

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF MUSICIAN

# AMANJ GHAZI

RANYA ALI

NESIBE KAVLU

ILKSEN SEYMA BALLI

RAEN DLZAR

DILMAN SADOON

GÜLSÜM BENGISU BALTAS

# PREFACE

---



*This biography is a tribute to Amanj Ghazi by the students of Ronaki International School-Erbil (RISE). They chose to write a biography of Amanj Ghazi, who is a well known musician in Kurdistan, as a school project because they wanted to honor his efforts and art.*

# CONTENTS

---

## Chapter 1

“Biography Of Amanj Ghazi” ..... 3

## Chapter 2

“Interview Questions” ..... 10

## Chapter 3

I “Kurdish Music Forms” ..... 13

II “Kurdish Music In Other Countries ” ..... 15

# CHAPTER 1

## BIOGRAPHY

### EARLY LIFE

#### FAMILY AND CHILDHOOD

Musician Amanj Ghazi was born during the war between Kurds and Iraq' Governor on (10.5.1965) in Rwanduz, Kurdistan. His parents were teachers. He is the oldest son. They named him Amanj. At that time, most kids' names were Arabic, but name was Kurdish which translates to "Hope", and he was happy with his name and loved it, for it strikes his strength, and his nationality.

#### EDUCATION

He was at Pashay Gawra (King's) school in Rawanduz. It is one of the oldest academic institutions in Kurdistan. It was established in 1923. After 4 years, it will be 100 years since it was built. He finished primary school there from grade 1 to 6.

#### Moving to Iran

He was in 3rd grade when the Kurdistan-Iraq war started in 1974. When he was 8, Amanj and his family immigrated to Iran. He and his family stayed in Iran for 1 year. He studied there, but when he returned, his credits were unrecognizable, so he had to retake a school year.

#### Back to Kurdistan and First Step to Music

When they came back, in 4th grade, Mr. Zrar Muhammed Mustafa was his teacher. He made a team of singers, but not for playing instruments, but to sing the national anthem.

He walked to classes and took the students with high vocals and good singing abilities. Amanj Ghazi was one of the students that was chosen. In total 16 students were chosen to sing the Kurdish national anthem, also known as "Ey Raqib".

When he was 9 years old, he was in singing team for summer in the 4th grade.

Mr. Zrar opened a music course. First he looked at their hands and fingers, because it's important for playing instruments. Some of them chose violin instrument, some of them guitars. He liked Ud (Kurdish guitar). From 1.07.1977 they started the summer course.

In 1.10.1997 they were able to participate in music course; by playing instruments and singing. They prepared 3-4 songs. Once the group of 11 and 12-year-old singers formed the band, they played in front of an audience for the first time. Up to 1980, they continued to participate in school plays, and other performances in town. First, they learned music notes. They continued even after the school started.

## FESTIVAL

1978, at age 13, there was a School Festival in Iraq for all the schools in the cities of Iraq. They went as students of Hawler (Erbil) to Samawa the south of Iraq to participate in a festival that used to occur every year and won the first place in Iraq. The band got awarded with presents.

## In Pursuit of Art College

In the 80's, He was 15 years old when he finished grade 9 (Middle School). They directly went to fine Arts College. At that time, there were only 2 Fine Art Colleges, 1 in Baghdad and the other one in Mosul. They went to the one in Baghdad with their teacher Mr. Zrar. When they went to Baghdad, it was hard for them because for their age, at that time Baghdad was another world for them. Totally different from Rawanduz, so they were forced to go to Mosul, to the other college. He and Mr. Ahmed Ruwanduzi and Chato Nawroz, who are also his age, attended the college of Fine Arts in Mosul for an interview and they told the interviewers that they can read notes and play instruments. The interviewers gave them notes for Arabic songs that they didn't understand but could play the notes. They were immediately accepted as Fine Arts College students.

## Fine Art College Years

They were more talented than other students in College because everything for them was a revision because they studied and practiced it all in Rawanduz. They stayed there for 5 years. In the second year they joined a festival that was called Spring Festival that occurred every year in Iraq. That festival was really important and he joined the festival with a group of great people that play instruments.



In 1982, He, Chato and Saed Ahmed with one who's a really famous artist now (Kadim Al-Saher) joined in Mosul, they proudly played the instruments in the Festival. Kadim could play guitar, when he noticed that they could play Arabic songs and in similar rhythms, they played his first song for him.

## First Job

At that time, the TV station and Radio stations were in Mosul, so a music team was created there and they were directly accepted as a member. They used to work there every evening and they were students at the same time.

## Travel Abroad and Ambitious to play Cello

Mr. Zrar traveled to Bulgaria and Hungary from Rawanduz at that time, he brought a cello from there to Rawanduz. Amanj Ghazi took the instruments because they had a tutor. Later, the instrument was back in Rawanduz.

At the beginning they told Mr. Sirwan Sirini who's a (member of parliament of Iraq), with Sherwan Akram, "Sirwan your hands, fingers and your height is suitable for a cello, why won't you play it?" but he didn't seem to like it and he was a bit shy.

Cello was a rare instrument in Kurdistan at that time. The cello was taken from Rawanduz to Mosul.

At this time, Amanj only played the Ud; however, he wanted to play cello, so he took it to his tutor. He gave him some teaching lessons but that tutor wasn't as good as he wanted. That time the music teachers of Chato and saed were not that good. In the second year of college they played better than their instructors. However, they really wanted to learn Cello so every Thursday they used to go to Baghdad by train which took 10 hours, to learn Cello from a teacher in Fine Arts College. They learned the benefits of violin instruments and they used to copy music notes to take it back to Rawanduz and come back on Saturdays, this continued for 4 to 5 months every week.



### The Formation of Orchestra

Afterwards, when they left Rawanduz, they generate a small orchestra with violins, violin 1 violin 2, violin 3, viola. They didn't have some other musical instruments. They were young and short and the instruments were big. It was the first orchestra that was established. The orchestra of Pasha Gawra was in 1984.

### Iraq and Iran War

Between the years of 1980 - 1988, there was a war between Iraq and Iran. Amanj Ghazi graduated at the end of 1985 as the best student. That year a new rule came out in Iraq that the top students had to serve two years as soldiers, because of war during that period of time. Therefore, he stayed in Mosul about 5 or 6 months. They were transferred to the front lines of the war which were next to Iran.

It was a really overwhelming situation, Amaj, Chato and Saed Ahmad were separated. If they stayed there, they would have been killed so they ran away from it. They went back to the villages around Rawanduz . In Rawanduz, the Peshmarga (Kurdish forces) were there, and they stayed there for around 8 to 9 months. Later it was announced that “those soldiers who ran away would be forgiven, but they had to come back.” Amanj joined again, and he managed to ran away again. Then, by 1988, the war was over. They were still working as the music team (pashai gawra) they worked on a really important thing, the folklore songs they collected them and renewed them.

## STUDIO

They had good singers and then they made a studio in Rawanduz. They started playing instruments and singing. They made a few songs with their own singers. Eventually, after they heard their song they were called to the TV station in Mosul. They would like to film the songs for them, so they could show them on the Television. It was a really significant improvement and a nice feeling for them. It was the first time that their songs would be on television where the people of Kurdistan were able to watch them. They made a few songs, in Bagdad Kurdish station. It is really old and it has been established in 1939, at that time there were only 2 channels Baghdad Channel 1 and 2, Channel 1 was Arabic and Channel 2 was in English.

## Songs on TV

Their songs were usually in the second channel and it was really good for them. Then the team of Pashai Gawra reached to the level of the other music teams such as the music team of Sulaymania, Erbil, Duhok and Bawaji in Koye.

## Work After The Tragic Event

On March 16, 1988 the Halabja chemical attack, also known as the Halabja massacre took place and at that time Kurds were in a really bad situation. When the war between Iraq and Iran was over, Iraq started attacking Kurds in the year 1989 and onward. The war began with Kuwait. Then Iraq went inside Kuwait and that is when the US started taking actions and Kurds started protesting for their rights and in the west, Shias protested too which helped Kurds gain half independence in Kurdistan and Kurds governed themselves then they came with a few teachers that were here in Erbil. They thought to themselves that they should have something after the protest just like other cities like Baghdad and Mosul there should be a department or a collage here to gather these talents together.

The year 1992 he, on behalf of the group of teachers, wrote a proposal to the head of ministry of education when Kurdish regional government was created in Kurdistan. They said that they are a group of teachers from the academy they want to establish a fine arts school in Erbil.

The proposal was accepted it, and on 22/10/1992 the fine arts collage was opened which was combined of three elements theater, music, statue. The first year about 100 people applied for the collage and 50 were accepted.

Across from today's Tablo Mall there was a school named Zahraw. Every evening, they would go there and teach. It is nice to know that from 50 of the students 26 of them were girls and 24 of them were boys.

After getting some students, they started teaching them about music and everything about that context of fine arts. The students learned really good staff in that era. They used to do yearly festivals to shows.

Some of them had amazing voices and some of them would play instruments really well. They made a new band, so they could join the festival and it continued the years 1992-1994. but unfortunately, this civil war happened within the Kurdish majority.

The civil war broke out between PDK and PUK, two large Kurdish political parties of Kurdistan. After it was over in the year 1997, the college of Fine Arts held its first graduation ceremony. The year 1997, they had an idea on how to make an orchestra, so they send message to all the graduates around Erbil then they formed an orchestra named "Kurdistan". At that time, Franso Hariri, helped them a lot and he made them a place where they could practice for the festivals.



Amanj Ghazi was working at the (Peymanga) until the year 2000. In 2003, Iraq was free at that time. A prominent politician, Sami Shoresch whom became minister of fine arts asked Amanj to serve as a minister of fine arts and education. Together, they opened an elementary school named Kalapuri Kurd. Mr. Sami Shoresch told him to be head of the project, because of Amanj's expertise with traditional songs.

This team travelled around Kurdistan to collect folklore songs with Mr. Wirya and Muhammed Zaza. It was the first time for a project of such nature. They gave them salary for it. Furthermore, they took a recorder and the camera and started going around from village to village, from Zakho till Khanaqin wherever they thought the old men and women would have songs. They went there and preferably; they chose all their woman to sing them to them because they didn't go to the cities so theirs were pure. They collected about 4200 songs and wrote them down but they are not published yet.

## PRIVATE LIFE

Mr. Amanj and his wife were graduated from the Institute of Fine Arts. In 2005, Ahmed Zaza whom was from Qamishlo yet he lived in Libya came back to Kurdistan to open a collage of Fine Arts. At that time, Amanj Ghazi was 38 so he went back to University with his wife to get Bachelor Degree and his wife is 10 years younger than him. They stayed in Fine Art collage till 2008 than he went to Ministry of Fine Arts of Division of Education.

# CHAPTER 2

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### **1. How many instruments can you play?**

I'm a professional at oud and cello but I can also play piano well because I need it for my work. I can play many other instruments like ocarina and banjo, but not as good as cello and oud, I'm also good at playing guitar.

### **2. Have you written melodies for singers?**

We wrote a lot of melodies for the famous singers, but the process of putting melody is not that easy. You create something new. All these melodies are created from (do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-si) from those 7 notes. We can create new songs, that's why I chose these poems (azandn) because it's hard for me, but I like to choose what's different from others. Sometimes we have to listen a lot until we get it.

### **3. Are the Kurdish instruments studied in the College of Fine Arts?**

Kurdish instruments exist now, but unfortunately they don't study them in College of Fine Arts. There should be specific teachers to teach them, we have (Tamur and saz) instruments which teacher Kameran who's from Qamishlo East of Kurdistan and we have Balaban instrument, but we don't have teacher for it so instead we have flute, clarinet which you play. For example, in Iran, they have (def, deyra, balaban, ney, shimshal) they study them in professional ways.

### **4. Have you achieved what you wanted in life, or still think there is more to be done?**

Singers are always looking for suitable things. They have a lot of goals, they always have new things. My goal now is to get my degree as soon as possible. That's currently my biggest dream. In September, I will either be accepted in Konya or Malatya University.

### **5. How many kids do you have and are they interested in music?**

I have two daughters; my oldest daughter Piano goes to English Department in Soran University. She went to Public school so she's self-taught. And my other daughter's name is Paya. They both sang when they were younger and they have their own music videos. Music for kids is a big world that is why we should write songs appropriate to their age. The music shouldn't be longer than 2 minutes because they will get bored.

### **6. What is your opinion about the Kurdish singers that copy other nation's music?**

Fortunately, the good artists now are following the footsteps of Hasan Zarak, Adnan Karim, and others like them, which is great we must have a distinction with the Persians and Turks, Arabic people. we should never copy other people we could take a few ideas here and there but never copy. Most of the singers are now singing (Hasan Zarak, Muhammedi, Mazhare Xalgi, Adnan Zarim) these are good. we should learn others too (Farsi, Turk, Bulgar, German) but first we should learn ours then those.

### **7. Why do people think music is haram?**

In Sami Yusuf's songs all types of instruments are used and his songs are simple and beautiful, it talks about landscapes, our prophet Muhammed (PBUH), and how beautiful people are. That's why its not haram. My point is it depends on people if they are using it in the right or wrong way.

### **8. Why isn't music lesson taken seriously in most schools in Kurdistan?**

Back in the days Ministry of Fine Arts, Ministry of Education, we had a congress we wanted to prove that there is difference between art and music. a lot of people have graduated whom could teach those lessons well but Ministry of Testing and Standards could care less in normal schools. there isn't a room for music. schools should care more about music lesson because it opens the human brain which leaves to better understanding and being calm.

### **9. What are some of the popular Kurdish instruments?**

The music instruments that exist now are used with majority of the cities or countries, but we had our own instruments. History says we live in what used to be called Mesopotamia. this country is between Djilas and Furat. which is one of the oldest ancient places with music instruments have been found.

For example, the instrument that are made out of (nuts tree) that have been invented here for example balaban, duf, jaz, tambur. tambur is one of the oldest instruments, they used to use it in Zardasht which is before Islam and they used to kiss the instrument then play it.

### **10. How many books do you have?**

Until now, I have written 11 books, 4 are now being published. It's getting ready. (2 books) are about (Raxneyi Kurdi), Kurdish songs, about education, (Wezareti Roshenbiri) on festivals. Other one is about furhange music, that translates music, some are printed, some they left, some about arrange, 2 books I translated from Arabic to Kurdish, one is about (muzhic Aydolazhya Note) Doctor Muhammed Zaza wrote it, but I translated to Kurdish. 1 book is about Folklore Kurdish Songs, 1 book about kids songs, there is 30 songs in it, I gave to some school, so they would see it; 2 books (manhaj), one is about (ud), instruments, one is for Salfij, Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La, Si scale.

# CHAPTER 3

## I KURDISH MUSIC FORMS

There are several types of performers in Kurdish Culture. Bards and Dengbêj are the most common, and use their musical skills and exceptional memories to bring Kurdish songs from one village to another.

A salient difference between Kurmanji and Sorani singing is the tendency for Kurmanji singers, to try to cram as many words as possible into a musical phrase. Among the Sorani, although this trait is also found in Erbil, it is totally absent from the Sorani singing style of Sulaymaniyah and Kirkuk.

The Kurdish people are heterogeneous ethnic group whose ethnic background comes from many regions including Iraqi Kurdistan and parts of Iran, Turkey and Syria. The Kurdish ethnic group includes many ancient ethnicities that have been absorbed into modern cultures including Iranian, Azerbaijani, Turkish and Arabic cultures. In this sense the Kurdish culture shares commonalities with many other regional cultures, and celebrates a unique level of cultural equality and tolerance. Kurdish culture has a rich oral tradition. Most popular are epic poems called *lawj*, and they often tell of adventure in love or battle. Kurdish literature first appeared in the 7th century AD. In 1596, Sharafkhan, Emir of Bitlis composed a history of the Kurds in Persian called *Sharafnama* almost one hundred years later in 1695, a great national epic called the *Memozi* was written in Kurdish by Ahmad Khani. Kurdish music is a central part of Kurdish culture. Traditionally Kurdish folk songs are passed down orally, from generation to generation. Kurdish songs range from historical stories to epic tales, and from lyrical poems to literary works. The most common musical instruments for dancing are the “*def u zirne*” (dram and oboe), similar to the *tapan* and *zurna* of Macedonia. In some regions, where for religious reasons musical instruments are considered improper, dancing is accompanied by singing, in which a “*stranbêj*” (traditional singer) calls out a verse, which in response is repeated by the other dancers, who then call out a new verse, which is repeated by the leader, and so on, back and forth.

In Iraq the Kurdish Music and Heritage Establishment (KMEH) has been taking steps to archive and digitize records of Kurdish music. Based in Erbil, the center's library has accumulated over 45,000 musical archives since it started recording music in 2004. Bards, or Dengbêj, are the most common and use their musical skills and exceptional memories to bring Kurdish songs from one village to another.

These are some types of Kurdish music and instruments.

- Dengbêj(Bards)
- Def
- Zirne
- Duduk
- Bait
- Sya Chamana
- Hoya
- Hayran
- Lawk
- Gorani

# CHAPTER 3

## II KURDISH MUSIC IN OTHER COUNTRIES

### *Kurdish Music in Iran*

In Iran, the city of Kermanshah is widely recognized to be a cultural center for Kurdish music. Both Iranian and Turkish music can be traced back to Kurdish tribes and musical traditional from around the Kermanshah region, and there are many established and upcoming Kurdish musicians based in Kermanshah.

### *Kurdish Music in Iraq*

In Iraq, the Kurdish Music and Heritage Establishment (KMHE) has been taking steps to archive and digitize records of Kurdish music. Based in Erbil, the centre's library has accumulated over 45,000 musical archives since it started recording music in 2004.

### *Kurdish Music in Turkey*

Kurdish music in Turkey has suffered from longtime censorship, and is still censored in many cities today. Kurdish songs have been banned from being broadcast on radio or television, and some Kurds have been arrested for even singing along to specific Kurdish songs.

**"MUSIC GIVES A SOUL TO  
THE UNIVERSE, WINGS TO  
THE MIND, FLIGHT TO THE  
IMAGINATION AND LIFE TO  
EVERYTHING."**

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY ABOUT A GREAT  
MAN WHO IS ONE OF THE FIRST PEOPLE  
THAT BROUGHT MUSIC WITH ITS LIGHT  
INTO KURDISTAN. AMANJ GHAZI IS ONE  
OF THE FOUNDERS OF FINE ARTS SCHOOL  
IN KURDISTAN. DESPITE THE  
DIFFICULTIES IN HIS LIFE, HE YET STILL  
MANAGED TO INCREASE PEOPLE'S  
KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE IN HIS PASSION,  
WHICH IS MUSIC.



**RONAKI INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL - ERBIL**  
SUPERVISOR: AZHWAN ABDULRAHMAN

# Have

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat.

---

## Related Glossary Terms

Drag related terms here

---

**Index**

Find Term