

**Foreword by the Director-General of UNESCO
for the CD project “Albanian Intangible Heritage in CD”**

South-East Europe is known for its wide-ranging cultural diversity and a rich heritage, both tangible and intangible, much of which has yet to be discovered by the outside world. Traditional music is one of the main pillars of that heritage.

Situated at the crossroads of many cultures that have exerted their influence over the centuries, Albania presents a musical landscape of unusual variety that has survived periods of change and political upheaval and offers today's generations a means of affirming their cultural identity.

Albanian traditional music is commonly divided into two major forms, which are vividly presented here in this 2-CD anthology: the polyphony typical of the South, and the predominantly monophonic traditions of the North. Both traditions have aroused the admiration of artists and ethnomusicologists from far beyond the nation's frontiers.

This collection, expertly compiled by Vasil S. Tole, is a tribute to the beauty and distinctive character of Albania's music. It takes us into a universe of heroic epics and ballads that retrace the country's history; gentle lyrical songs and intimate laments or lullabies; ceremonial chants; and jocular songs too. The instruments heard on these CDs include the lahuta and the çifteli.

This project is a valuable addition to UNESCO's action for the promotion of traditional music. The Organization is more than ever dedicated to safeguarding and promoting the intangible cultural heritage. Such a task can only be carried out in close partnership with peoples and communities wishing to preserve the tissue of their cultural identity by means of oral traditions and artistic expressions of every kind. This selection of traditional Albanian music lifts a corner of the veil that has for too long hidden a great musical legacy.


Koïchiro Matsuura