were performed the most by school choirs were selected for detailed analysis.

Analysis of Songs

Work with the school choir is a very complex whole that is interdependent on many factors that have a chain function. At this point, the focus of this study is to highlight one of the main components (the first link of the chain) which is then reflected in the functioning and quality of the choral ensemble. It is known that the benefits to students of participating in the school choir are multidimensional (Clift & Hancox, 2001), not only contributing to musical and general development but, as Rutter says, "in an age where the solitude of the computer screen drives people away and threatens to oust real group activity, the world needs its choir ensembles more than ever before, in school, church, concert halls, and community" (Rutter, 2001).

Since the selection and performance of the choral repertoire reveals, among other things, the quality aspect of a choral ensemble, we have presented the findings about the choice and realization of the repertoire made by the choir teachers. The musical parts of these songs have been analyzed in detail with all musical and content components such as formal structure, the way the melody and rhythm are organized, the importance of the theme/rhythmic material, the voices, the high points of the phrases, the harmonic structure. Below we have presented one of the analyzed examples.

Lule-Bore

Nasho Jorgaqi

S. Gjoni

pjesa a g-mol Motivi Fjalja - I Fjalja - II

SOPRANO

T D T

Figure 1. Choral song - Lule bore

“Lule borë” is considered as the hymn of our lyric songs. It is a song from Shkodra, composed 55 years ago by the composer Mr. Simon Gjoni (a well-known composer from Shkodra). The song was written by Mr. Nasho Jorgaqi.

The formal structure of the song: a, a1, a2

Part (a) of the song is introduced in unison, which consists of a small-scale period with a very characteristic motif both of melodic and rhythmic context. Song tonality of part a is in g-mol. In a1 there is the division of voices with the melody of the third interval being divided into the first and second voices. It consists of a minor sentence with repeated two measures. A characteristic of this theme is the repetition of motifs with changed melodies and same rhythm.

a) Its tonality in modulation jumps to G major. In the final part a2, a lighter melody with the same rhythm structure and jump to the initial tonality is noticed.

The melody and rhythm

This song’s melody is simple with gradual motions; it is a popular motifs song very acceptable and easy to remember. During the melodic course, the intervals of sixth and minor third (6 and m3) are noticed. The song’s range-the (ambits ranges) from c1 to es2 for the first voice (soprano), whereas for the second voice (alto), it reaches low sounds to av. The rhythm of song is in the form of 7/8. Also, different values of notes are used such as the eight, the fourth, and half notes, which do not present any difficulties for interpretation by children’s choir ensembles (especially lower secondary (6-9) school choir ensembles).

The harmonic structure

This song’s harmony is more compressed by giving it greater opportunities for harmonious expression. Since its melody is melodious, it creates greater opportunities so that even the harmony is richer (whose chords are written in details in the song’s part). Here the cadence is simple and understandable

(and persuasive too). It is particularly the aspect of song’s form that gives it a distinct development. a, a1, a2 are characterized by maintaining the rhythm value, measure, and modulation by not moving the note, but only the accord from G major in that g minor.

The textual aspect

The textual aspect is simple is not in line with the requirements of this age students’ - based on education point of views. This phenomenon is present in many folk songs, whose content-textual aspect exceeds experiencing opportunities of students of this level. In addition, it does not offer anything to the latter either in pedagogical or educational context.

Results

Research findings from interview

Our study aimed to investigate the views and practices of teachers on the way of selecting

Theme 1. Sources of Choosing Choral Songs

Table 2. Content analysis of participants’ view about sources of choir repertoire selection

Choir teachers use different sources when choosing choral songs	f
Sources from the Internet	9
Personal libraries	6
Material (choral songs) from own previous education	5
Books with a collection of folk songs	15
Arranging of folk songs by myself	8
Songs from music textbooks	18
From collaboration with other colleagues	3

Findings indicate that choir teachers use different resources on an individual basis according to their preferences (but without following a set protocol).

“... due to the lack of choral songs in the mother tongue, I often adapt different songs by adapting them to the needs of the choir and to the character of the program (performance) during public appearances” (ChT2-M-37; ChT8-F-34).

“I often use resources from the Internet, especially in cases where I choose to

the choral repertoire and the opportunities that this repertoire offers for encouraging musical development of students within the framework of general education.

From the semi-structured interview, three (3) main themes were drawn from this research:

- The use of resources (choral songs) that the teachers have at their disposal
- The type of songs that the choir teachers worked on and performed with the choir
- Working conditions faced by choir teachers during choral rehearsals

Resources and assets are key factors for choir teachers to perform repertoire with appropriate musical and aesthetic requirements.

work on songs in a foreign language” (ChT1-F-25).

“Since we have a lack of choral songs for children, I use my personal library with materials that I have from my previous schooling and the collection of songs from my long experience of working with a choir” (ChT10-M-63).

“Most of the choral songs that I have at my disposal are composed for adult choirs (MIX SATB), therefore, it was imposed on me to adapt these songs

to the interpretation capabilities of the choir or in some cases to “deform” them in such a way that the students/choristers are able to interpret them” (ChT14-F-36).

“We often collaborate with colleagues by borrowing or exchanging choral songs that are suitable for choir ensemble” (ChT9-F-55; ChT18-F-48).

“I use the songs that are in the school books by adapting (arranging) them for the choir, since almost all the songs are composed for one voice only” (ChT4-F-32; ChT15-F-34; ChT11-F-28).

“In order for the songs to be more

attractive for the students and the public, I arrange them myself” (ChT6-M-27).

“I prefer to choose folk songs because they are more suitable for the choristers, they learn them easier and faster, on the other hand, there are more songs/books available from different authors” (ChT13-F-44).

The findings show that in most cases the songs are not interpreted as written in a standard way, but they are simplified, (even exceeding the competences and copyrights), deformed to suit the impulses of the choir leaders or conditioned by the interpretative capabilities of the choral group.

Theme 2. The Type of Songs that Choir Teachers Worked and Performed with the Choir

Table 3. Analysis of songs that choir teachers have worked during last school year

The number of songs you worked during the last school year		f
Up to three songs		3
Up to five songs		11
More than five songs		4
The way of interpreting /performing the choir songs		
interpreting in unison		12
interpreting in two voices		14
interpreting in three voices		2
Songs that you have performed with the choir in the last three programs		
Lule borë	folk songs (songs with folk motifs)	15
A kanë ujë ato burime	folk songs (songs with folk motifs)	13
Për mëmëdhenë	patriotic songs	9
Vajta n’Elbasan	folk songs (songs with folk motifs)	14
Moj e bukura More	folk songs (songs with folk motifs)	9
Shkolla ime	school songs	6
Mirë mbrëma	folk songs (songs with folk motifs)	7
Shkoj e vij flutrim si zog	folk songs (songs with folk motifs)	3
Kënga e Rexhës (qou Rexh’ qou djalo)	folk songs (songs with folk motifs)	4

“During the school year I worked/realized only three new songs, the choir students are busy with many other activities and I don’t want to burden them more” (ChT8-F-34).

“I worked on five new songs (including the songs we had from previous years), I sometimes work on new songs depending on the need and the number of appearances in front of the public” (ChT16-F-39).

“All the songs that I have worked with the choir are well-known folk songs, those that were more difficult to perform, we performed in unison, while the songs that had smaller interpretation requirements, we interpreted them in two voices” (ChT18-F-48; ChT6-M-27).

“I prefer to choose folk songs because they are more suitable for choral students; they learn them easier and faster” (ChT13-F-44).

“I have worked on many new songs; most of them are folk songs with some minor exceptions in cases where we need to have patriotic songs in the program in honor of national holidays (eg anthem and any other patriotic song)” (ChT9-F-55).

“During performances on holidays with a national character, I usually choose well-known songs which I adapt for children’s choirs or we perform them in unison”,

while other songs are from the repertoire of popular folk songs (ChT17-M-58).

“The choral repertoire that I work with the choir, adapted it to the possibilities of choir students, I choose folk songs that the students learn easily and sing with pleasure” (ChT2-M-37).

“I pay attention to the choice of folk songs, because they are very well received by the public, we even have cases where the public joined our performance by singing or clapping. And this definitely motivates me and the choir students” (ChT11-F-28).

The findings show that in most cases the choir teachers performed a limited repertoire. They had not made a selection of songs that represented different genres and styles that possessed musical value, but for various reasons chose to perform folk songs with minor exceptions in some cases.

Theme 3. Working Conditions During Choral Rehearsals

Table 4. Conditions and difficulties that choir teachers face during the work with the choir

Conditions that choir teachers face during the work with the choir	f
The conditions meet all of our requirements	5
Conditions partially meet our requirements	7
Conditions do not meet our requirements at all	6
Technical or professional difficulties that choir teachers face during the work with the choir	
The lack of space for choir rehearsals	6
The lack of choral songs in the mother tongue (native language)	15
The school staff and the principal are not cooperative	8
The lack of choral competitions	10
The choir is not included in curriculum plan	13
Students’ overload with other activities	7
The lack of training’s (how to conduct or work with the choir or for music education in general)	11

“The lack of a separate class for choir rehearsals creates difficulties working with choir” (ChT14-F-36).

“Since there is a lack of choral songs in the mother tongue, I am obliged to adapt

adult songs for the needs of the school choir, which are then reflected in the work with students and create difficulties during their learning and interpretation” (ChT8-F-34).

“The overload of students in different courses and teaching in two shifts creates difficulties in adjusting the schedule for choir rehearsals” (ChT16-F-39).

“The difficulties in adapting the choir rehearsals for learning due to the fact in that learning takes place in two turns” (ChT12-M-46).

“To be organized by the municipal directorates or the ministry of education professional visits for the students of the choir, from which they would benefit professionally and also be motivated” (ChT9-F-55).

“Even a single training was held with us (either for choir work or for music education in general)” (ChT14-F-36; ChT12-M-46; ChT1-F-25).

Research Findings from Analysis of Songs

From the comparison of the repertoire and the analysis of the songs, it can be noted that most of the choir teachers were prone to performing folk songs. These songs in most cases were popular, which made them more attractive to students and the public. For more see Table 3. (ChT18-F-48; ChT6-M-27; ChT13-F-44; ChT9-F-55; ChT11-F-28; ChT17-M-58; ChT2-M-37). Mostly the songs were single voice, (ChT18-F-48; ChT9-F-55; ChT6-M-27) to which the accompanying voice was added as a “melodic cover” and as a result, in some cases the songs lost their originality (the flow and clarity of the song faded both in the melodic and rhythmic form as well as in the structure-form). In terms of melodic and harmonic development they were simple, usually starting in unison, then breaking into the refrain part (or other suitable parts), where the accompanying voice often performs in a third (following the theme in imitation) but with very modest development in the vertical-harmonic aspect. Also, there is a large distance between the voices (soprano, alto), which washes out the artistic beauty and originality, and is disproportionate to

pedagogical requirements.

While in the poetic aspect, text should represent the best in poetic standards: freshness, originality, and directness “quality choral music uses text that have value as poetry and are full of significance (Batey, 2002), “meaningful music with a strong text will stay with them for years to come” (Tina, 2002), findings indicate songs in some cases exceed the limits of the school choirs level since their content contains terms, words that exceed their experiential abilities. This is probably also due to the fact that many of these traditional folk songs were created a long time ago and due to the time context and socio-economic changes, in some cases, they contain words that are almost incomprehensible to students.

In general, elements of folk music dominate the repertoires of choral ensembles of our schools. It is absolutely understandable for students to learn folk songs from their culture and be exposed to traditional music; however, choristers should be offered a more comprehensive repertoire that gives them greater opportunities for musical talent development. Based on the detailed analysis of the songs, it generally appears that these songs are very simple and create modest opportunities and limited musical and aesthetic development.

The wise choice of the choral repertoire with all the components, both musical and content components, is the key to the success of a choral group, because through these songs the choristers will develop and be educated musically and overall, and will cultivate their musical tastes.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study highlights the real situation related to the selection of the repertoire, its quality in terms of musical and textual content and the opportunities it offers to students in encouraging musical and general development. Choral singing is a unique activity that allows amateur musicians to perform a wide range of musical repertoire,

to participate in performances, often at a high level of musicianship, under the guidance of skilled musical directors (Einarsdottira & Helga, 2016).

From the analysis and comparison of the repertoire, although, choir students should be offered a variety of songs for interpretation (Apfelstadt, 2000), it is observed that they had not performed a variety of songs that would represent musical values, songs of different genres and styles for the respective age. Instead, most choir teachers were determined to perform folk songs. They select and perform songs with modest (few) artistic and musical demands, simple songs which are really accepted more easily and attract much more choristers and also give a spectacle to the public, the latter being precisely the only purpose of the teachers. Moreover, some of these songs are easily worked out and adapted to the needs of the choir (mostly in two voices, or singing in unison, and then in certain places split into two voices). In most cases, choir teachers have not followed professional criteria, in an order to “allow the repertoire to dedicate performance practices of various cultures and periods (Cash, 2019), and thus require certain performance practices and tone colors” (Blue, Hoosen, & Orion, 2018), but have applied and been influenced by other peripheral criteria during the selection of the repertoire, avoiding professional responsibility.

Although, choral teachers say that in general there is a marked lack of artistic choral songs for children in their mother tongue and according to them this imposes such a selection. However, it is not only the lack of choral songs for children that is the reason associated with this selection, but that folk songs are more attractive to choristers and their practical performance is achieved faster and easier. Some teachers even emphasize that when they define the repertoire, they always have the audience in mind, because artistic-classical songs are not often welcomed like folk songs. Although

for choral teachers the choice is imposed in the absence of adequate literature, it is observed that there is a lack of will and professionalism to find better alternatives that offer students optimal opportunities for further musical and general development. In this aspect, teachers must work hard and use better judgment in choosing the repertoire (Walker, 2020).

We can say that one of the main factors influencing these “excessive” variations is due to the fact that there is no standard or curricular requirement (MEST, 2016), that provides for, suggests or obliges choir teachers to meet requirements of working with choral groups because “the use of a multicultural repertoire can expose students and their audiences to a wide range of music literature, performance styles, musical aesthetics, and concepts related to the music-making process” (Maultsby, 1987).

Even choral repertoire and its qualities should always challenge and motivate musical learning (Doreen, 1987) in general, we can conclude that the songs chosen by the choir teachers were simple, did not have musical and professional criteria (Reames, 2001), and their realization with the choir does not bring the appropriate benefits for the choir students and does not create the required opportunities for musical development.

Recommendations

The recommendations are addressed to institutions and actors such as: MESTI-Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, Municipal Directorates of Education (MDEs), Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Education and choral teachers who in cooperation or independently can directly influence the improvement of the situation related to the issues that have been addressed in this paper.

For Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation

- to announce a competition for the creation of choral songs for school ages,

to publish them in physical or online form, or to attach them as additional packages to music education texts.

➤ to revise the curricular part related to extracurricular activities outside the classroom (referred to as additional program). This will automatically reflect the standard program requirements and avoid major divergences-differences during choral work by choral teachers.

➤ in cooperation with MDEs, the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Education should organize choral competitions at all levels of education because this increases competition, the professional responsibility of choral teachers and the ambitions of school choirs.

➤ in cooperation with the MDEs to organize trainings for music teachers with a special focus on the organization of work with choirs (the trainings should be held by qualified conductors or distinguished choral teachers).

For Faculty of Arts

➤ in cooperation with composition professors within the faculty to compose choral songs for children in their native language.

➤ to design a program where composition department students are required to create songs for children's choirs such as "canons", songs for two and three voices in accordance with the requirements of this level. (Although it is but a modest request for the student of composition, such songs would serve many teachers and choral groups in secondary schools).

For Choral Teachers

➤ to organize choir work as a professional requirement; to select choral songs with artistic values that develop the musical and general education of students.

➤ to create a school music archive

(music library), store score sheets, audio recordings or video recordings of choral songs. This would facilitate the work of colleagues about the selection of the repertoire and would serve to prevent the choral program from being repeated too often.

Limitations of Study

The study is mainly based on the measurement of variables in the study based on participants' self-declarations through implementation of semi-structured interviews, and based on analysis of music parts of songs. If other instruments were to be applied to the study, the results might have been different from the ones we presented in Kosovo.

Acknowledgment

Acknowledgments to all collaborators who contributed to the realization of this study. Acknowledgments to music teachers who participating in this study.

References

- Apfelstadt, H. (2000). First things first: selecting repertoire. *Music Educators Journal*, 87(1), 19-22.
- Batey, A. (2002). *Selecting quality choral literature in the high school setting*. In Spotlight on Teaching Chorus (pp. 43-45). Reston, VA: MENC, National Association for Music Education.
- Blue, T., Hoosen, V., & Orion, L. (2018). Preparation, practice, performance, and pondering: a different approach to score preparation. *American Choral Directors Association*, 58(7), 69-80.
- Broeker, A. (2000). Developing a children's choir concert. *Music Educators Journal*, 87(1), 26-30. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3399674>
- Bull, T. (2002). *Ran steps for creating or adding vitality and improving the quality of your choir*. In Spotlight on Teaching Chorus (pp. 76-77). R&L Education.
- Cash, S. (2019). Middle and high school choral directors' programming of world music. *International Journal of Research in Choral Singing*, 7, 36-55.
- Clift, M. S., & Hancox, G. (2001). The perceived benefits of singing: Findings from preliminary surveys of a university college choral society. *The Journal of The Royal Society for the Promotion of Health*, 121(4), 248-256. <https://doi.org/10.1177/146642400112100409>
- Cruz, P. (2017). Is all music for everyone? *The Choral Journal*, 58(4), 11-20.
- Doreen, R. (1987). Children through choral music experience. *Choral Music Experience*, 4(9), 3-5.
- Doreen, R. (1993). Children's choirs: a revolution from within. *Music Educators Journal*, 80(3), 44-48.
- Einarsdottira, S. L., & Helga, G. R. (2016). The role of choral singing in the lives of amateur choral singers in Iceland. *Music Education Research*, 1(18), 39-56. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2015.1049258>
- Eric, J. P. (2007). *The use of folk songs in education: Some examples of the use of folk songs in the teaching of history, geography, economics and English literature*. Published Online, 89-94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057876980000141>
- Frizzell, E. (2021). Choral directors perceptions of choral tone. *PLoS One*. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0256587>
- Guy, F. W. (2001). *The repertoire selection practices of high school choral director*. R&L Education.
- Hohweiler, M. (2002). *Starting an elementary-school choir*. In Spotlight on Teaching Chorus. R&L Education.
- Holcomb, A. (2002). A prespective on literature for young choirs. In Spotlight on Teaching Chorus. R&L Education.
- Jansson, D., Eslatd, B., & Døving, E. (2019). Choral conducting competences. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 43(1), 3-21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X19843191>
- Jones, H. (2012). *A point of departure for rehearsal preparation and planning*. Cambridge University Press, 272-280. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521111737.020>
- Kastner, J. D., & Menon, S. (2019). Popular Music in Choir: Helping Students "Find Their Voices." *Music Educators Journal*, 106(1), 48-54. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0027432119856083>

- Maultsby, P. K. (n. d.). (1987). *Toward a multicultural music-education curriculum*. T. C. Society, Editor. Retrieved from https://www.music.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2660:toward-a-multicultural-music-education-curriculum-sup-1-sup&catid=217&Itemid=3665#:~:text=The%20use%20of%20a%20multicultural,way%20to%20achieve%20multicultural%20programming
- McRae, S. W. (1991). *Directing the Children's Choir*. In Schirmer Books.
- MEST. (2016). *Core Curriculum for Preparatory Grade and Elementary Education of Kosovo* (Grades 0, I, II, III, IV and V). S. a. Ministry of Education. Retrieved from <https://masht.rks-gov.net/kurrikula-berthame-per-klasen-pergatitore-dhe-arsimin-fillor-te-kosoves-klasat-0-i-ii-iii-iv-dhe-v/>
- Minton, W. (2002). *How do you select literature for your choirs*. In *Spotlight on Teaching Chorus* (pp. 50-52). R&L Education.
- Neuman, W. L. (2014). *Pearson new international edition. in social research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches* (Seventh, pp. 477-480). Retrieved from <https://www.pearson.com/store/p/social-research-methods-pearson-new-international-edition/P200000005113/9781292020235>
- Núñez, F. J. (2012). *Globalization, multiculturalism, and the children's chorus* (201-215). *The Cambridge Companion to Choral Music* (Ed. André de Quadros). Cambridge University Press <https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521111737.016>
- Reames, R. (2001). High school choral directors' description of appropriate literature for beginning high school choirs. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 49(2), 122-135. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3345864>
- Ritter, F. (2002). *Tell the truth! create a disturbance! make a difference!* in *spotlight on teaching chorus* (pp. 136-137). R&L Education.
- Rutter, J. (2001). *Starting a choir*. *Universiteit van Pretoria*. Retrieved from <https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/30171/03part2chapter1-2.pdf?sequence=4>
- Shaw, J. (2012). The skin that we sing culturally responsive choral music education. *Music Educators Journal*, 98(4), 75-81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432112443561>
- Tina, B. (2002). *Ran steps for creating or adding vitality and improving the quality of your choir*. In *Spotlight on Teaching Chorus* (pp. 76-77). R&L Education.
- Walker, T. (2020). Addressing contextual information in multicultural choral repertoire. *The Choral Journal*, 61(4), 57-62.
- Wilson, S. W. (2003). The young elementary school chorus: an introduction to choral singing. *Music Educators Journal*, 89(5), 32-37. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3399917>

Biodata of Authors

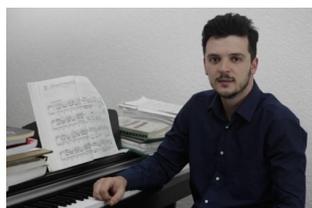


Assist. Prof. Dr. **Adhurim Rasimi** is professor of musical pedagogy at the faculty of education at the University “Hasan Prishtina“ in Prishtina, Kosovo. Besides he is also appointed by Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) as deputy coordinator for the curriculum design in the field of arts. He is also author of the module and certified coach in the field of art and music within the training for the Standards Development and Learning in Educators for early childhood 0-6 years old. Dr. Rasimi is

also compiler of guidelines for educators in the field of art as well as compiler of practical guidelines for parents. Besides pedagogical activity, he has led various coral formations such as: children’s choir “Birds are singing“ children’s choir of the Radio Television of Kosova, mixed choir of the city of Gjilan. Currently he is focused on research in the field of music education, especially those that reflect the real situation and improve the teaching of musical education in general schools.

Affiliation: University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo.

Email: adhurim.rasimi@uni-pr.edu **ORCID:** 0000-0002-3493-2899



Mr. **Armend Xhoni** studied musicology at the AAB University in Kosovo and music theory studies at the University of Tetovo in North Macedonia. He is currently continuing his studies at the master’s level in Albania for Musicology and is also pursuing his master’s studies in composition at the University of Business and Technology (UBT) in Kosovo and master’s studies in musicology at University of Arts in Tirana.

Affiliation: Student in master’s studies, University of Arts, Tirana, Albania.

Email: xhoni51@hotmail.com **ORCID:** 0000-0002-3978-6237

Appendix 1. Semi-structured Interview Format

Semi-structured Interview Form			
The aim of this study is provide us with information about your way of selecting the choral repertoire and to identify the opportunities that this repertoire offers for encouraging musical development of students within the framework of general education in Kosovo.			
The answers received from you will helps us in drawing the results for this research. All answers will remain confidential and only for the needs of this research.			
Thank you for your cooperation!			
Gender:	Female ()	Male ()	Age
The following questions were answered by the choir teachers.			
Q1. How many songs you have worked on with the choir during this school year?			
Q2. In how many voices do you interpret choir songs?			
Q3. Which songs have you performed with the choir in the last three programs?			
Q4. From what sources do you get the songs you work on with the choir?			
Q5. Do you think you have adequate conditions in your school to successfully realize musical activities?			
Q6. What are the difficulties you face as a teacher in performing the work with the choir?			

Appendix 2. Sample Songs A Kan' Uj' AtoBurime

A kan' uj' ato burime

(Populllore)

Aranzhoi:
Armend Xhoni

Tonaliteti: e-mol

Tema Motivi

I A kan' uj' a - to bu - ri - me ti moj buz' ka-ra - fi - lja i - me

Pjesa I

II A kan' uj' a - to bu - ri - me ti moj buz' ka-ra - fi - lja i - me

5 a1

I A kan' uj' a - to bu - ri - me ti moj buz' ka-ra - fi - lja i - me

II A kan' uj' a - to bu - ri - me ti moj buz' ka-ra - fi - lja i - me

9 motivi ritmik a2

I ti moj buz' ka-ra - fi - lja i - me oh_____ A-man, a-man, a-man e

II ti moj buz' ka-ra - fi - lja i - me oh_____ A-man, a-man, a-man e

13 kadenca...

I oh për be - lin e për ko - kën ta - te a - man a - man e

II oh për be - lin e për ko - kën ta - te a - man a - man e

T D T

Appendix 3. Sample Songs VajtaN'elbasan

Vajta n'Elbasan

$\text{♩} = 220$

F B F B F B

a **motivi** **a1**

SOPRANO

Vaj - ta n'el - ba - san me ble nji fus - tan ish - te krizë e

ALTO

6 C⁷ F C⁷ F Gm C⁷ F

ma - dhe go - cë ve - re - si s'ma dhan' fol e mos fol

a2

11 F C⁷ F Gm C⁷ F F C⁷ F

fol se t'kam sev - da ho - pa be - lin e hollë haj - de ma - sha - lla.

T D-----T-----

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Vajta n'Elbasan'. It is written for Soprano and Alto voices. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 220. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 8/8. The score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 1-5) features a Soprano line with a boxed-in motif (measures 1-2) and an Alto line with a boxed-in motif (measures 3-4). The second system (measures 6-10) continues the vocal lines with various chords (C7, F, Gm) and lyrics. The third system (measures 11-15) concludes the piece with more vocal lines and chords. The lyrics are in Albanian. There are performance markings 'a', 'a1', and 'a2' above the notes, and a 'T D-----T-----' marking at the bottom right.