

CLASSICAL CONCERT

# Albanian and American Songs



Lola Aleksi Gjoka—the People's Artist of Albania “Music became her life,  
and her life became music”

*Juki Maria Rako, Gjoka's daughter*

“...the spirituals were meant...for people of all races and every creed.  
Through all these songs breathes a hope, a faith in the ultimate justice and  
brotherhood of man.”

*Harry T. Burleigh*



Thursday, June 1 2023, 7PM

Fort Square Presbyterian Church  
16 Pleasant Street, Quincy

Welcome!

This event takes place in the midst of intense international tension, which threatens to undo much of what mankind has accomplished up until now. Simultaneously a new paradigm of development rather than exploitation is gaining ground internationally, begging the question; which way do *we* go?

Only by recognizing “the One in the many”; that is, by placing what *unites* us above what separates us, will we be able to overcome the present profound civilizational crisis. Thus, in that spirit, the motive and theme of this concert is the *Dialogue of Cultures*. Today’s performers are all members of the international Schiller Institute, and have been devoted to such a dialogue of cultures for many years.

*The soul of a people is expressed in its folk music*, thus many great composers have looked to the folksongs of a people, not merely for inspiration, but exactly because it is the role of the composer to uplift the culture and to shape the future by bringing people forward toward the ideal.

We are opening this event up with Franz Schubert’s *An Die Musik*, a hymn of sorts written to Music itself, because this song—though neither Albanian nor American—expresses the universal purpose and power of beautiful music, in the words of Schubert’s contemporary Ludwig v. Beethoven: to indicate a higher life to us, and to give us hope of attaining it.

After this “prologue” the program will consist of musical pearls from two different yet identical projects:

In the 1860-70s the spirituals, or plantation songs, were collected by a group of former slaves and descendants of slaves, centered around the Jubilee Singers. Subsequently, composers such as Harry T. Burleigh, who had become a friend and student of Antonín Dvořák in New York, with Dvořák’s encouragement applied classical compositional methods to arranging these folk songs and brought them to the concert stage.

In the 1930s in Albania, Lola Aleksi Gjoka and her musical collaborators traveled their nation to collect the folk songs of their people, arrange them, and bring them to the concert stage. Both these projects were carried by the mission to unite and uplift the people, and create a renaissance of culture.

We hope you will enjoy these selections of Albanian and American music as much as we enjoy sharing them with you.

-Malene Robinson

## PROGRAM

### Welcoming Remarks

An die Musik (To Music) ..... Franz Schubert

Kur me vjen karshi-karshi (Kosova) ..... arr. Lola A. Gjoka

Shamija e beqarit (Tirana) .....arr. Lola A. Gjoka

Moj fllanxe që rri ne kafaz (Shkoder) .....arr. Lola A. Gjoka

At the River. ....Aaron Copland

Oh wasnt it a wide ribber ..... Harry Thacker Burleigh

My Lord what a morning ..... Harry Thacker Burleigh

Dy gisht përmbi vetull (Elbasan) ..... arr. Lola A. Gjoka

Kenga e Emines (Diber) ..... arr. Lola A. Gjoka

Kroi i fshatit tonë (Lazgush Poradeci) ..... arr. Lola A. Gjoka

Everytime I feel the spirit ..... Harry Thacker Burleigh

Wade in the Water ..... Harry Thacker Burleigh

Going Home .....Antonín Dvořák and William Arms Fisher

Eja vashë ..... Lola A. Gjoka

### *Performers:*

**Myles Robinson, *tenor***

**Malene Robinson, *piano***

**Feride Istogu-Gillesberg, *soprano***

**Jen Pearl, *soprano***

*A Special Thank You to Besëlidhja Ungjillore e Shqiptarëve në New England  
and the Fort Square Presbyterian Church for hosting this event.*

**To Music**

You noble art, in how many gloomy hours,  
when life's fierce orbit entangle me,  
Have you kindled my heart to warmer love,  
Have you carried me away to a better world.

Often has a sigh, flown from your harp—  
a sweet, holy chord from you—  
Unlocked for me the heaven of better times.  
You noble art, for this I thank you!  
You noble art, I thank you.

**Kur më rrin karshi-karshi (Kosova)**

O, kur më rrin karshi-karshi,  
un' kam xan merak në ty.  
Bardh e bukur je,  
nuk kam çajre pa t'marr er'.

O, si një pul' mor' du me u ba,  
e n'kotec un' du me hi.  
Lypëm, gjejëm o i keq,  
gjejëm n'mujsh o i shtrembët-o.

Vetëm ti më ke pëlqye,  
të kam zemër, të kam sy.  
Bardh e bukur je,  
nuk kam çajre pa t'marr er.

O une t'lypi e t'kërkoj,  
për pa t'gjet mori nuk të la.  
Bardh e bukur je,  
nuk kam çajre pa t'marr er.

**Për muzikën**

Ti art fisnik, në sa orë të trishta,  
Kur orbita e egër e jetës më ngatërron,  
Ke ndezur në zemrën time një dashuri më të  
ngrohtë,  
Më ke çuar mua tutje, në një botë më të mirë.

Shpesh një pëshpëritje, që fluturon nga harpa  
jote,  
Një kordë e ëmbël e shenjtë nga Ty,  
E zhbllkoi qiellin e ditëve të mira për mua,  
Ty art fisnik, të falënderoj për këtë!  
Ty art fisnik, të falënderoj.

**When we stood face to face (Kosova)**

O, when we stood face to face,  
I fell in love with you.  
White and beautiful you are,  
I have to have you.

O, could I be like a chicken,  
in the cage, I would go away.  
Seek and find me, o miserable,  
find me if you can, o twisted one.

You are the only one I like.  
You are my heart and my eye.  
White and beautiful you are,  
I have to have you.

O, I search for you and request you,  
and will not leave without finding you.  
White and beautiful you are,  
I have to have you.

### Shamija e beqarit (Tiranë)

Nxire moj goce nxire,  
shamin' e beqarit.  
Shtrydhe moj goce shtrydhe,  
shamin' e beqarit.

Ndeje moj goce ndeje,  
shamin' e beqarit.  
Mblidhe moj goce mblidhe,  
shamin' e beqarit.

Vene moj goce vene,  
në xhep të beqarit.

### Moj fllanx' që rri n'kafaz (Shkodër)

Moj fëllanxa që rri në kafaz,  
anmiku t'ka zaptue,  
aman aman.  
Anmiku të ka zaptu.

Dil se je mbushun me maraz,  
Fillo kangën me këndue.  
aman aman.  
Fillo kangën me këndu.

Ik' Fëllanxa aman prej kafazit,  
shkon në mal ku binte bor',  
aman aman.  
Shkon në mal ku binte bor'.

Jallah u djegsha,  
hajde me vaj gazit.  
Nuk të la pa ta t'shti në dor'  
aman aman.  
Nuk të la pa t'shti në dor'.

### The veil of a bachelor (Tirana)

Bring it girl, bring it,  
the veil of a bachelor.  
Squeeze it girl, squeeze it,  
the veil of bachelor.

Hang it up girl, hang it,  
the veil of a bachelor.  
Put it girl, put it  
in the pocket of a bachelor.

### O bird in the cage (Shkodra)

O bird in the cage,  
the enemy has captured you,  
for goodness sake.  
The enemy has captured you.

Get out, you are full of anger.  
for goodness sake,  
start to sing the song.  
Flee from the cage,  
for goodness sake,

to the mountains where it is snowing,  
For goodness sake!  
To the mountain where it is snowing.

"Jalala," I am burning.  
Come with the oil.  
I will not give you up.  
For goodness sake,  
I will not give you up.

**Dy gisht përmbi vetull (Elbasan)**

Dy gisht përmbi vetull moj,  
ç'ma ke lidh shaminë.

Qaje moj Minush,  
se s'ta qan njeri.

Kur më del te porta moj,  
ç'ma lidhe shamine.  
Qaje moj Minush,  
se s'ta qan njeri.

Dy gishtat te dorës moj,  
me gur xheraliu.

Qaje moj Minush,  
se s'ta qan njeri.

**Kënga e Emines (Dibra)**

O t'bahem lale, rrasë përmbi krue,  
Sa ta shoh Eminen, lale tue shkumue,  
me sapun të bardhë, lale tue shkumue.

O! Mine eja, cuc' ç'më fajke bre?

O! Kujt ja dhe mori besën?  
Mine cuc' pse e le djalin e?

O t'bahem lale, bylbyl përmbi ftue,  
Sa ta shoh Eminen, lale tue gatue,  
me duer të bardha, lale tue bukurue.

O! Mine eja, cuc' ç'më fajke bre?  
O! Kujt ja dhe mori besën?  
Mine cuc' pse e le djalin e?

O t'bahem lale bylbyl përmbi mollë,  
sa ta shoh Eminen, lala me këmish të hollë,

O! Mine eja, cuc' ç'më fajke bre?  
O! Kujt ja dhe mori besën?  
Mine cuc' pse e le djalin e?

**Two fingers above the eyebrow (Elbasan)**

Two fingers above the eyebrow,  
You are putting on the veil.

Weep little Mina,  
nobody else will cry with you.

When you go out to the gate,  
you carry a scarf.  
Weep little Mina,  
nobody else will cry with you.

Two fingers of the hand  
have diamond stones.

Weep little Mina,  
nobody else will cry with you.

**Emines's song (Dibra)**

O, could I be "lale" a stone by the spring water,  
To quickly see Emine "lale" bathing,  
with the white soap "lale" foaming.

O! Mine, come, why did you turn me down?

O! To whom did you give your word?  
Mine girl, why did you leave the boy?

O, could I be "lale" a nightingale over the  
quinces,  
To quickly see Emine "lale" baking,  
white hands "lale" makes her more beautiful.

O! Mine, come, why did you turn me down?  
O! To whom did you give your word?  
Mine girl, why did you leave the boy?

O could I be "lale" a nightingale on top of the  
apple,  
to quickly see Emine, "lala" in her thin shirt,  
sewing cloth, "lala" for the wedding.  
O! Mine, come, why did you turn me down?  
O! To whom did you give your word?  
Mine girl, why did you leave the boy?

**Kroi i fshatit tonë (Lazgush Poradeci)**

Kroi i fshatit tonë,  
ujë i kulluar.  
Që nga rrëz' e malit,  
ç'na buron rrëmbyer.

Ven' e mbushin uje,  
vashat an' e mbanë.  
Cipëzën e bardhë,  
lidhurë mënjanë.

Cipëzën e bardhë,  
cipëzën e kuqe.  
Qafën si zambak,  
buzën si burbuqe.

**Eja vashë nga Lola Gjoka**

Si një drit' moj vajzë,  
jetën ma ndriçove,  
se në zemrën time zgjove  
një dashni pa mas'.

Që nga dita që të pash,  
s'mundem të t'harroj.  
Në vetmi rri e ëndërroj,  
me ty një jet' plot gaz.

Pres me shpres' edhe durim,  
çastin të t'takoj,  
dhe me gjithë shpirtin tim,  
të them, të adhuroj.

**The fountain in our village**

The fountain in our village  
with clear water.  
From the foot of the mountain  
it flows to us with vigor.

They come tapping water,  
girls, from everywhere.  
With white veils  
tied aside.

White veils  
and red veils.  
Their necks are like lilies,  
and their lips like buds.

**Come girl by Lola Aleksi Gjoka**

Like a light, o girl,  
you enlightened my life,  
in my heart you awoke  
an endless love.

Since the day I saw you,  
I can't forget you.  
In loneliness, life is cloudy.  
A life with you is full of joy.

I awaited with hope and patience,  
for that moment when I could meet you,  
with all my soul,  
to tell you that I adore you.

*Translations by Donika Muneka, Eri Dautaj Lulzi, Ardjana Kalo, Martin Kalo  
and Michelle Rasmussen.*



## Lola Aleksi Gjoka “Artiste e Popullit” 22 mai 1910–6 tetor 1985

Lola Aleksi Gjoka (1910-1985) was born and grew up in Sevastopol, Crimea, where her family were Albanian immigrants. Lola began playing piano at the age of 9, and her musical talent was evident right away. She later went to the conservatory in Sevastopol in order to become a concert pianist, but her education was aborted shortly before her graduation, when the family had to leave the Soviet Union and move to Albania. Lola was 21 when they settled in Korça, Albania.

At the same time, Albanian bel canto singers, like sopranos Gorgjia Filçe, Tefta Tashko, Maria Kraja, tenor Kristaq Antoniu and baritone Kristaq Koço also returned to Korça from abroad. They all got together as a group, with Lola Gjoka at the center. They were passionate artists who were unified in their efforts to spread classical music to uplift and unite the people. They held concerts, which included works of Verdi, Puccini, Tchaikovsky, Beethoven and Schubert, and included traditional Albanian songs.

They began collecting folk songs from all over Albania, and Lola arranged them, carefully preserving the authenticity of the melodies, and, as much as possible, capturing their essence in her piano accompaniment. Her beautiful songs are a fusion of old, authentic Albanian folk songs and classical music—a cultural treasure that, for most part, has been all but forgotten.

In 2021 Feride Istogu-Gillesberg, soprano and vice president of the Schiller Institute in Denmark, initiated “the Lola Gjoka Project”, which brought together Albanian and Danish singers and pianists to, for the first time ever, record the music of Lola Aleksi Gjoka. Now, finally, these songs are accessible for the whole world to hear—a revival of an Albanian treasure that now can take its rightful place in the diadem of mankind’s creations.

For more on the Lola Aleksi Gjoka Project see:

[www.musikalskdialog.dk](http://www.musikalskdialog.dk)