

## INTERVIEW WITH RAFET RUDI

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Duration: 204 minutes

Present:

1. Rafet Rudi (Speaker)
2. Erëmirë Krasniqi (Interviewer)
3. Petrit Çeku (Interviewer)
4. Donjetë Berisha (Camera)

*Transcription notation symbols of non-verbal communication:*

*() – emotional communication*

*{}* – the speaker explains something using gestures.

*Other transcription conventions:*

*[ ]* - addition to the text to facilitate comprehension

*Footnotes are editorial additions to provide information on localities, names or expressions.*

## Part One

**Rafet Rudi:** Alright, I am Rafet Rudi, a composer born on January 5, 1949, in Mitrovica.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Can you tell us about your family, your early childhood?

**Rafet Rudi:** I mean, I belong to a *gjakovar* family that moved to Mitrovica from Gjakova because of economic reasons, and I mean it was a family that migrated between two world wars. My father, for example, had a shop, he was a merchant, and this happened because Mitrovica was a more dynamic city. An industrial city, different from Gjakova, which had no movements, no employment, of course it didn't even have factories and so on, and all of these were present in Mitrovica. Mitrovica, I mean, it was, we will also see later during the interview, it was a relatively open city, or I can say the most open city in Kosovo back then. Precisely for the fact that it was an industrial city, people from other centers as well as even from abroad were employed here and of course there was a more dynamic life, and that is where a bunch of families saw an opportunity. And, it is interesting how in Mitrovica, they lived as a kind of enclave, very, very weirdly. Why am I saying this, because until...during my entire childhood, I mean, they noticed me as a *gjakovar*, very interesting.

Meanwhile, I was born there as well as my brothers and sisters. I had two sisters, I mean one of them is still alive and two brothers who are still alive, and it is interesting, not a wealthy family, not wealthy but seems like, because of my father, very oriented towards education. That is why, I mean, I was the youngest in that family, I mean, all the others were older, and they all studied, and it is interesting that all of them studied outside Pristina. It is interesting. I mean, my sister Servet, who is deceased now, might be from the generation of the first intellectuals who studied in Belgrade, I mean this is in '55-'56, I mean, when in Kosovo, let's say... It is known that women were in the process of being veiled, I mean, and when it came to her it was a matter of being veiled or continuing her studies and she continued her studies. She studied Mathematics in Belgrade. Totally, totally strange. Looks like that was a wish of my father, and of course I had the luck of [belonging to] this family too.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Do you remember any detail from your life in Mitrovica...it seemed very interesting to me that you said that they identified you as *gjakovar*?

**Rafet Rudi:** Look, that, that is one, one, maybe not a detail, we don't, I didn't say it in a negative connotation...eh, but the issue is not that, that was a pretty closed environment, as it is know, that society, the Kosovar society at that time was very...I mean, isolated, cities, villages, right? There

wasn't much communication, right? And Mitrovica, let's say, had its own *rreth*<sup>1</sup> and people knew each other there, the city was very small compared to the population it has now, and, that is why the differences were noticed, right? But I must say something, the Mitrovica of that time was heterogeneous in the sense of society. I mean, there were Turks, Serbs, yes...but there were no big divisions.

Let's say in our *rreth*, which we called our *mahalla*,<sup>2</sup> we also had Serb neighbors, right? That is why, my generation, I mean, people of my age have always spoken a relatively good Serbian, different from other cities, any other city. Not to talk about Gjakova, where people didn't know Serbian at all. Then, they also spoke Turkish, but that was during the time when many Albanians began to emigrate to Turkey, as it is historically known. Even our house, the one we have in Mitrovica, we bought it from a person who emigrated to Turkey, and that structure, let's say, the national heterogeneity made Mitrovica very specific back then. And that continued even later, right? And...let's say, let's say in the elementary and middle school and at the time when I started to engage in music, communication was totally normal, right, I mean...

What is it, what connects me with that environment? I learned a very good Serbo-Croatian, this is how we called it back then, and the literature was in Serbian, right, I mean, be it magazines, I mean, we had a library in our house, of course not as the one I have now, but that was a tradition, right. I remember it and feel bad that it wasn't saved, but for example, my brother Agim, Myrvete and I, we, the younger children subscribed to the children's magazines *Kekec* and *Zavanik*. There...why am I telling this? Let me mention it again that it was because that was a good means of [intellectual] growth, which couldn't be provided by Albanian language, or even education and so on. And then, for example, there was a very active library, very active library in Mitrovica, which I...I remember it well that I often went there and read books in Serbian. I mean, that environment made it, I am mentioning this specifically, my development, and I would say that Mitrovica, as a society, is very different from other cities. When I look at it now, from this perspective, I think that it played a very positive role, I mean, in my later growth.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Can you identify where your father's interest in education came from?

**Rafet Rudi:** First, I will tell you that my father...I don't know him. He died when I was four. I mean, as a family we were connected to our mother, an extraordinary personality, I can say, very strange. I am mentioning this because they say that my father was pretty calm, very calm. You know, neat and so on, while my mother was more dynamic, energetic and in fact, she made it possible for us to grow, I mean, to educate and so on.

And now, I am saying this, I was mostly influenced regarding music by my brother Reshad, who is an economist, he was, but he belongs to a whole generation of students who studied in Belgrade. This is, I mean, this is already known, right? Year? This must be somewhere in the late '50s, in the '60s, and there were hundreds of Albanian students, and those students were connected to Mitrovica, right, my brother and my sister were among them. When they returned during holidays, they organized some activities, parties, gatherings, youth parties, I can say, that considering the time, they were more emancipated than the other people in the city.

<sup>1</sup> *Rreth* (circle) is the social circle, it includes not only the family but also the people with whom an individual is in contact. The opinion of the *rreth* is crucial in defining one's reputation.

<sup>2</sup> Word of Arabic origin that means neighborhood.

And they had those meetings, I mean, or the way we call them now, *party* [English] and so on, right? They met and sang and those [gatherings] were a routine, once a week, I mean this structure of people met once a week. And as a little child, I started attending them and helping with my guitar. And it is very interesting, guitar was the first instrument I was connected to. Of course, that was totally amateur, I mean it was simply following the singing, the singing, right, and I mean, the musical activity, and the songs that were sung were songs of the entertaining genre of music, right, for that time. I mean, not folklore gatherings, they weren't such, right. We don't notice the difference now, but the differences were very sharp at that time, very obvious, and I mean, this is the environment where I had my first contacts with music.

Then of course they were enthusiastic because of the environment where they lived, because they were in, I mean he was just born...my brother was also active in the association *Përpjekja* [Struggle] in Belgrade, right. Belgrade and Zagreb were two centers where there were more Albanian students, right, and they were relatively developed centers. I even thing that they were very developed, because when you consider the system, which we lived in, right...I mean, it was a nominally communist system, right. But, as it is known, Yugoslavia was way more forward in the Eastern Bloc, and that is why it had a big influence, I mean, in our cultural environment through these students who studied in those centers. And so, I belong precisely to that environment, right, and these were my, I will repeat it, first contacts with music, but nothing bigger or more ambitious than that.

The essential contact, I would say, is in 1960 when I started the music school, the elementary school of music in Mitrovica, and this should be viewed in the context of Kosovo. Besides Prizren, Mitrovica also had the school of music, right, and I guess there was one in Pristina as well. But the school of music in Mitrovica was pretty active and specific because of many characteristics. My beginnings, I mean, are connected with this school of music, and thanks to the activity of professor Fahri Beqiri. He was young at that time, but he was a very dynamic, communicative person and he gathered...in the years, I mean, we are talking about '59, '60, '61, '62 right, when he gathered talented children from Mitrovica and helped them to get oriented towards music. And since professor Fahri was a friend of my brother and sister, they are the same age, right, I mean, he insisted to test me in music.

And I, I remember the moment when I went to the school of music, and I had to...of course the usual ways of testing the ear. I don't exactly know how it happened, but I know something else, that I had to tell which instrument I wanted to take up, and I decided for the violin. Of course, without exactly knowing the difference, which is pretty big between the violin and other instruments, but this is how my life with music started. Of course, we are not talking about quality growth, right, because there weren't music professionals at that time in Mitrovica. However, I took the elementary information about music in that elementary school of music, and somehow, that was crucial for me to continue the middle school of music in Pristina. Of course, that was important, right.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** When did you come to Pristina?

**Petrit Çeku:** I just wanted one... a little more about Mitrovica. What memories do you have about the professors of music there?

**Rafet Rudi:** Look, yes, yes, look, of course I don't remember things from that time very clearly, but...I don't, I don't....For example, Fahri Beqiri was my violin teacher in the first year. He wasn't a violinist,

violin wasn't his expertise. But, and I know this for sure, some teachers from Vojvodina and Serbia were involved in the school of music, right, mainly they. And I guess Fahri was the only one who started working at that time. Then, of course this composition of the school of music changed after some years, but in the beginning, there were no musicians...with differentiated expertise, right. You know we aren't talking about that kind of educational level.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Shall we move to the time when you came to Pristina?

**Rafet Rudi:** Yes, after three years, after three years, after three years I continued the school of music in Pristina. It is interesting, I even feel bad for not saving the correspondence I had with my older brother who was in Belgrade, because my mother was against the idea of me going outside of Mitrovica. Here it should be clear that moving between Mitrovica and Pristina back then was a whole adventure, I mean, it wasn't the same as it is today, and of course, as a mother she was afraid to let me travel alone at the age of 14. Can you imagine that for the admission exam, or for the first year of my classes, I travelled by train from Mitrovica to Pristina, Fushë Kosovë, and then from Fushë Kosova to Pristina by train again in order to make it in the morning, to catch the class. I did this every day.

**Petrit Çeku:** Approximately, how much did the journey last?

**Rafet Rudi:** I think I had to take off around two-three hours before the class started, because you know that classes started very early, right. I don't exactly know, but it must have started before eight, or at eight, not like now. And you can imagine a 14 years old child who had to go to the train station from home, I had to take off at five in the morning, imagine this during the winter. I can't even imagine it now, I mean, to make it to class very early in the morning. It generally was difficult, continuing my education outside my home was an adventure, and my mother had her doubts. But, strangely, I don't know how I got convinced, and what pushed me to insist to go and I had the support of my brother who was in Belgrade and to whom I had to talk.

And here I am mentioning this part...my brother and my sister, because we have an age difference of twelve-thirteen years, and they played the role of parent to me. Alright, I mean this was, my insisting and then the agreement of my brother and sister was crucial, so I continued in Mitrovica. Then there was the financial problem, right. It wasn't easy, continuing my education outside the environment where we lived had a cost, right. Alright, I mean I continued the school in Mitrovica, but I must admit, that time wasn't much productive in the sense of...since the preparation I had, I was at another level compared to my classmates who had no preparation from the school of music at that time, right...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** We are talking about Pristina, right?

**Rafet Rudi:** Pristina, yes about Pristina. I had to be more ambitious in that phase. I don't think that I had ambitions but I will mention...I would mention it that the school of music in Pristina had teachers...Let me mention this first, that the lectures were given in Serbo-Croatian and teachers were very good. This was very important for my further development, absolutely. When I compare that time when we were in the third and fourth year we wrote whole fugues, we wrote fugues, and when I compare that with the school today, I can't understand how the level of the school of music went down, compared to the time when I learned at that school.

I mean, the level of teachers was relatively good, relatively good, not to say very good, but this was very important for my development, because there were some professors, I won't name or rank them

now, who encouraged me and some of my colleagues who distinguished themselves to go and study in Belgrade, right, and they did it precisely in the last years, in the third and fourth year. I am saying that they were very important for my development in the sense that I slowly started being aware of music, about how important music could be in my life. I mean, it seems like I was more ambitious at that time, and in the fourth year I had already started to understand the influence of these good teachers who were from Niš, Belgrade and so on, and I started to seriously think about my studies and continuing them in Belgrade. And the time was such that having studied music, you would immediately find the opportunity of employment, I mean, and...

**Petrit Çeku:** In the school of music?

**Rafet Rudi:** Yes, in the school of music. And I guess today it is not even possible or...I mean, continuing your studies, that was, you had to show a greater love and ambition, because you had another option of development, or of life in another job and so on, right. And, of course, I didn't have that kind of dilemma, even though, before...I mean, the school...I didn't continue the Academy and studies right after I finished the school of music, but after finishing it, I continued working for one year in the school of music as a preparation for Belgrade, I mean for my studies in Belgrade, and I mean, I got fully prepared.

Of course, not with anyone, but alone, I prepared alone. But let's say, I had the knowledge that was required in the admission exam from my teachers and professor Fahir, who at that time had finished his studies in Belgrade and I mean, when I went to Belgrade, I sat and played my pieces at the piano. This was the form of presentation and I mean, the audition, right, for my studies. It is important that I played them, because it looks like that was one of the reasons why they even accepted me in Belgrade. I mean...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** In general, was this musical education a totally new thing after the Second World War, were people educated in these musical genres before?

**Rafet Rudi:** In school? In the school of music?

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Yes...in these genres?

**Rafet Rudi:** I mean, there was the school of music in Prizren, which was a kind of cradle of the development of classical music. In Mitrovica there was the second one as it is known, and in '61 also the school of music in Pristina, the middle school of music. We cannot talk about a high level, I mean we aren't talking about a musical life, I mean a concerts life. I mean, this is a relatively low level of education, but it is very significant because that was a specific school, besides the gymnasium,<sup>3</sup> I mean and I suppose that...it is exactly this element that made the qualification of the staff important, because those who went to the school of music were those who were more ambitious and talented, and they only thought about further growth. That further growth meant the Academy of music, right. But, let me say this, because as I mentioned it here, there were teachers in the school of music here who weren't from a very low level. For example, I remember in the school of music, in the hall, which was here in the building of the school of music until recently, the symphonic orchestra held rehearsals all the time, I mean, a kind of a symphonic orchestra, right.

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<sup>3</sup> A European type of secondary school with emphasis on academic learning, different from vocational schools because it prepares students for university.

I remember one case when I was present, there was a family from Niš, their daughter is a famous cellist in Germany, Ksenia Janković. I mean, she was one of the children, I mean, she was a student. While, Olga Janković was a pianist, Pavli Janković was a conductor, and they developed a kind of activity, right. But, I don't know why, but they did something that was very important for the students. I remember when I was in rehearsals, I mean in the rehearsals of the symphonic orchestra. I am saying that those are, let's say, the first moments of my contact with professional music, a more professional music compared to what it had used to be before, right, I suppose that not even Prizren could have that at that time. I am talking about '64, '65, '66, '67, right.

For one moment, you also know it historically that, I mean, right after the war, Prizren was the capital, and then it was moved. Pristina became the administrative center and that is why the institutions began there, right. I mean, the radio, Radio Pristina, within which there were some activities, some collective activities, the choir of the radio worked as an amateur group, then the orchestra worked as well. And with this move, I mean, with the move of the center from Prizren to Pristina, there were some repercussions in the sense that, our first musicians went to Pristina. For example, Rexho Mulliqi, Lorenz Antoni<sup>4</sup> worked there and then they moved to Pristina. We are talking about this time, Pristina started to become a musical center for the school of music, Prizren was not the center anymore, nor was Mitrovica, right... This is important, that period should be enlightened.

**Petrit Çeku:** In the third and fourth year your enthusiasm towards music grew... I wanted to ask you whether you had access to music, and in what way, in the sense of listening to music?

**Rafet Rudi:** Yes, of course, there were very few [occasions], very few of them. I mean, we are talking about school and I mean for a period of the development of this school and our schools, when I say this, I mean before... no, this is also a description of the political situation. That was, that was a very difficult time for Albanians and those were the last years of a system that was very harsh towards Albanian education and culture and so on. There were changes, but they were mainly done for the sake of external effects, politica, but in essence, there were very few musical events. There could be, I remember the contacts we had with similar schools, let's say with other countries around Yugoslavia.

For example, I remember very well when we went, let's say to a school of music in Belgrade or any school of music from Niš and Belgrade held concerts in our school of music. These were some ways, right. Then, there were some sporadic concerts. For example, I remember, since we are talking about guitar here, [Jovan] Jovicić, I saw him back then in the middle school of music.

**Petrit Çeku:** In Pristina?

**Rafet Rudi:** Yes, yes, in Pristina, in Pristina. This is very beautiful. I remember that it took place here in the military cinema back then, or when UNMIK [offices] were located, here in that building...

**Petrit Çeku:** Do you know where it is, I am interested to know?

**Rafet Rudi:** The military cinema, it was near *Grand* [Hotel] that center, it used to be the center of UNMIK. The building, that building.

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<sup>4</sup> Lorenc Antoni (1909-1991) was a Kosovo Albanian composer, conductor, and ethnomusicologist.

**Petrit Çeku:** Aha. So that was the military cinema?

**Rafet Rudi:** Yes, the cinema. It was an ordinary cinema, but there were some halls and one of them was used by the military orchestra for rehearsals. This is interesting. Back then, there was also the military wind and brass orchestra, because these centers such as Pristina and let's say Niš and so on, I don't know much about military organizations, but I guess Pristina was among the most important military centers and had this element within it. Good that you mentioned it, this is very important, the development of the symphonic orchestra is connected to the military orchestra.

**Petrit Çeku:** In what kind of way?

**Rafet Rudi:** Because the first conductor of the symphonic orchestra of the...we are talking about the '60s, but also the '50s, when there was an activity of the symphonic orchestra and it was documented by recordings that to this day exist in the radio. And one of the first people who developed this activity was Vojnović, Bogoljub Vojnović, and he was the conductor of the orchestra...the conductor of the wind and brass orchestra of breathing in the garrison of Pristina. And, those instruments and that conductor were part of the first core of the orchestra. This is enough...this can be documented, right...and especially, when I say that there were sporadic concerts, I suppose that those were concerts or activities of this orchestra, of this wind and brass orchestra, which gathered musicians from various places, not from Kosovo. The players were from other countries. Let's say, he might have been a member of the orchestra here, but two years later he could be a member of the orchestra in Niš or Novi Sad and so on.

## Part Two

**Rafet Rudi:** We are somewhere...we explained the orchestra, right? I think that if it has all been recorded, there is nothing else to say because the essential change happened some years later. Because in '67, '66, '67 I finished the middle school and back then there was the famous IV Plenum of Brioni<sup>5</sup> right? And that is where...that is where an essential and very drastic change took place, very drastic. I mean, drastic for the mentality that I tried to explain before that you...you saw Belgrade and so on, while in '66, '67 and '68 there are the changes in the amendments [to the Constitution], right, the politicians know them, and that led to the creation of the Constitution of '74. This is a decisive moment. I have to explain this period, but I was in Belgrade at that time, right, from '68 to '7...practically '74, I was... in '73, November-December, right, I mean, in '74 I was in Belgrade.

**Petrit Çeku:** Can you tell us a little about Belgrade?

**Rafet Rudi:** Yes, Belgrade, yes. This is the most important, right. Of course, it is important especially for me, for my development.

**Petrit Çeku:** How was the staff of the Academy?

**Rafet Rudi:** So, I mean '60...in '68, '69 I enrolled in the department of composition in Belgrade, I

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<sup>5</sup> IV Plenum of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, held on the Adriatic island of Brioni in 1966, mostly noted for the expulsion from the party of Ministry of the Interior and head of secret police Aleksandar Ranković.



began my studies. Of course, I remember the admission exam. It even seems strange to me how I was very convinced that I would be successful. Even though that was a relatively isolated environment for Albanians, for their development, especially for specific departments. Because there were students in the Academy in Belgrade, but they were mainly studying pedagogy, right. Esat Rizvanolli is the first one together with Fahri Beqiri who studied composition. And, I mean, at that time, I went too, and I played my compositions on the piano and they valued that, so this was enough for me to get accepted. And this, this moment is very crucial because the difference was very significant. The changing of the environment, the big difference between Pristina and Belgrade at that time, at that time. A terribly big difference. While here there were no constant activities, there was a cultural life, a cultural one, I am emphasizing this because I was especially interested in other fields as well, but let's not talk much about that now.

Let's return to music, I mean it was very...this change was very decisive to my development because let's say, in the first year I saw a musical giant, Gennady Rozhdestvensky, for example, a...very quality and big orchestra, and the musical life in Belgrade of that time was much more developed than in Belgrade today, if you know about the attendance to ensembles, to chamber music groups, of orchestras and big names. I mean, I can say that the Eastern Bloc, right, it is known that historically it is not connected to us, this is not something that I say, it is not something new.

Of course, Belgrade was the main cultural center of the Eastern bloc. Because, let me explain it to a wider extent. The orchestras were more interested to go to the Eastern Bloc, but they faced difficulties because they went to Sofia, to other centers, while in Belgrade they came very frequently. When I say in Belgrade...I have to mention that usually when the artists came, the big orchestra names, they held concerts in Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana. This is a small but important detail.

That was a big work for me, because I ultimately am...connected to the classical music because here in my environment in Kosovo, I developed a kind of activity also in other fields of music. Let's say, I was a member of bands, rock bands and so on, at the moment when in the first year I contacted those big names, to me it was absolutely... there was only one traced path in my life, and that was classical music. And generally, that high level was in Belgrade, the high cultural level, I mean the high level of the development of concert life was very significant...very significant to my growth.

As far as professors go, I must say that I reached the generation of Serbian educators, composers and conductors who at that time were at the peak of their careers in the West. Let me mention some of them, Oscar Danon, Zivojnović, Mihovil Logar and Zivković, Milošević and so on, and this is a generation in Serbian music that is known as the generation of the school of Prague. I mean, let me mention this detail, because in the '20s and '30s, Prague was the main center of modern music. Let's say that they learned from Jozef Su and Alois Haba, you know, the composer Alois Haba was considered a very great modern composer of the '20s and '30s, and they were their students and transmitted that [knowledge]. They studied in the '20s and '30s, right, and they came to Belgrade. And when I started, they were in the West and let me say, they were at the end of their careers but it was very important to me having such people who lived abroad, right.

They were professors who had finished very important academies in centers of the West, in Germany, especially in Prague, I am mentioning this because between two wars, Prague was the center of the Eastern Bloc, different from Warsaw that was the main center during the '50s and '60s, a center of modern music in the Eastern bloc. I mean, the education system in composition there was very different from a center let's say, Bucharest or Sofia. It was absolutely a center that cultivated a very

advanced education. Let's say, if it is important, Shostakovič and Stravinsky came to the Academy of Belgrade, as well as Cage in '71, when I was in Belgrade, Cage came. Even though he came to Bitef, right, I mean, this is important, Bitef.

**Petrit Çeku:** What is it?

**Rafet Rudi:** Bitef is a very significant festival of modern theater.

**Petrit Çeku:** Of theater?

**Rafet Rudi:** Of theater. He came, yes, {nods}, as it is known, Cage was active in various fields, but why am I mentioning this? Because Belgrade was a totally open city, and since Belgrade lived in a Yugoslav environment where there was also Zagreb, in '61 there is the beginning of the Zagreb Biennale. In '61 there is the Zagreb Biennale. These centers were communicating, I mean, Belgrade, Zagreb and I mean, Ljubljana, and let me mention the positive part of the sufficient formation in the field of modern music, you could find everything there, I mean, in Belgrade.

At that time, as far as life goes, I mean, my own development in the field of composition, Belgrade was connected and was a collaborator in the organization of the festival in Opatia, the *Tribuna e Krijimtarisë Muzikore Jugosllave* [The Tribune of Yugoslav Musical Creations], which is a very significant festival for the development of the musical creation here in Kosovo as well, because we were, later we were constantly connected to that festival. It was a very modern festival, I mean, all the actual tendencies that were developed in other countries, in other centers such as Amsterdam, London, Koln or Darmstadt and so on, they were echoed exactly in the *Tribuna e Krijimtarisë Muzikore Jugosllave* and also, as it is historically known, in the Zagreb Biennale, and I mean, this was...

I am mentioning this because since the first year in our Academy, I mean there was an organization to send the students of composition to Belgrade. I mean, the festival lasted one week or four-five days. And it was a festival in which the best potential of the creativity and the artists of the Yugoslav centers of that time who performed it, were represented. And let's say, since the first year, I attended the festival regularly and then in the next twenty years, that festival, (laughs) was significant, and always had a big influence, I mean a massive influence, let's say on my own creation and on the creations of some of our composers...who were interested to attend it. And besides that, I mean, even though it used to take place in the entire other side of Yugoslavia, that was...it played a role...a significant role in the view of our creations of the early '70s.

I mean, the partitures of our few composers that you see, it is true, right? There are very few of them. These relatively correspond to the creations that were developed not only in Belgrade and Zagreb but also elsewhere. Then that time, I have to explain this detail as well. We moved, we travelled, let's say, compared to our colleagues in Sofia and Romania, I mean in the Eastern countries we had, I mean, during the '70s I went to international festivals as well.

**Petrit Çeku:** When you say "We as an Academy," you mean the students of the Academy, right?

**Rafet Rudi:** Yes, the students of the Academy.

**Petrit Çeku:** The Academy had organized trips?

**Rafet Rudi:** Yes, yes. The students of the Academy, the department of composition. We went to the festival in an organized way. I mean to the *Tribuna e Krijimtarisë Muzikore Jugosllave*, also sometimes the Zagreb Biennale. I mean, this completely open environment of Belgrade had a big influence and was decisive for my orientation, I mean, in creation. Then, if we focus on my development now after the first year of my studies in the department of composition, I enrolled in the Department of Conduction, which is a totally separate department. For your information, I graduated in conduction before, and one year later I finished my studies in composition.

Like this, later then, I think that was important, maybe, it is important to mention that I already spoke Serbian when I went to Belgrade. I had no barriers to get integrated, I mean, and experience the cultural life. I mean, I had no barriers.

**Petrit Çeku:** Because of books...

**Rafet Rudi:** Yes, yes. I mean that is why I mentioned it earlier that in Mitrovica, Albanians from Mitrovica spoke Serbian, and I was a very passionate reader, and the literature was a very attractive field for me, I mean, it was important to me and to my development. Let's say, I experienced the cultural life very intensively. I mentioned the cultural life in Belgrade because I remember it as a student, of course there were many theaters, let's say, around five-six professional theaters, and I mean there was no show within the season that I didn't see. Practically, I saw them all. I mean, I can absolutely say that, as far as theater goes. Then there were publications. Of course, here as well {points towards the library}, I have many publications of that time, publications in the field of musical theory, we could only find them in the Serbian-Croatian language and the knowledge of language was very important, the level of its knowledge. And I can say that I fully got to experience those five years in Belgrade and of course, I got professional in some way.

Generally, the education level was very high, in the sense of not experimenting. I mean, the education in the field of composition, it is true that it was more based on the neoclassical music, let's say, because of the aforementioned professors, right. But, that has a positive side, because the basic theoretical subjects were taught. Without experiments. I mean, we learned harmony in a very high level, analysis as well, harmony and polyphony. The requests on piano were very high, let's say, I had ambitions to enroll in the department of piano as well. Maybe because my professor was at the same time a conductor in the opera of Belgrade, during his life he was a composer as well as a pianist. To that point that he was also a soloist in the philharmonic orchestra of the Czech Republic and maybe that is why I had the ambition to collect all those fields in my development, let's say, they would find answers, of course, in the environment of the back then Belgrade.

We had, I mean, it is important to mention it that we, the students and those who came after us, I mean our older colleagues Esat Rizvanolli, Fahri Beqiri, right, I am talking about those who were in the department of composition, we had a humanitarian help from our professors, I was helped by my professor, right. There was no hesitation, I mean the relation was very human. Even though, I suppose that one could find anything in that wide Belgrade, bad things as well. But definitely not the Belgrade that was developed later, very harsh towards Albanians, very cruel towards Albanians and so on.

I must say that these years consist on an essential change for the political world of Kosovo, and that influenced our relations, the relations of the students from Kosovo with the professors in Belgrade, right... It was a pretty correct relation. Maybe you also...maybe I must say this, that during my stay in

Belgrade, the procedure of the formation of *Shoqata e Kompozitorëve të Kosovës* [Association of Kosovo Composers] started, it was done with the help of our professors from Belgrade. Just as a historical fact.

**Petrit Çeku:** Was it connected to the *Shoqata e Kompozitorëve të Jugosllavisë* [Association of Yugoslav Composers]?

**Rafet Rudi:** Yes, yes also with the *Shoqata e Kompozitorëve të Serbisë* [Association of Serbia Composers], within the *Lidhja e Kompozitorëve të Jugosllavisë* [The League of Composers of Yugoslavia]. All the republics had their own composer associations that developed a very great activity, I mean, in the field of publication and communication that they had with similar associations around the world. This is very important. Let's say, at that time, as soon as I finished my studies, I officially attended the evenings of Bratislava as a composer, a festival, right, *Mbramjet Muzikore të Bratisllavës* [Bratislava Musical Evenings]. It is a festival that still exists, a festival of modern music, and we used the connection that existed between Yugoslav composers and other associations. I mean, the Association of Composers in '69 became a branch of the Association of Serbia, while in '72 it became an independent association, precisely with the help of these musicians whom I mentioned.

**Petrit Çeku:** I have a personal curiosity, actually, a personal request, if you can mention some of the great names of music that you heard in Belgrade, I would like to have them recorded.

**Rafet Rudi:** Yes. I mean, extraordinarily great world names frequented Belgrade... great names of international musical art, I mean be they performers or composers, right. Let's say, among the composers in Belgrade, not during the period when I was there, but generally at that time, right, in the '60s, '70s, when we studied, I mean this, and there were other colleagues, Shostakoviç, Stravinsky, Darius Mijo and so on. There was John Cage, who came with the occasion of the festival of theater, Bitef, but he came because the environment needed such an important experimentalist composer, right, an international name. On the other side, artists, orchestras from Vienna were constantly present. About names, let's say there were Zubin Mehta, Horenstein, I remember now that there was the Berlin Philharmonic with [Herbert von] Karajan korean in two concerts, you know, that I am mentioning that those concerts had a big echo and importance to me but also for the environment, but especially to me as a musician.

### Part Three

**Petrit Çeku:** Yes, for example, how important were the names you mentioned?

**Rafet Rudi:** Ah, yes. I mean, I mean, for my development, the names that I mentioned, I mean there were also other names such as Mravinsky, Davidostra and so on, who were present in the cultural life of Belgrade. They were very important in the sense of my growth as an artist, but also of my connection with music. Because I often explained it to my students later how important musical life is for the development of an artist. Not only school. I can even say that the other part is more important...there is a detail, because in Belgrade, I... the connection wasn't made from listening to an orchestra of the Belgrade Philharmonic, or the radio orchestra, but from an orchestra such as the Berlin Philharmonic. That, it was {moves his hands} very decisive for my development, because for an artist the experiencing of such events is very important. They make the move to another phase very

decisive. Not the average orchestras, right. I often tell my students that it is good for them to go to the concerts of our orchestra, but they must know that the international orchestras sound a lot different, right, the ones that they don't get to experience, unfortunately, and it is up to them to decide whether they want a big development and the contact with big events. Big orchestras, big artists and so on.

**Petrit Çeku:** Can you shortly explain...I assume that your musical aesthetics or your approach to art has changed during your stay in Belgrade, can you shortly explain how, what kind of artistic aesthetics did you have at that time?

**Rafet Rudi:** Yes, maybe interesting, maybe, and maybe I will elaborate it in a more precise way. The professor whose classes I attended, the one I respected, admired and so on, I mean he had knowledge, only now do I realize that he had a limited knowledge. I mean, he was focused on neoclassicism, I mean, while my ambitions were greater, and I could not get a direct answer from him. Of course, besides that, I am thankful to him for the parental feeling he expressed for me. I mentioned the positive aspect of this orientation in Belgrade, of the Academy of Belgrade, but there is another detail, another side. What we heard, for example at the festival of Opatia, the Yugoslav Musical Creations, that was an orientation... {phone rings} ...maybe just turn it off, if...just turn it off (laughs).

**Petrit Çeku:** Yes, Opatia, then...

**Rafet Rudi:** Yes. I mean, I forgot where we left, but let's say it one more time...the orientation in Belgrade was totally directed towards neoclassicism, I mean, it was however limited. What we listened at the Festival of Yugoslav Musical Creations, where the orchestras of Zagreb and Ljubljana and so on participated, was different. I mean, that was a more advanced level, much more ambitious in the sense of stylistic orientation, of the pieces that were represented. And in those five years, they influenced my symphony which is in a neoclassical spirit based on Prokofiev, Shostaković and so on. The piece that I mentioned is very important, because that is one piece for which I won a great federal award after my studies at that time, in an anonymous call, right, for this piece. That was very important for my life as a musician in Pristina, because I had some benefits because of that, I mean, because of that award.

Alright, let's return to my stylistic orientation. In the last years, in the fourth and five year, my ambitions were bigger than what Belgrade could provide. This is very important and this is proven by my pieces one, two years later, which are let's say, concerts for piano with big orchestra, where I use the dodecaphonic, serial music. Then the pieces...

**Petrit Çeku:** You used the new technic in your first piece, right?

**Rafet Rudi:** Yes, in '75, right after my studies. Practically, that was something Belgrade couldn't provide. This is important, right. Then, there are some other pieces, *Metamorfoza* [Metamorphosis] for three instruments in the string orchestra, *Rrojtja* for guitar and orchestra, these are atonal pieces. Those pieces weren't written thanks to the background of Belgrade. Fundamentally, of course yes, because education allowed me to do it, but I was fed my new orientation towards new music, to let's say avant-garde music, from outside Belgrade. Now, I must say this as well, besides the admiration I have for the years of my studies, I mean, even though Belgrade was relatively limiting, but the fact that I could travel, let's say to *Vjeshta e Varshavës* [Autumn in Warsaw], I went there for two years in a row at that time, where the partitures, the partitures, not to say, that is where I got provided with the most

extreme partitures of composers such as Lutoslawski, Penderecki, Serosky, Tadeusz Baird, let's say Górecki, and so on.

I mean, I knew about all their pieces during the '70s. I was even there when the premiers of some pieces that became famous later were given. I was there when the premiere of *Mi Parti*, a piece of Lutoslawski, was given. Lutoslawski was a conductor in '77, I was in the hall and listened, and I have the disc with that piece. Then Mayer and some other composers. I mean, this is a whole new field compared to the one in Belgrade. Much more advanced, and...but, I don't blame Belgrade because it is exactly such a level of Belgrade that made it possible for me to go higher, if that can be considered so, right. If the stylistic orientation itself can be considered as something important, I mean...

At that time, of course later I changed my viewpoints, right, not to comment on the opinion I have on that music nowadays, but it is important to say that with my returning to Kosovo in '74, to Pristina, not all the chances for growth stopped, because we had a very big communication. I am always mentioning this communication, because for the growth of a creator, I mean of a composer, different from a performing artist, it is important for them to have information on new trends. Right, I even consider that to be something decisive, right, because music, I mean, the composer must be current. They should be in touch with what is being created. It is important that a composer can individually shape his stylistic orientation, but that should be related to what is being created in the world nowadays. A creator cannot have a decent creative life without information. I mean, I don't think that my return here was a big handicap.

**Petrit Çeku:** No, I am interested, I mean, you mentioned the Association of Composers that was established after the independence in '71, I mean the Constitution, it was already done in '71. Can you explain, what was the effect of those positive movements in the everyday life in Kosovo?

**Rafet Rudi:** Look, I mean in '70, in the end of '73, '74, I practically returned to Pristina. I worked at the school of music for one or two years, then I started working at the Academy of Music and in the end, in the end of my active work, I was a teacher in the Academy. In the '74, I mean Kosovo, the cultural environment here was drastically different from that, I mean if you look at the cultural environment, but also the field of music, it was totally different from the one I left when I went abroad for my studies. That is related, I mean this change was initiated from big changes that took place at that time in the political field, social-political, right. I mean, in '66 there is the Plenum of Brioni, the changes of the amendments in '68 and the Constitution in '74, it generally was a dynamic environment in the cultural field. It is true that it wasn't such a high level, it wasn't that high, but the ambitions in this environment to change the situation in the field of culture were very big.

At that time, as it is known, important educational and cultural institutions were founded. The University was founded in the '70s, right, then the library and so on. I mean, the institutions.... the symphonic orchestra was founded as well, it was stabilized, because a form of the symphonic orchestra existed even before, but during the '70s, with the formation of the Radio Television of Pristina, as a big center, I mean, the whole musical life was related to the Radio Television which was formed at that time, in '74, '75...and generally, that was, let's say a renaissance. Various cultural magazines started their publication. Let's say, there is the *Fjala* [The Word] magazine, where there were various articles in the field of music. At that time, in '75 I started writing, in '75, '76 there are my articles, I mean they are that old, and I closely know what the cultural environment in those places looked like.

I mean, it is true that maybe establishing the institutions was a little difficult, but it is very important that they were established. The Academy of Arts, the department of visual arts was established in '73. The department of music was established in '75, without a qualified staff of teachers, but it was important that there were ambitions for their development. Other issues then, as we know, these institutions weren't so fortunate, as it is known. Because the famous demonstrations and the degradation of cultural life took place in '81, but that is something else.

Generally, in the field of music it is important that in '74, the festival *Skena Muzikore e Prishtinës* [Pristina Musical Scene], this is how it was called. A festival that took place in November, it was connected to the day of Pristina and so on. That is not very important, it is important because many ensembles, chamber and orchestral formations came here through that festival, artists from other well-developed centers such as Ljubljana, Zagreb, Belgrade. There were various ensembles each year, and they had modern music in their programs, that was very important for that time. In general, I mean, the changes were radical, although not even close to those in big centers of Yugoslavia, but however.

It is interesting to mention that since we lived in such a big community such as Yugoslavia, the institutions such as the Radio Television, symphonic orchestra and I mean all the other cultural institutions followed a certain way of cultural, musical life organization like other centers. That could be viewed negatively from someone, but I see the positive side of it, because, in a place where there was no governing tradition nor in the organization of cultural life and institutions, we followed, I mean, we imitated an organization, an experience that existed in other centers. Let's say, musical production existed in various editorial offices exactly because it existed in Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade, that is why it needed to be established here, even though there might have not been qualified staff.

Then, the programs' physiognomy in the radio and television was a copy of other centers. I mean, apart from the fact that there was no qualified staff, the model was good. I am mentioning this because later, in the '90s and also after the war, there was not a good organization. Not a good tradition was followed, I mean, they didn't always take the good models for the organization of cultural life. During the '70s it was very good, and they gave us, the people of culture, the chance to develop. Let's say, I was a member of the organizing board of that festival for ten years, the one that I mentioned earlier, the festival of modern music in Opatia. Of course, not because of my merits because I was very young at that time, while the festival was organized from giants of cultural and musical organization.

Let's say, the famous halls and orchestras led at the same time, they organized the cultural life. The halls and orchestras in Zagreb and Ljubljana, and they were part of the festival there, and through that, not to say, that was the key, because all the Republics and Provinces had to be part of the festival...so we provided a place there. This was very important, and we managed to go there, not always with our artistic level, but because we belonged to that wide environment. For example, the meetings of the Radio Television, also the orchestras. Let's say, in the '80s, I was...after returning from Paris, I started leading the professional choir of Radio Pristina. 30-40 people were employed in this professional choir, I mean...

**Petrit Çeku:** When was it established, that year?

**Rafet Rudi:** '80, yes, it was established in '80 and I started working. Then I led it for around seven seasons, and I practically held concerts in every country in Yugoslavia, in all the important festivals, in the Festival of Ohrid, in Belgrade, I mean, in the Festival of Dubrovnik, the Festival of Modern Music in Opatia, and those were routine, the presentation of our ensembles there was routine, it was very beneficiary for us since we didn't always have a high professional and artistic level. But since we had units in that environment, right, political units, then we used them.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** With whom did you communicate at this professional level here in Kosovo?

**Rafet Rudi:** Look, I mean, as far as our musical life or the historical development of our music, there is another essential change during the '70s. While not many of our people studied during the '50s and '60s, but however, they studied in the Academies of Belgrade, Sarajevo and Zagreb, they studied in the department of pedagogy. I mean, you might know, let's say, professors such as Engjëll Berisha,<sup>6</sup> Mark Kaqinari,<sup>7</sup> Vincenc Gjini,<sup>8</sup> Akil Koci,<sup>9</sup> and so on. They all have graduated from the Department of General Musical Pedagogy. While, in the end of the '60s, the first professional composers started graduating. I am not talking about the quality, but they learned their craft in the Academy.

So, I mean, that is the time when Esat Rizvanolli,<sup>10</sup> Fahri Beqiri,<sup>11</sup> Zeqiria Ballata<sup>12</sup> returned from Ljubljana, Rauf Dhomi<sup>13</sup> from Sarajevo, I returned from Belgrade in '74. This is a five-six years period and these are the composers who came back to Pristina and began their activity. I am saying, maybe there were just a few of us, but we transmitted the very good experience of the centers where we studied. Let's say, Ballata brought a very avant-garde spirit in music. Let's say, those of us from Belgrade, then Bashkim Shehu<sup>14</sup> was two-three years younger than me, from Sarajevo, and those were the people who were present on the musical scene. At that time, we had no players, no developed singers and players.

I mean, first there were the composers, conductors, Bahri Qela was our first conductor who graduated in conducting and so on. And I mean, they got connected to each other. Then they were present in the faculty in the Academy of Music as participants in the musical scene of Pristina. In '70, the other

<sup>6</sup> Engjëll Berisha (1926-2010) also known as Befre, was an Albanian painter from Peja, a member of the Academy of Figurative Arts of Kosovo.

<sup>7</sup> Mark Kacinari (1935–1983) is a composer who studied at the Music Academy in Belgrade in the Theory and Education department and studied composition at the Music Academy in Skopje.

<sup>8</sup> Vincenc Gjini (1935-) is a composer who graduated in pedagogy and music theory at the Academy of Music in Belgrade, studied and graduated in composition in Skopje. He mainly worked as a lecturer at High Pedagogical School a branch of the Academy of Music and Arts.

<sup>9</sup> Akil Koci (1936-), from Prizren, studied in the Music Theory Department at the Music Academy in Sarajevo. He went on to study composition in Skopje and Germany. In Pristina he was the leader of the music tracks field of the Radio and TV of Pristina and the Dean of the Music Faculty in Pristina.

<sup>10</sup> Esat Rizvanolli (1936-) is an Albanian composer of many songs. His works are mostly choral and vocal tracks, instrumental.

<sup>11</sup> Fahri Beqiri (1936-) is Albanian composer and former professor at the University of Pristina Department of Music.

<sup>12</sup> Zeqiria Ballata (1943-) is a Kosovar composer.

<sup>13</sup> Rauf Dhomi (1945-) is a Kosovar classical music composer and conductor and a teacher at the University of Pristina. Dhomi is the author of many operas, requiems, masses, cantatas, symphonic music, film scores and theater music.

<sup>14</sup> Bashkim Shehu (19550-) is an Albanian writer who lives in Barcelona, Spain.



festival *Ditët e Muzikës Kosovare* [The Days of Kosovar Music] was established. Ballata and I were its initiators. It was held in Gjakova. Why was it important? Not for such a big development or influence on the public, but it was important because very modern pieces of our creations were played. That is where they came to light, right. I can even say that the first composers, such as me or Bashkim, or Gjon Gjevelekaj later and so on, we were, as I view it now, we were privileged because our pieces could be played by good orchestras and ensembles in Yugoslavia, such thing is unimaginable for our young composers nowadays. It is impossible for an orchestra of Zagreb to play a piece of a young composer of ours, right, or Ljubljana. That was...it is unimaginable nowadays, and we had that.

At that time, maybe it is important to mention that I travelled a lot in these various centers. I got furnished with partitures of modern music and so on, because I also aimed to study abroad, which I did in '79 when I went to Paris when I got a scholarship from the French government. And there we used a quota that we had, I mean, of the environment that was called Yugoslavia, right. Because we went there through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through a collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France, right. Some scholarships were provided for artists, I mean, for Yugoslav artists and sometimes we won them. So, Sabri Hamiti and Ibrahim Rugova were there before me, I was the third one in this line, the third winner of this very important scholarship.

I stayed in Paris for one year where I had all the possible benefits, I had the scholarship...I mean, I was provided with classes from an important French composer, Claude Ballif and I can say that Paris was the second...the second important point in my formation as a musician. Now, let me tell you about Paris, what was there, maybe it is too much, right. I mean, that was, first, besides these details that I explained related to the development of the cultural life in Yugoslavia, in Belgrade and so on, however my contact with Paris was absolutely shocking. I mean, that is absolutely determining when we talk about my development, I mean, my development as a composer but also as an intellectual.

Let me mention it, that the composer, my professor in Paris, he was also a theoretician, I mean {points towards the library} I have many of his books, he was also a philosopher, and he was an atonalist composer of the school of Darmstadt, a famous one, right? I mean, it was developed by postmodernists, I mean, Boulez, Hans Zimmer and some other composers, Stockhausen and so on. And, there was a blossoming in the '50s, and he belongs to this generation, I learned composing from him. I mean, it is not that I always agreed with his orientation, because he was very extreme and now I realize, in my viewpoint, but I gained a lot also in other fields, for example in the field of aesthetics, philosophy and musical theory in general. Thanks to him, I started thinking about music more. He was one, let me repeat it, he was a philosopher who was very interested, I was interested, I opened up conversations and then he saw some things in me related to literature, philosophy and musical art and we discussed them together with him.

In general, I mean Paris, that year in Paris got me connected to the French culture and this library {points towards the library} that you see now, I mean a big part of the books are in French, because then I continued being connected to the language and French literature and culture...I mean, in general, to a French cultural world. Let's say, maybe it is not totally unimportant that I practically only read in French, literature and *belles-lettres* and intellectual growth, right. That is very significant because the theoretical books, let's say, books here {points towards the library} the theoretical books I have here, they are absolutely not in Albanian nor in Serbian or Croatian. I mean, they can be found in English or German as we know, but French, I mean the knowledge of culture helped me.

I went to France every year. Of course, not during the '90s as you might imagine. In that cultural environment, right, that was in Kosovo, we couldn't go anywhere, different from the previous period when as I told you, I went to festivals and we needed no visa...we didn't know what a visa was at that time, I mean, during the '60s, '70s. But, I am talking about the period after our war, right, when I continued...19 years ago, I continued to constantly go to Paris, Paris, Strasbourg and so on...and I continued being connected to the French culture.

#### Part Four

**Petrit Çeku:** Was Ehat Musa a guitarist at that time?

**Rafet Rudi:** Yes. Practically, the collaboration, the connections with Ehat are even older. Ehat was also a student in Belgrade when I was studying there.

**Petrit Çeku:** Right?

**Rafet Rudi:** Yes, yes. Before he went to Paris, we became friends in '70, '71, then he went to Paris in '71. So, I used the connection that we had, our friendship, in order to make it through the big Paris. I mean, to make it through in the sense of understanding it better. Before going to study there, some months, one year before going to study, I stayed in the house of Ehat for one month, just in order to get familiar with the place, without a scholarship, I stayed there privately. And this is an important detail, I mean, at that time, with our salaries we managed to even travel to Paris. This is a significant detail, I mean, who can manage to go and stay in Paris for one month.

It is impossible, right? And through Ehat, I somehow knew Paris better and closely, because he had stayed there a long time and through my contacts with him, and the collaboration, the idea for me to start playing music for guitar came exactly during my stay in Paris. Those were the years, '78, '79, '80, '81, '82, I mean, when I wrote a bunch of pieces for guitar, you know, *Rrojtja* [Living], *Suita* [The Suite], *Sonata* [The Sonet], then *Koncerti* [The Concert] comes later and so on. I mean, maybe it was important that Ehat, since he had a lot of experience with that cultural environment, and through him, through his circle, I got more into that environment.

I met, let's say Rafael Andi, the well-known professor and editor. I mean, thanks to this contact, the first publication of *Suita* from the printing house *Transatlantic* was done, which made it possible for me to be relatively recognized to a greater extent. Of course, coming from the relatively dead environment of Pristina, that was very important. That made it possible for me to see my piece being interpreted more there. So, this is it as far as Paris goes. I mentioned that it was shocking to me because there were concerts of an extraordinary high level, as it is already known. It is important that I had already seen important orchestras and names in Belgrade, but when I went to Paris, I realized that they only came to Belgrade for some time, but they lived there (laughs). Then, of course this was an experience that made me see my whole development from another perspective.

It is important maybe the detail with my professor, which I often explained to my students. When I was there with my professor, we often listened to Albanian music. Yes, very interesting. I played the music of the South in order for professor Claude Ballif to listen to it, and he told me that to him, it sounded like the sounds, this is significant to our Albanian music, like the sounds of Leotenus and Perutinus,

Lotem, Preoten, these are two composers that developed the tradition of the school of Notre Dame from the twelfth century, thirteenth, right. And so, he listened to it, to me this was, for example, this enigmatic detail. Maybe I made various constructions that it is old music and this was the proof, a music...a polyphony never heard, but seemingly preserved and related to a part of Europe. I understood it, but not in details. It is interesting, some years ago I wrote a piece *Ulu mal, të del hëna* [Mountain, Get Down and Let the Moon Come Out]. I dedicated it to professor Claude Ballif. This is not important, he died a long time ago, but that is where I took the music of Perotinus, Peroten, Peroten, a composer of the thirteenth century, and the music of the south, and merged them into each other.

Of course, I immediately say that during the creation of that piece, I was inspired by this idea. But I couldn't understand how the old polyphonic school of Notre Dame could be related to the Albanian music of the South. And in a moment, of course I had an idea of the relation and it is a piece, I mean a modest piece for choir, it was played, we have played but it cannot be found on Youtube, we haven't uploaded it, but it is important because parallel to that, I started to merge a kind of music into another, in one, I mean, based on the ambition or the idea that this is how Claude Ballif must have listened to the Albanian music at that time. He was impressed by it. He was impressed by the wealth of our folklore. I mean, all the recordings that we listened to for weeks in a row, to me it was a great lesson in the sense that there, I got to see some existing values, but simply, our folklore music, respectively the music of the South that must be so old, when one is here, they don't always see that.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** How did you create the contact with the music of the South in the '80s?

**Rafet Rudi:** Ah, yes. This is an interesting story as well. I mean, in Paris I got in touch with some students from Albania. Above all, the communication between Kosovo and Albania at that time in '77, '78, '79, '80 was...I had been to Albania two years before going to Paris, and I guess that's where I got some recordings from. But the other connection was through some Albanian colleagues, who weren't studying music. There are some public faces, ministers and people very close to the party of [Edi] Rama, one of them is Etem Ruku, he was my friend and later he developed a great political and university career. This is not important, but, through him and these other students, I managed to get the recordings.

That is not the most important thing. The most important thing is that I should have not lose those cassettes when I returned to Pristina. Yes, this is painful. In that part there {points to his left} that is where I have the cassettes of modern music to which I listened at that time, I recorded them from the radio. *Radio France, France Musique* and *France Culture*, these are two radio stations that I still listen to. I listen to them on the internet, in much better conditions than before (laughs) in Paris, but that is something else, but yes, I mean, I should've had a full luggage with cassettes when I returned from Paris.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Why did you destroy them, can you tell us the reasons?

**Rafet Rudi:** Eh, yes. I mean, I brought all the cassettes back but those of Albanian music, because maybe, another detail that maybe goes beyond this composer presentation of mine. During the '70s, I was close to Jusuf Gërvalla.<sup>15</sup> I mean, we were very close to each other, I was the closest person to him

<sup>15</sup> Jusuf Gervalla (1945- 1982) was a poet and also nationalist activist killed in Germany together with his brother and a third person. All these killings have been widely attributed to Yugoslav agents, though no investigation has come to a conclusive identification of the killers.

in his four, five last years. And we wrote, the festivals that I mentioned, we signed a bunch of articles which we led. And at that time, he was being persecuted by the Serb police, I mean, he left Kosovo and went to Germany, as it is known. And I was their target.

Of course, the whole time I expected to have the same fate as those people from our culture who experienced detention and so on. I even had concrete signs for that, but it didn't happen. It didn't happen because my connections to Jusuf were different, at another level, not in the *ilegale*<sup>16</sup> activity...no, even when I talked about Jusuf and his *ilegale* activity, I wondered how was he understanding towards me, because I was against that. Against that, in the sense that I said that such a valuable intellectual of ours should finish schools and should fight for the national cause in other ways, not with pamphlets and banners, and he agreed with me.

Only did I later find out from Suzana, his wife, that in the endless conversations I had with him about culture, art and literature, he was very knowledgeable in modern literature, I mean, I was influenced by him, he waited for those conversations to end and then they went out to spread pamphlets (laughs), I didn't know these. Of course, I could think that he would do great things, but I wasn't his collaborator in that, because I absolutely thought that thing should have been different...and I still feel bad, I still think that things should have been different. I mean, the patriotic fight should be according to one's physiognomy and one's professional character. A writer should write well, a composer should compose well and that is how they contribute, right?

Alright, let's return to what I was saying earlier. I was targeted. I received concrete signal from very competent sources, exactly at the time when Jusuf went and I didn't dare to have those materials, and today that seems paradoxical, an anomaly to me. But this could be fatal for me, such recordings could be fatal and that is why I destroyed all those cassettes. I would at least like to know which ones I presented to the professor in Paris, I don't exactly know. Because I knew the music, but I don't know exactly which song, or...and so, this is my period in Paris.

I mean, Paris is not the issue, or the fact that I only listened to good orchestras and good artists, big events, but, through poems, one can see better the situation here. I started understanding more clearly the values of Albanian music. I mean, when you are far, the physical distance, right, but also the cultural one, you see better the environment to which you return. That is your initial environment, right, and I saw it much better and that is not unimportant because the development or the following of standards that exist in cultural centers...first the investigation, the understanding, the experience of those standards, that makes it possible for you to transmit them to an undeveloped environment and save them. You don't see those standards if you only go to Paris once for a concert and return, no, you can only do that once you got to experience the rhythm of a big center...

Now, let's talk a little about the Imperial Hall. I mean, in '83 when I had...yes, in '83 when I had a concert with the choir in the Imperial Hall of the festival of modern music that I told you about. I took three folklore flute players. They didn't know music, they played folklore motives in flute, right, and the piece was *Flijimi* [The Sacrifice], which is a very significant piece to me, not to anyone else, but to me, do you understand. I used it, I am constantly engaged in folklore. Yes, I am constantly engaged in folklore from the position of a composer. For example, here {points to the left} is a piece that will be played soon, it is folklore. But it is a parody, it was inspired by the piece *In C* of Terry Riley. Terry Riley,

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<sup>16</sup> Constellation of underground militant groups fighting for Kosovo separation from Yugoslavia and unification with Albania during Tito's Yugoslavia.

Terry Riley has the *Kunte* piece of postmodern music. It is called *In C*. And my piece is called *In A*, do you understand? And I need to explain a lot to the choir because none of them know what *In C* or *In A* is. There are people's music elements, I mean...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** That's what I thought about too...

**Rafet Rudi:** Yes, yes. I admire those who are very flexible, right. I don't like to interrupt, I am not talking about my experience now. For example, I used to play piano very well, but I didn't want to be known for that. Or for example, I am sorry for this digression, but for example I don't know, Ballata allows himself to go as a pianist. I am not against that, let him do it. I, myself, look, they do it, he did it in Opatia. If I went to Opatia to play with Pavica Gvozdic there, and I am playing the piano. Vladimir Krpan there and I am sitting at the piano. I have respect for the profession, the level. That is why I didn't allow myself to show up with another profession, do you understand, But, now when I look at it, I see that I was engaged in many professions, in writings and so on...But the writings are logical, because writings are understandable from the position of the composer, not from the position of the musicologist. I have many articles, many articles, there must be four or five hundred articles, do you understand, but those are small articles or criticisms...alright...

**Petrit Çeku:** So, yes, hmmm...but, maybe...A detail from the beginning, from your first contact with music. I saw a very sophisticated way of including folklore and some motives, especially from the south in *Suita*. I suppose that this is connected to the recordings you had in Paris which you destroyed later. I am interested to know, chronologically, when did the involvement of a kind of national tendency of folklore music begin?

**Rafet Rudi:** Aha. So, yes. Yes, yes. Look, I mean from the first piece, it is interesting that my professor in Belgrade insisted for us to take folklore pieces and merge them with our pieces, and practically my first pieces, *Suita*, *Sonata*, *Variacioni* [Variation], *Kuarteti Harkor* [Arc Quartet] and so on, that I did during my studies, they all have a folklore song. It is very interesting. I mean, it was almost granted. It was also mechanical in the sense that my professor insisted, simply. It is not my choice, but later, I mean, later, a choice in the sense, a choice of creation. I mean, not always in the quotation form, but always trying to make the harmonization more logical. And, this is the creative idiom, right...

This is a very deep ambition of mine in which I was never successful. But, I was always ambitious in that direction. I mean, no matter what kind of stylistic orientation the composer chooses to write, Albanian music is always a chance. Not in the sense of propaganda or a patriotic pamphlet. No, for a previously planned intention, but in the sense that it is a good chance, a good source for the creation of a piece. No matter the way a piece is written, be it tonal neoclassical or atonal, right. I mean, it is possible. In *Suita* and *Rrojtja* you have, there is something in each of them, something folkloristic. But, I always tried to bring it somewhere to a higher level, but I didn't always manage to do it, and that connection also exists in my last pieces.

Unfortunately, there is not much trustworthy ethnomusicological work here. Trustworthy in the sense of making it easy for you to recognize which is the Albanian music, right, and take it. I mean, we have such destiny that sometimes our music is simply oriental. The oriental motives, I am talking about the creations of Kosovar composers in general, I see myself there as well, that some oriental motives were taken...because we thought we were taking the Albanian music. He, I mean you don't always have

it...It is even difficult to find the music, to recognize the difference among the Albanian music in Albanian music and what is the oriental influenced, right?

This is a big problem, and our ethnomusicology hasn't done much in that direction. I am talking about Albania too, there are no big results. For that, the moment when my professor listened to music of the South and compared that and the French music from the twelfth and thirteenth century, that seemed very mysterious to me. I was very attracted to know what was hiding there. Maybe there is a chance because we know that the music of the school of Notre Dame, you know, the Notre Dame tradition of the twelfth and thirteenth century, the singing of Notre Dame, right, of the school of Notre Dame, that is national French music. That is not refined music of the time of Renaissance and Baroque, it is more rudimental. I mean, that music must be way older, but it is similar to the music of our South.

Maybe there is a deeper connection of this music, maybe from earlier centuries. Of course, there is no research in that direction, and I mean, my pieces that have folklore elements, it is not always been sure, it has not been sure that they are connected to Albanian music because Albanian music itself is not so clear, the sound, the motive structure isn't clear. Of course, we always imagine, but it is not like that. I mean...

**Petrit Çeku:** Let's return a little to music. Were you censured, do you remember any...

**Rafet Rudi:** Period? Yes...

**Petrit Çeku:** I guess we once talked about the issue of a text that was considered a little...

**Rafet Rudi:** Aha...No. I was formally censured. In the moment...But, this is another moment. I must've always been tailed by someone, right. Even though I was never engaged in politics. At all. I never was politically active. But since the time of my friendship with Jusuf, I was negatively perceived for my work as a conductor as well, in the professional choir of the radio, I mean, I had an incident. I was expelled from the choir in '87.

Alright, let me explain it, I was censored. This might be the answer to your question. It happened in '87, there was a day of the radio which we organized traditionally. The leader of the Republic of Serbia, the leader of the Central Committee of Serbia and the leader of Kosovo were in the hall. The choir was always present at such celebrations, I mean, it was part of the protocol, and there was a concert on the radio and the program was usually not written. There were usually some usual artistic points, every year we had some...artistic and then, that night they wanted us to sing in the spirit of the nationalist euphoria, you know, the song of the '80s, "Comrade Tito, we swear to you," right. I mean, that was given in the end of every celebration as a hymn, and that day, they surprisingly had written the program and this was included as well, the hymn, which didn't need to be. And when the artistic program was over, I gave a sign to the choir to leave the stage and they were expecting, "Comrade Tito, we swear to you." Our entire political establishment, and I, as a very brave man, of course I didn't know what was happening, I mean, was it because a member of our choir did not sing well, right.

I mean, and I went out after the concert and I had some small signs that I had caused an incident. Then, one of our men, he made me aware that this is the third time that we haven't sung, "Comrade Tito, we swear to you." He had understood it, I didn't know about it (laughs) I mean...and I went home,

then a campaign began in the Belgrade newspapers, in *Politika* [Politics], *Novosti* [The News] and so on, so I had them. I didn't know, because it was the weekend and an official from the Radio Television came to me on Sunday and gave me the letter of expulsion from work at the choir of the Radio Television. I didn't know. When I took the newspapers and saw those articles, they were terrible. There were calls for lynching, detention and so on. Terrible! I mean, I didn't know at all, and from that day, my pieces weren't played on the radio.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Is this the beginning of Milošević's nationalism?

**Rafet Rudi:** Yes, because this was exactly in '80...this is exactly the last stage before Milošević's triumph there, right. He became the leader in '87. This happened in the beginning of '87. Then, I didn't conduct for 19 years. I mean, this is destiny (laughs). But, alright, then some months later, right, of course there were Albanians at the radio, televisions and newspapers, I silently had their support, of the people who were there, be it directors and so on. But they couldn't openly help me. I mean, this was a very dangerous period. I mean, maybe the generations of today cannot understand how people suffered back then, as it is known, right?

I mean, such banal things. They didn't suffer because he had a program, he organized the army. No, no, that was an article (laughs), something that took ten years, fifteen years. This is how things happened. This is how we lost intellectuals. I mean, there was nothing serious, and that could easily happen to me too, and things would be very different. But my pieces were forbidden on the radio. At that time, it was important whether they were forbidden or not, because our pieces were listened to very much on the radio. While now they are forbidden in a hostile way, right (all laugh). I mean, maybe this should not be mentioned in this case, but we received big *tantième*<sup>17</sup> at that time. I mean, the annual budget, a great part of the annual budget was because your pieces were played in radio or television.

**Petrit Çeku:** Were they played in all the radios of former Yugoslavia?

**Rafet Rudi:** Yes, yes, of course. They were well classified, settled. If a piece was played in the Yugoslav Radio Television, from eight to nine after the news, that was well payed. I mean the *tantième* was very high. Of course, we don't have them now.

Now those who do *schund*,<sup>18</sup> right, some organized something for the copyrights. *Schund*, those who do *schund*, clear *schund*, and they want to protect their copyrights? They don't ask us, or we aren't present at all, and these are sporadic. We were extraordinarily protected as composers. I received honorariums from abroad, even from Moscow, where my pieces were played. I mean, they weren't big from outside, but they are...because there were exchanges, there were exchanges, yes, exchanges of the Yugoslav Radio Television with other Radio Televisions. I mean, our pieces were played within those exchanges, right. The pieces were listened and so on, and then that turned into a totally non-organized life after the liberation, I mean our creativity is in a poor situation, I mean. There is another issue, the intensification of musical life, right, happened more after the war, as it is known. But, in the medium of radio, there is still a normal flow there, let's make an analogy with Belgrade, Zagreb, not to say France, while we have nothing.

<sup>17</sup> French: *tantième*, bonus.

<sup>18</sup> German: *schund*, literally trash, in culture this term is used to indicate a creation as artistically inferior, worthless.

## Part Five

**Rafet Rudi:** After my return, I mean, from Paris, maybe at that time...because I don't know until where we arrived. I mean, let me explain this shortly and I will come to that. After my return from Paris, I continued creating, I continued my activity in Pristina. But this time is more connected to my activity as a conductor, since in '80, some weeks after my return from Paris, I started working with the professional choir of the radio. This was totally accidental. It wasn't, it wasn't a profession I dreamt about when I enrolled in conduction. Absolutely not. I didn't think, I didn't study conduction in order to become a conductor. Not the conductor of a choir, at all, I didn't even see myself there.

My engagement in the radio was accidental and... but it is important for my creativity, activity and development as a musician because for the next seven seasons, '80-'87, I was connected to the choir of the radio and to the activities that the choir had in various festivals in Yugoslavia. And they were not so few! I mean, they were significant. Then the representation of the choir in the network, in the Yugoslav Radio Fusion Network was very important. I mean, but maybe my colleagues in Ljubljana and Sarajevo couldn't listen and recognize that choir, because it was a unique cultural market.

I mean, all those years were connected to my activity in the choir, and even my creativity was somehow connected to it. But, I must say that our cultural life started degrading in the early '80s. I mean, there was hope in the early '70s, and that interval of time was extraordinary for the culture of Kosovo. I believe that Kosovar culture will never have such an intense period, and when we look at it now, it only lasted six-seven years, it is impressive how the institutions were established as well as various activities in the field of music or in the wide field of culture. And in '81, of course in '80 we have the death of Tito and so on. The political situation began to change in '81, and there were repercussions on the destiny of our music and culture as well, which subsequently influenced my work too.

I mean, even though there were big chances for the creativity of our composers to move a lot forward through festivals. Then there were chances for the orchestra to grow and the Academy to expand and so on, and that means that there was a regress. Unfortunately, because of the harsh political intervention in the cultural creativity. In '87 I was interrupted my work in the choir, and my public appearance as a composer in radios and so on was problematic because of some political issues.

Eh, the moment the chances raised, let's say, in the optimal level, for the cultural institutions and cultural life and so on to move forward, that is exactly when it suffered a regress, until the '90s when the Radio Television was closed. In '91, practically every institution was closed and we entered a terrible are of, I mean, cultural and national life. But now, if we look at that environment from the perspective of culture and education, that period was tragic

At that time, I started writing because I had no other way of expressing. I worked with *Revista Koha* [Time Magazine]. *Koha* was, I mean, this was in '91, '94, '95. I mean, I had a column. Eqrem Basha was the editor and I was one year older, I mean I would write weekly about various events of music, and maybe there are one hundred articles of that time. When I look at the subject of those articles, it



impresses me how I could deal with such topics in such a difficult time, but in the other side when I look at them now, it looks like they were a waste of time.

You can imagine, for example, I wrote about composers, about the seventieth anniversary of Boulez, of the anniversary of Michael Tippett, modern composers that are not even famous. They are hardly known in other centers, not to talk about here. Because at the time I was working in the magazine, I was in touch with the French magazine *Le Monde de la Musique* [The World of Music], I was prepaid, and I would follow some of their articles. Let's say, imagine how paradoxical. In '95 there is Mitterrand, he announces the City of Music, *Cité de la Musique*, and there was an article in *Koha* one day before he did it. I mean, I dealt with such trendy topics, about...the anniversary of Schoenberg, and so on.

I mean, now I think that I lived on an island, totally isolated, totally alone. If you look at the topics, only the topics, not the level of articles, but the topics, I mean, that was a terrible loneliness. For example, let's say I wrote about Anton Webern, Edgard Varéseti at that time, about Cage. All those articles and essays are collected in my book *Sprova Estetike* [Aesthetical Challenges] and they are from that time. I mean, I was also preoccupied with philosophical and aesthetic books and so on.

Or, for example, another detail. At that time, I mean during the '90s, after the regression of the '80s, during the '90s when they [institutions] were closed, people of culture and intellectuals would meet in the afternoon in some coffee shops. Maybe you know this, *Elida* or *Dora* and so on, and there we would have debates, of course political, and after three in the afternoon, we all had to spread and lock ourselves at home. And I tried to take a quality radio where I listened to the third program of Belgrade, during that siege, during the curfew, right, I listened to *Arvo Part* for example, and as a proof to that I have a lot of cassettes that I recorded from the third program of Radio Belgrade, which had a very high level in the sense of promotion of music and modern cultural topics. I am not saying that it was productive. But that was a paradox in my life. A paradoxical situation and very controversial.

You can imagine, a feeling, the emotions I had at that time...hard to describe. Let's say when I listened to modern music, or choral modern. A music with which the choir of the radio dealt at that time. I mean, a totally advanced orientation. I was very emotional. Not because of music, but because of the environment that music could create for that time, and...I don't believe that someone is so crazy not to feel Anton Webern or Tchaikovsky when they listen to them. Those who feel it intellectually but not emotionally. It makes you nostalgic, so I would get nostalgic. Not for music, but for the environment that it creates, which was a faraway reality, and...

Alright, this was about the '90s, and of course I feel bad about that period of my life. I mean, I can absolutely not be idealistic regarding the national cause and say that we advanced a lot in the sense of national awareness at that time, of course that is valuable, but in the creative aspect, that is tragic. To me it was tragic and I feel bad for those years.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** What happened to music at that time?

**Rafet Rudi:** No, there was nothing. In '93 I even...some days before the Institute of Albanology was closed, as the last institution that was closed, there are even scenes that Anton Çetta<sup>19</sup> was beaten, they are terrible. Some days before that, I made an attempt to activate the choir. This is December of

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<sup>19</sup> Anton Çetta (1920-1995), folklore scholar.

'93. Some people from the choir gathered and we played, it was a concert. It was held on the stairs of the Institute of Albanology, its topic was *Krijimtaria Sakrale Shqiptare* [Albanian Sacral Creativity]. We played Noli, I mean Fan Noli,<sup>20</sup> some pieces. I had written a piece, a small cantata, with the influence of *arbëresh*<sup>21</sup> liturgic singing and so on. But that was done like that by intention. But it was an activity that was interrupted and I mean, there were...

**Petrit Çeku:** Where did you hold the concert?

**Rafet Rudi:** In the, in the Institute of Albanology.

**Petrit Çeku:** Ah, yes. I was only interested about that, about the concert.

**Rafet Rudi:** Yes, at the Institute of Albanology and some days later, the Institute was closed. It was the last building and there was a, there was a great silence. Let me also say that I sent my pieces to my colleagues in Albania, and they played them there very often during that time. I mean, in '95, '96, '97 and '98, I was very present in Albania, you know, because modern music started being trendy there and they were interested, and so they were played.

Alright, but I think that was total darkness for our culture. Of course, we looked at it with ideals and so on. I couldn't accept it. I couldn't because I was...not the most aware one, maybe each of them when they thought more about it, knew that it was tragic for culture, but people didn't want to accept it. It was tragic for education, we still experience the repercussions from that time. That is tragic. The instrumentalization of education. I mean, with higher intentions, of course...that wasn't taught...and we arrived to the '90s, and I mean there is '99 and there is no more...

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** When the war began, where were you during the war?

**Rafet Rudi:** Yes. So, half of the time during those three years, I was here, inside. Of course, not in this house, I was in another house, we were in the city center. After the challenges crossing the border, which turned out unsuccessful, I mean the border with Macedonia, I returned and stayed here for one month, then I crossed. But, the other part, until the liberation, I was in Skopje and there is an interesting story that is connected to my work and the organization of festivals after the war. During that time, I was in contact with Ilir Bajri, with whom I had worked before. He was kind of my collaborator in a weird activity during the '90s, the activism of a vocal octet. I removed...we even realized pieces, I mean Bach and Schubert and so on. But this is a minor story.

**Petrit Çeku:** This doesn't seem minor to me, if we can return to the '90s again...all these...

**Rafet Rudi:** Yes. Look, we had concerts, sporadic concerts. For example, I was very active in understanding... be it as a direct participant or a critic. I remember for example a very attractive concert, a very good concert of Sihana, Lejla, at the Catholic Church, this is how I connected...I mean the concert was ongoing, and the light was switched off, you know, and those two continued, our very good artists of course continued...continued to play, and...I remember that I wrote a review about it,

<sup>20</sup> Fan Noli (Theofan Stilian Noli, 1882-1965) was the founder of the Orthodox Church of Albania and Prime Minister of Albania for a brief period in 1924. He was also a writer and a scholar and died in exile in the United States.

<sup>21</sup> Albanian community, which settled in Italy after the death of Skanderbeg in the fifteenth century.

you know, that was a symbolic way to express the darkness of our cultural life, I mean that concert, right.

We organized sporadic concerts. For example, at the association... at the offices of the Association of Composers, I marked, you know, the anniversary of Mozart. It was '91, the anniversary of Mozart, and we marked it with various articles and with a concert, in that room of...in what back then we thought was a hall (laughs). It was a very small room, half the size of the room downstairs {points towards the room}. But there were fifty-two chairs, I know this because I was very precise in organizing those events. They were held, but there was a feeling of...a fantastic idealism, surreal, right, you know, the feeling that we are doing something. We opposed the system by creating an illusion of cultural life. That is good for the national cause, but it is very hard for the artistic cause.

**Petrit Çeku:** To sum up the '90s, I remember once in a private conversation you compared it to the First World War, when Ravel was engaged as an ambulance car driver and so on...you explained this and told me that...

**Rafet Rudi:** Really? I don't remember that detail.

**Petrit Çeku:** You told me that however, when he returned to Paris, there were cultural activities, no matter the fact that it was a world war!

**Rafet Rudi:** Yes, yes. I believe that if life was consolidated before the '90s, I believe that there would be parallel activities. But we didn't have many of them. We must admit it.

**Petrit Çeku:** But it was forbidden...

**Rafet Rudi:** Yes, yes, it was. I mean, you couldn't activate the orchestra. The collective activities, because those were problematic, I mean, to physically gather people. Because a bigger gathering of people was problematic. And so on.

I mean, it was a great sadness, the '90s...at the time when I was in Skopje, Vanessa Redgrave called me. She was in Canada, and she got my phone number from Ilir. Ilir, who had communicated with her in '98 when Vanessa was here while we were escaping to the mountains. She was an activist, she went and talked to Ilir, Ilir Bajri, and Vanessa loved Ilir very much. They had a strange relationship. I, because we collaborated with her in Pristina, and I know this...Ilir told her about an initiative that she was thinking to create a festival here. A festival that later was called *Festival Kthimi* [The Festival of Return] ... she thought that maybe it would be better to contact me for activities in the field of culture, Enver Petrovci in the field of theater, and so on.

And she recommended me to a festival that was going to be held in the first days after the war, and that, practically, she felt that the war would be over, and we knew that it would be over and we started our collaboration. Those were collaborations, back then there was collaboration. I mean, we had started using e-mails and internet. I was in Skopje, I was working in a radio, Radio 21, which was activated there. I mean, this is the end of January...I mean, May. I mean, right before the end of the war, she had an extraordinary idea to invite great names, which she did. Philip Glass among them, also Franco Nero. Some names that may not mean much to you, but for example Lulu Kennedy-Cairns was

a very famous rock singer in England...She was here at the concert within this celebration, Patricia Case was here too, and so on.

And we managed to organize that festival in September. And the festival was organized, Philip Glass was supposed to be part of it as well, but we didn't do it in Pristina since it was impossible to find a suitable hall for piano...and the festival was held with posters in Albanian and English, I mean with the festival of Pristina. But, the concert of Glass was held in the Universal hall, and we went there within...

**Petrit Çeku:** The concert is in Skopje, right?

**Rafet Rudi:** In Skopje. The Universal Hall in Skopje, she held a concert and we communicated. During the preparations, we were in touch with Philip Glass. That festival was humanitarian, so famous names such as Elton John, Mikhail Baryshnikov and so on were donors of this festival. I don't remember other names but they were internationally known. We managed during the time we were staying in Skopje, Ilir in Italy and Vanessa, to communicate and right after the ending of the war, Vanessa came here and she would come during July and August, she came several times in a row. The desk of the festival was created, and that festival was held, with a lot of hope and ambitions for it to become a traditional festival.

But, unfortunately it didn't become so. But, somehow, through that festival some other festivals such as Remusica and some other festivals were created, right, with the insisting of Vanessa and a director, Gotar...Vanessa decided to create a center of modern music. I was in charge for that project, and I asked Philip Glass to become its honorary director. Of course, he was kind enough to accept, but we didn't continue with that...the chance to continue the collaboration with Philip Glass. I feel bad that we didn't use that moment. He was predisposed, he was...he knew exactly where he had come, the festival and so on. A very significant name for us, for the promotion of our musical culture in the world, I mean we had the chance to have it as an umbrella, you know, such name.

However, that festival was held but it was turned more into a concert, it was held in the hall that was burned, and there were around five-six thousand people. A documentary about it was screened at the festival *PriFest*, I guess it was directed by a Canadian director, I didn't get the chance to watch it. People watched it and it was all about the festival, the preparation, it was very intensive, an office was established, in which Vanessa would stay when she came here, and in which we held our meetings. Not only two-three meetings, but many of them. We would work daily on it, we were always in touch and I can tell you a detail. Four special airplanes came for that show. A choir from Canada, Jacques Lang, the Minister of Culture of France. He is a very significant personality for French culture, because he is the founder, initiator of the World Music Day, June 21. He was there and many other great names. There was enthusiasm and so on...

However, what remained from it? The Center for Modern Music which we established those days, and the Remusica Festival came out of that. I mean, two or three years later, exactly from the Center of Music. Then it was established as a Center of Music...the Center for Modern Music. And it still somehow exists, even though there are not a lot of activities, because the center is focused only in the organization of the Remusica Festival.

However, that is where they started, from that initiative of Vanessa, she was very skillful in organizing. I was always surprised by that personality, that energy of hers to work in this direction. I mean, cultural life got alive thanks to her. In 2000, 2001, 2002 a lot of festivals were founded. First the Festival

of Chamber Music, Remusica Festival and so on. I mean, of course the cultural environment in the field of music became totally different. To me it was very good, because there were always more activities, as it is known, many chamber concerts who came from abroad as a donation of embassies, of cultural programs of various foundations. I mean, there were a lot of funds for a period of ten years. They wouldn't give money, but would send artists from France, Canada, Sweden and so on, Great Britain, and the cultural life took a very good shape.

But in the sense of institutional organizing, there were problems. Unfortunately, we didn't manage to save some of the main institutions such as Radio Television, the production of the Radio Television. The production was a place where the creativity of our music was recorded and kept. I mean, that was totally destroyed, it was turned into something else, and like this, I mean, this is how we are continuing.

Of course, there are positive sides. But I feel bad that there are a lot of negative sides which we are practically experiencing, which our creativity is experiencing. Before, our creativity and music were recorded, archived, saved and so on, while nowadays there is no archiving of our creativity. Radios have no recordings of our creativity, they don't express any interest to save them, to archive them. It is very painful, and it is very unique at a regional level. While other centers have saved it somehow, we have destroyed everything, the preservation, the archiving and stimulation of creativity and so on. An ad-hoc stimulation of special initiatives of festivals is done, but they aren't saved and so on.

Maybe Remusica has an archive, and that is all thanks to my will. We have, for example, since 2002 we have an Archive Remusica of our creativity and that is the only place where there is an archive of recordings of Kosovar composers, but also concerts that took place at that time. There is no institution to take the responsibility and obligation to do it, and this is very negative. Can you imagine, since '80, a professional choir ensemble has existed in a stable way, and nowadays there are no proofs for its existence, I mean, of the existence of that ensemble. The activity of the symphonic orchestra existed from '74-'75 to '90. Our programs were thought in an institutional way back then, I mean they were planned, thought and conducted. There is no proof of the members of that orchestra. I mean, no institution took care of them. This is painful, and we are not aware of how bad it is for the next generations when they will attempt to do a reconstruction of the cultural life.

Fortunately, there are people who saved something. I am one of them. If the cultural life of '74 and '90 aims to be reconstructed, I mean, I was lucky enough that my archive wasn't destroyed during the war, and it is possible for it to be reconstructed. I mean, with dates. There is everything, all the programs, all the programs of the festival. Someone else might have them as well, I guess my colleague Ballata, but he wasn't here during the '90s, he was in Maribor. He had, I mean he was more systematic in this sense, but not the others. Others either didn't follow them or weren't interested, and so on.

But, let me tell you a detail, not to brag about it, but as a painful detail of our cultural life during the '90s. There was no institution to take care of them, and unfortunately there are no initiatives even after the war to make the reconstruction of the cultural life of that time. This is something that I don't understand. I mean, I don't understand the nominally cultural institutions, that have cultural responsibilities, that don't attempt to create an archive of what happened during the '80s, '90s and so on. From these materials, I mean even if they are from private archives. This is from the early '90s until the beginning of the war.

**Petrit Çeku:** Through Remusica you saw, you must have had a journey at the beginning, in which you could feel the good energy of good movements after the war. Has it gotten more difficult lately?

**Rafet Rudi:** So, I am telling you some of my personal impressions, which I suppose must be analogous to other festivals. Yes, I mean, they are general. Look, in the beginning we had big support, the cultural, musical life in Kosovo, from various foundations. Let's say, let me tell you, let's say, with Pro Helvetia, for years in a row we had ensembles from there. With Guadamuz, a foundation in Amsterdam, we had artists from there for five-six years in a row. Then, it was the same with Britain, Germany and so on.

**Petrit Çeku:** The Alliance Française...

**Rafet Rudi:** Yes, the Alliance Française, they have the cultural program near the embassy, right. But they weren't connected to the Ministry of Culture but to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and this is interesting, a lesson which we should have learned. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs organizing various cultural activities, that was a must for development.

Alright, this is something others should think about. And, we had a big support, I mean groups and even orchestras came during those years. But now, the support of these foundations has started to weaken, practically to stop, the support of embassies that were here, in the meantime the festival has started to live its life, and in relation to artists and various external foundations and so on, thanks to that, artists are always interested in coming here, I mean, international artists. And it could be their initiatives, and we have many cases when they look for a collaborator.

The artists of a considerably high level, who need something, they come to us for their activities. For example, there was a quartet of saxophones, there was the Ensemble Pierrot Lunaire that came to us for concerts that they held here for years in a row. Not because they were very interested, especially about Pristina or about Remusica, but so that they could get the benefits of the foundations whom they worked for, they had...except a concert they held for example in Zagreb, they needed another concert in the region. This was a condition, and that is why Trio Fibonacci came. They held concerts here for two years, or Pierrot Lunaire had a concert in Zagreb and then came here, not because they were very interested in Pristina, but we had that benefit because they needed it.

I mean, it is interesting, I mean Remusica in a way is...it was promoted in regional organizations as well. Such as *Ditët e Muzikës Maqedone* [Days of Macedonian Music] in Skopje, and other festivals. For example, some years ago, I was in Belgrade, as a guest in the Bemus Festival. Bemus isn't much different from our festivals. It is not the difference that used to be twenty or thirty years ago between our festivals and the festivals in Belgrade. Back then, they received big donations, while we had nothing. I saw all that festival and of course it is better than here, but the difference is very little. I am talking about festivals. I mean, this is interesting.

**Petrit Çeku:** How is it, how is the aesthetics right now, how to say it, what...?

**Rafet Rudi:** ...opinion. Look, maybe this is understandable for my age, this makes it possible for me to see my creativity in continuity, but also with the development of my opinions towards art. Lately, I am active in the philharmonic choir but I also work with the orchestra, the big vocal-instrumental pieces, that is what I've been doing lately.

While in the aspect of creativity and my aesthetic opinions, there is a big change in the sense of a reassessment of the big period of time with which I was very preoccupied. I mean, the problem of modernity as such, with which I was very preoccupied. Sometimes it was pleasant, that ambition, and sometimes it was painful because I couldn't follow it. Especially during the '90s, when there was no communication at all.

But lately, I am in a period where...a drunken song, that is how I would call it, of my creativity opinions, I don't want to hurt the old Rafet, but I would rebuke him. I mean in the sense that he was very enthusiastic about new things, modern music...right.

I believe that it was a little too forced. Time proved it that the music, that avant-garde music of the '60s, however it was a time...however, more experimental. I know that my professor in Paris as an atonalist, wouldn't think like this, but I see it like this, no matter the showing up of great names of the twentieth century such as Stockhausen, Boulez and so on, I believe that there was a self-pleasure in the comfort of that music...a creative comfort which was made possible by the economic development of places, the comfort for them to live in an unreal life, not real.

All this creativity, if for example the player of the piece of Cage goes up to the piano and makes some movements, and calls it a musical piece, it can be...it looked interesting to me when I saw it in Paris. But I believe that however, we should be aware that it is not natural. Piano is made to play on it, not hit it. I mean, hit the piano or break it. I mean, the trends that I told you about, about the festival *Tribuna e Krijimtarisë Muzikore*, they were extreme. I mean they took wood and cut it in order to call it music. I believe, I see some enthusiasm, not that I wrote many modern pieces at that time, but it looks like it was forced in various periods of my creativity. I believe that if I was calmer in that direction...maybe I would write better pieces during my life. I mean, more solid, more real.

I believe that now that we are in a deep postmodernist period, I mean, that is when we see what a waste of time those things were. Maybe this is all subjective. Maybe a colleague of mine in a developed place doesn't view it like this. I know it, and that is why in the last years, in the last ten years, fifteen last years, the physiognomy of my creativity has changed in the sense of the awakening of creativity. I mean, it is more real, closer to the audience, more emotional. The emotion in a musical piece cannot be cancelled in the name of modernity. Practically, that was what the atonal music was about...practically, a kind of alienation that... I believe that time proved it in every element, such orientation of the extreme atonal music, its detachment from the audience, from emotions, from simple emotion, right.

You know, a piece should communicate emotionally with the audience. I believe that it is not enough for it to only be understood by intellectuals. I aspired that, I mean I didn't always achieve it, but nothing can replace the emotional communication of the piece with the audience. I mean, the connection between all those limbs, the creator, the artistic piece and the audience should be at the emotional level. Then they should be explained, and that is when other elements come to the discussion, professionalism, aesthetic and intellectual message and so on. But I believe that the emotional sense should not be lost in creativity, and there was a risk for this to be lost in avant-garde of the '60s in Europe. No matter how the propagators of that music justified every piece, every attempt, but time proved that it didn't always justify itself. I mean, the emotional level which is the base of this tissue, that connects the limbs, I mean the composer, the creator, the piece and the audience, it should always be there. Without it, art will hardly have a future.

**Erëmirë Krasniqi:** Thank you very much!

**Rafet Rudi:** Like this, like this. Alright!