

National activities linked with iso- polyphony

Events promoting the qualities of intangible heritage in the area of iso-polyphony.

Ency. Pursuant to Law no. 9048 of 7 April 2003, on Cultural Heritage, et al., the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, Paris, 2003, ratified by the Albanian Government in 2006, and sub-legal enactments in this field, several important national events aimed at preserving and promoting the qualities of folk iso-polyphony are organised within the Republic of Albania. These include:

The National Typological Folkore Festival (FFTK) of Saze and Folk Bands, Korçë.

The FFTK of Saze, a national intangible culture event, focuses on the musical tradition of the saze, as an embodiment of instrumental iso-polyphony. The music of the saze is found throughout the south, south-east and south-west of Albania, especially in the urban music of Korçë, Vlorë, Pogradec, Përmet, Berat, Leskovik, etc. Other towns which have saze ensembles, although lying outside this cultural zone also participate in this event, as is the case with the Lela family of Tirana, etc. This festival has been held regularly in the town of Korçë since 1994, in cooperation with the local municipality, and in accordance with the Statute of National Typological Festivals approved by the Ministry of Culture.

The FFTK of Iso-Polyphony, Vlorë.

The FFTK of Iso-Polyphony, a national intangible culture event, focuses on the non-instrumental iso-polyphonic tradition, and is held in Vlorë on the eve of the November festivals. This festival, which by now occupies a place in tradition, is an outstanding example of Albanian polyphony as a manifestation of popular creativity. The purpose of the festival is to present, encourage and promote the finest values and achievements of this genre, and to revive the cultural life of the areas where iso-polyphony is the chief form of artistic expression. With this end in view, the finest performers from all parts of the country are invited to participate. Folk polyphony groups from towns with musical traditions, such as Korçë, Gjirokastrë, Sarandë, Vlorë, Gramsh, Tepelenë, Përmet, Skrapar, etc, participate in the festival, as do groups from the north whose songs feature

two or more voices. It is also intended to invite groups from other areas of the Balkans which have a polyphonic song tradition, such as Greece, Macedonia, etc. Prizes are awarded by a jury of specialists. This festival has been held regularly in Vlorë since 2001, in cooperation with the local municipality, and in accordance with the Statute of National Typological Festivals approved by the Ministry of Culture. Following the proclamation of iso-polyphony as a “Masterpiece of the Oral Heritage of Mankind” by UNESCO in 2005, on 25 November, the festival has begun on that date each year, closing on 28 November, Albanian Independence Day.

FFTK of Folk Dance, Lushnjë:

The first National Typological Folklore Festival of Folk Dance was held in the town of Lushnjë in 2006. The purpose of this festival is to present, encourage and promote the finest values and achievements of genre of folk dance, and to revive the cultural life of Lushnjë and the surrounding area. With this end in view, the finest performers from all parts of the country are invited to participate. It is also intended to display as many folk costumes from the entire country as is possible. The festival is held in cooperation with the local municipality, in accordance with the Statute of National Typological Festivals approved by the Ministry of Culture.

Folklore Festival of Folk Musical Instruments (FFVMP), Gjirokastër.

The FFVMP is a cultural and artistic event concentrating on folk songs and melodies accompanied and interpreted by folk musical instruments such as the fyell, sharki, çifteli (plucked string instruments), gajde (bagpipe), cyledyare (double pipe), etc. This event is organised on a District basis and has been held since 2002. The Folklore Festival of Folk Instruments is a multicultural event during which the performances that take place in the citadel of the museum-city of Gjirokastër (proclaimed a World Heritage Site by UNESCO) are accompanied by other events, such as exhibitions, launches of publications, seminars, etc. The FFVMP invigorates cultural life in the citadel and the historic centre of the town, as well as promoting and presenting cultural and folklore values, with a particular emphasis on the interpretation and accompaniment of folk instrumental music. The FFVMP encourages cultural tourism and stimulates traditional craft

businesses in the historic centre of town. The festival is mounted by the District of Gjirokaštër in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Culture.

International CIOFF (International Council of Organizations for Folklore Festivals and Folk Art) Festival, Përmet:

This is the only international festival of ethnic, cultural and linguistic minorities to be held in Albania, and it takes place under the auspices of the CIOFF. Albania is a member of the CIOFF, and the Albanian Section is based in the town of Përmet, where the first festival was held in 2001. The Përmeti Multikulturor (Multicultural Përmet) International Folklore Festival is the only cultural and artistic event to include the folklore of the minorities and ethnicities living in Albania. Përmet was selected because it is a town where a variety of cultures and ethnicities co-exist and encounter one another, as well as being the birthplace of such masters of folk song as Laver Bariu, Mentor Xhemali, Remzi Lela, and others. Along with the performances, which are held in the main square, other events such as symposia, exhibitions, book launches, etc. are also organised as part of this multicultural event. The festival is intended to invigorate the cultural life of Përmet and the surrounding area, and to promote and present the cultural values of the ethnic groups and minorities at countrywide and regional level, inspiring peace and friendship between the ethnic groups and peoples of this regions during Albania's integration into Europe. The event is also intended to promote cultural tourism and encourage local businesses, and has been marked by successful cooperation between the local authorities and the Përmet Chamber of Commerce, and has been followed with considerable interest by local people, who regard it as a festival of their own songs and folk dances, and one which fully appreciates their local culture. The festival constitutes a major achievement for the entire Albanian folklore movement, since it displays the country's remarkable fund of folklore, has put Albanian tradition firmly on the global map, and has established an important reference point in Albania for the worldwide CIOFF, which covers the expenses of the festival. The Statute of this festival was approved by a Decision of Përmet Municipal Council in December 2006, the legal enactment prescribing the organisation of this activity.

Bejkë e Bardhë Festival, Pilur, Himarë

The Bejkë e Bardhë Festival is a Iso-Polyphony, a national intangible culture event, focuses on the non-instrumental iso-polyphonic tradition, and is held in Pilur, Himarë on April. The first edition was in the end of April 2019. This festival, is intended to take a place in tradition, as an example of Albanian polyphony culture as a manifestation of popular creativity.

Divani Lunxhot Festival,

Divani Lunxhot Festival is an important festival organized in Gjirokastra with iso-polyphonic groups from Gjirokastra region and especially from Lunxheria area.

Lit: Dalli, I “Informacione”, Kultura Popullore, 1-2/2001, fq. 293-295; Shkreli, Inis “Festivali Kombëtar i Sazeve dhe Orkestrinave Popullore në qytetin e Korçës”, Kultura Popullore, 1-2/2005, p. 290-291; Qafoku, Klodian “Festivali Kombëtar i Polifonisë”, Kultura Popullore, 1-2/2005, p. 292; Çausi, Fitim “Shpirti i popullit në këngë”, 2006;