

## **CHILDREN'S MUSIC FESTIVALS OF THE ALBANIAN COMMUNITY IN MACEDONIA**

A wide palette of different music events in our country, from year 1994 is enriched by another type of manifestations; those are the Albanian children's song festivals. If we take into consideration the year when the first festival was held, we could say that the Albanian children's song festivals in Macedonia appear relatively late in the musical scene and all in all, it has to do with something of more than one decade of continuation with this kind of manifestations. However, this one-decade continuity is not complete due to the two year standstill in the years 1997-1998 when not one festival was held. Having in mind this turn of events, we could freely say that even the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a period when these kinds of manifestations have a great success and expansion in most of the cities in Macedonia inhabited with Albanians. We must also stress that in the former SFRJ, there Albanian children's song festivals existed in Kosovo, so that is it something familiar and known for the Albanian population living in those areas, but for the Albanian population living in Macedonia, the appearance of the first children's festival in 1994 is a very important newness that will bring and contribute to the development of a new genre –the children's pop music. The interesting thing is that at the beginning, in the 90's we had only one festival that is being held in Skopje, while from 1999 and onwards those kinds of festivals appear in other cities. Viewed from present-today's perspective, from 1994 until today, eight children's festivals are established in several cities in Macedonia such as: Skopje, Tetovo, Kitchevo, Struga and Resen. From this we could notice that besides the great expansion of this kind of manifestations in the last five years, still in some cities with a relatively big percentage of the Albanian population such as: Gostivar, Kumanovo, Debar etc, there is still not one festival of Albanian music for children held. This is due to the general socio-economic and cultural occasions in our country. If we take into consideration the fact that in some of those cities such as Gostivar, there are almost no cultural institutions (theatres, cinemas, concert hall, library and similar), than it is very easy to come to a conclusion while so far there was no festival of this kind being held.

From the festivals held in the last decade, some of them have been successfully keeping up in the music scene up to date. With their modest history ate of six to seven years, overcoming all the obstacles and difficulties, they slowly but surely have the tendencies of becoming traditional. Contrary to them, the others who due to different reasons have quenched their activities after the first, second or the third year, have however left behind them a dozen of new songs that the children nowadays sing. As festivals with greatest continuity we could set aside "Bletëzat" (The Honeybees) from Tetovo which has started in year 1999 and has succeeded to stay on the music scene including year 2005 and Ylberi (Rainbow) from Skopje that is continuously being held

from year 2000-2005. Luckily, both the ones that have been held and the ones that have quenched are documented with audio and video records and some of them with musical note record. We should highlight that some festivals are recorded from the National Television MTV and are very often broadcasted in the second channel that broadcasts a programme of the ethnic communities in Macedonia. By that, the funds of those kinds of songs in MTV are enriched, which was more than modest and unassuming before.

All the festivals are private ones, which means that they are self-financed by the participants themselves and partly they are financed by different sponsors, donors, etc. Parts of them, although with symbolic means, were assisted by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Macedonia. When it comes to the organizational aspect, most of them are managed by the artistic council responsible for the artistic part (music, text, arrangement, production) and managerial team responsible for the organization of the financial part. However, there are cases as it is the case with “Shou me fatosat”, where one person takes the responsibility over everything starting with the songs and to the organization and management of the financials means. It is of big importance to mention that initiative of the first festival of Albanian children’s music “Bilbilat këndojnë” descends from the private television “ERA”, which in year 1994 structured a team of musicians and music pedagogysts who have realised this project. The very important role of the medias is seen in the example of the most prestigious festival “Ylberi” which from year 2001 is realized in a co-production with the music house “Prima” and the second channel of the Macedonian Television.

According to the content, with an exception of the festival in Resen which is a festival of folk music where the children appear as performers, all the other are festivals of new-composed children’s pop music. In order to have a more clear picture, in the following table are shown all the children’s festivals of Albanian music, both those who have remained in the music scene and those whose continuity has quelled. This table shows information’s of the name, year/’s, place and the genre.

NAME	PLACE	YEAR	GENRE
1.Bilbilat këndojnë (Singing Nightingales)	Skopje	1994-1996	Pop
2.Bletëzat (The Honeybees)	Tetovo	1999-2005	Pop
3.Ylberi (Rainbow)	Skopje	2000-2005	Pop
4.Shou me fatosat (Show with the childrens)	Skopje	2001-2003	Pop
5.Pëllumbat e artë (Golden doves)	Kitchevo	2002-2005	Pop
6.Bilbili i Prespës (Nightingale from Prespa)	Resen	2003-2004	Folk
7.Kolibri (Humming-bird)	Tetovo	2004	Pop
8.Zogu i artë (Golden bird)	Struga	2004-2005	Pop

From the table we could notice that all together so far in Macedonia there were eight festivals of this kind. As we could see, in most of them the names of the festivals are related to the names of birds, where we have a clear allurements on the association of singing in the children's fantasy connected to the bird sounds. The others are related to specific concepts from the nature that is very interesting and attractive to the children's world.

In the second column we could see that three of the festivals were held in Skopje, two in Tetovo and one in Resen, Struga and Kitchevo, by what we could come to a conclusion that still the bigger centres, despite everything, they lead with the number of these events. Here, most likely, as most important factors that contribute to the whole think are: the number of the populations, the economic power and the higher level of the cultural development.

According to the sustainability, as we have mentioned before, there are festivals which after the first year have quashed and festivals that are still being held. For the time being, from the eight festivals stated on the table, according to which one of them was held in the current year 2005, we could say that their continuity was maintained by four of them: "Ylberi" from Skopje, "Bletëzat" from Tetovo, "Pëllumbat e artë" from Kitchevo and "Zogu i artë" from Struga.

According to the genre representation, as we have mentioned before, all the festival with the exception of the Prespa festival "Bilbili I Prespës" are festivals of children's pop music and they are distinguished with a very broad variety of the songs, while as the most representative genres appear to be: hip-hop, RNB, rock, dance, rap, pop ballads, songs with folklore elements etc. We should also mention that within a great number of songs, there is a big influence of contemporary trends in the popular music. An interesting fact is that the children themselves, during the process of the creation of the songs (it will be explained later), very often seek that a world hit from the contemporary pop music serves as an example to their song.

The expansion of children's festivals of Albanian music from year 2000 up to date is as a result of many factors, from which as one of the most prominent we could separate the development of the computer technology, which enables that almost every musician has it own mini studio. If before we could count in one hand the audio studios in our country, now we are facing a completely different reality where the choice is big and different, from the mini studios where the work is mainly with PC's, to the big professional studios equipped with the most sophisticated professional studio equipment. This has, significantly contributed to the fact that as authors of songs in one festival, appear many children's composer, with the exception of the festival "Shou me fatosat"- Skopje (2001-2003), where one and only composer appears as author of all the songs. In average in all the festivals without any exception, the number of songs varies from starting with 17 up to the maximum of 25 songs. According to this also the number of the performers varies in the frames of

those numbers, with the fact that sometimes there might be more performers in one song, so that the number could insignificantly deviate from the upper mentioned numbers. The age of the children is from preschool to the higher classes of a primary school and expressed in numbers that is from five to fourteen years. But in some cases there were also participants less than five years of age. The participants are chosen in an audition, but if the author wrote the song intentionally for some of the kids and he will compete with it as a ready product (which we would talk about later), than conditionally saying an exception is made, due to the fact that lately those cases are more outspoken and frequent.

A big handicap of those festivals is that in all of them almost without any exception, the appearance is play back, both the instrumental and the vocal. The kids sing in the studio with a previously recorded matrix and after everything will be mixed, the song is burned and recorder in a CD and than it is played as a ready product. The playback is often a joint product of the author of the song, the arranger and the producer. The procedures in evolvment of the playback are the following:

1. An arrangement of the song is done
2. From the arrangement, the orchestral playback in the studio is recorded
3. The vocals are recorded based on the orchestral playback
4. Remix of the vocals and the orchestral part is done
5. Mastering

In that direction, an aim of many of the organizers is to organize a festival where at least the vocal would not go playback, by which the real affinities of the performer would come to expression and the uncomfortable situations where one kid has sang in the studio and another gets out in the stage would be avoided. But, having in mind the fact that those are private festivals , which in great extent are financed by the children participants, it is very difficult to do something in that respect, because in many of the cases the material means and not the affinities of the children are decisive if he will participate or not. The following table gives us approximate picture of the number of the compositions, number of the authors and the number of the arrangers for each festival separately.

NAME	Songs	Composers	Arrangers
1. Bilbilat këndojnë (Singing nightingales)	18-20	14-17	6-9
2. Bletëzat (The Honeybees)	18-22	15-19	7-11
3. Ylberi (Rainbow)	20-25	14-20	10-14
4. Shou me fatosat (Show with the childrens)	17-18	1	1
5. Pëllumbat e artë (The Golden doves)	20-22	16-18	9-12
6. Bilbili i Prespës (Nightingale from Prespa)	17-21	/	8-10
7. Kolibri (Humming-bird)	20	15	13

8.Zogu i artë (Golden bird)	17-20	13-16	6-8
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In most of the cases, except the festivals in which one person appears as an author of the songs, the songs are chosen in a publicly announced competition. After the competition had ended and it is closed, the artistic council of the festival chooses according to them the best songs, by what they keep the right of any kind of changes in relation to the melodic line, the text, arrangement, and the production and similar. It is very interesting that in the 90's, during the announcements of the competitions for the first festivals, it was required that the songs were handed over as a note scriptures of melodic lines with harmonic symbols, while in the later competitions from year 2000 and onwards, it is done by simply handing over a demo recording or audio record of the song as a final product. This is due to the greater use of the contemporary computer technology in the music art.

Some of the festivals have set a practice that in their frames they invite participants from Kosovo and Albania, so that from the overall number of songs 5-6 are always reserved for those participants. This practice was set from practical reasons, because at the very beginning our country had a great deficiency of composers of Albanian music for children, arrangers and text writers. Now, when the conditions are changed to a certain extent, that practice still continues and by that it is contributed for a bigger variety of compositions, arrangements, production approach and similar.

All the festivals are held in the frames of one term, which in the biggest part is conditioned from the financial limitations that the organizers are faced with. Only the festival "Ylberi" had one relatively successful attempt in year 2003, when it was held in the frames of two nights in a row, with one qualification night and one final night, but it did not manage to continue with this practice in year 2004, so it came back on the old model-one night festival. The festivals are with a competitive character and according to that as it is the case in other festivals three rewards are given from the jury and one from the audience. Only the festival "Shou me fatosat" in all its editions had a revue character.

Nevertheless, the huge positive influence of those festivals enrichment of the cultural-amusement life of children, could be best noticed if we make a comparison between the auditions for choosing solo singers in the 90's where the children sang songs from the genre of folk or pop music and the present auditions in which they sing almost nothing but children's songs that come out from the upper mentioned festivals. Also, it is important to mention that many young famous singers from the Albanian pop scene in Macedonia, have sang at least once in some of these festivals.