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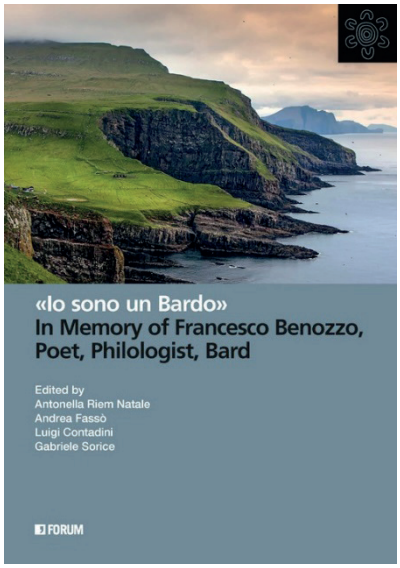
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Io sono un Bardo: In Memory of Francesco Benozzo, Poet, Philologist, Bard

Io sono un Bardo: In Memory of Francesco Benozzo, Poet, Philologist, Bard. 2026. Antonella Riem Natale, Andrea Fassò, Luigi Contadini e Gabriele Sorice (a cura di). Udine: Forum, Collana ALL, pp. 448, € 28.00, ISBN: 978-88-3283-593-9



https://forumeditrice.it/percorsi/lingua-e-letteratura/all/io-sono-un-bardo/io-sono-un-bardo/libro_view

Io sono un Bardo: In Memory of Francesco Benozzo, Poet, Philologist, Bard, edited by Antonella Riem Natale, Andrea Fassò, Luigi Contadini, and Gabriele Sorice, is a substantial commemorative volume devoted to the work and intellectual legacy of Francesco Benozzo, poet, singer, harpist, and philologist. Published by Forum Editrice in the ALL series of the Department of Languages and Literatures, Communication, Education and Society at the University of Udine, the 448-page volume brings together scholarly essays, bibliographical materials, documentary sources, poetry, personal recollections, and photographic material.

Its multilingual character reflects the international and interdisciplinary contexts in which Benozzo's work developed[1].

The title, *Io sono un Bardo*, derives from the bardic identity that was central to Benozzo's understanding of his own work. As the editors explain in the preface, the volume is dedicated to the memory of a beloved friend and esteemed colleague whose activities encompassed poetry, song, the harp, and philology. The collection consequently does not attempt to separate these practices into discrete categories. Rather, its organisation reflects the connections between language, history, territory, oral tradition, performance, and memory that recur throughout Benozzo's scholarly and creative work.

The volume is divided into two principal sections. The first, "Re-Sounding Landscapes", approaches Benozzo's work through critical and scholarly perspectives, with particular attention to the relationship between language, history, and territory. The second, "Echoing the Bard", moves from critical analysis towards personal and experiential forms of remembrance. It gathers poems, memories, anecdotes, and stories by colleagues, collaborators, friends, and family members. The distinction between the two sections is useful, although their juxtaposition also reveals how closely scholarly inquiry and lived experience were connected within Benozzo's practice.

The first section situates Benozzo's work within a range of intellectual fields associated with ethnophilology, oral traditions, landscape, and the study of language and place. One of the important implications of the volume is that Benozzo's philology cannot be understood solely through the conventional image of philology as the textual study of historical documents. His engagement with oral performance, music, landscape, and vernacular traditions forms an integral part of his intellectual practice. The volume therefore provides an opportunity to consider the ways in which philological research can intersect with performance and with forms of knowledge transmitted through voice and place.

Antonella Riem opens the volume with a poetic essay on Benozzo's places of the heart: the Apennines, Galicia, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, the Faroes and Friuli. Contributors to this section include Andrea Fassò, emeritus professor at the University of Bologna and Benozzo's mentor in the study of the *jeu-parti*, and John T. Koch, who was professor of a young Benozzo in Wales and whose research on Celtic origins and landscape linguistics intersects with his work. An essay on music and song by Benozzo and Elena Lamberti is republished for the occasion. Other contributions include an essay by the medievalist Paolo Galloni; Augusto Ponzio's study of Benozzo's critical work on Giosuè Carducci; Paolo Scartezzini's reflections on shamanic sleep and dreams; and Luca Marini's account of his shared dissent with Benozzo during the pandemic. Luigi Contadini discusses Benozzo's aspiration for freedom as a man, poet and scholar, while Naiem Abdulrazaq draws parallels between his dissent and that of the Azerbaijani mystical poet Imadeddin Nasimi (late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries). Gabriel Dunsmith explores Benozzo's poetry of nature and landscape;

[1] *Io sono un Bardo* (2026) continues Benozzo's long-standing publishing relationship with Forum Editrice's ALL series, spanning philology, poetry, translation and landscape studies. Previous titles include *Poeti della marea* (2022), *The Ridge and the Song* (2022) and *Sciamanica* (2023). See the ALL series: https://forumeditrice.it/percorsi/lingua-e-letteratura/all/?text=all-english (consulted on 30/09/2026).

Mattia Mantellato offers a moving tribute to Benozzo as "Poet from the Frontier"; and Isabel Alonso-Breto discusses *Poeti della marea* and its accompanying CD, in which Benozzo reinterprets and sings the bardic poetry of ancient Welsh bards.

This relationship between scholarship and performance is particularly evident in the material concerning Benozzo's work at the University of Udine. The concert-lectures organised through the Department of Languages and Literatures, Communication, Education and Society brought together academic discussion and musical performance. In this setting, subjects associated with medieval and Celtic oral traditions, balladry, and landscape poetry could be approached not only through textual analysis but also through sound and performance. The documentation of these activities contributes to the volume's broader account of Benozzo's approach to teaching and research.

A further dimension of the book is its attention to Benozzo's international collaborations. The material relating to his Visiting Professorship at Bath Spa University in 2023, as well as the concert-lecture *The Ridge and the Song* at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, illustrates the geographical breadth of his scholarly and artistic engagements[2]. The latter work is especially relevant to the volume's recurring concern with landscape and song, bringing together topography, memory, oral tradition, and poetic expression. The inclusion of this material also helps to document the movement of Benozzo's ideas between different academic and cultural contexts.

The volume's discussion of the Master MaPS project provides another example of this interdisciplinary orientation. Benozzo's contribution to an initiative concerned with poetry and wisdom, anthropology, sociology, pedagogy, neuroscience, shamanism, and community-building is presented in relation to his interest in oral poetry, toponymy, and the ways in which human beings experience and interpret place. Here again, the emphasis is less on a single disciplinary method than on the connections among language, environment, memory, and cultural practice.

The second section, "Echoing the Bard", changes the register of the volume. The contributions are not primarily attempts to analyse Benozzo's work from a critical distance; instead, they preserve particular memories of the person, his relationships, collaborations, and activities. The section opens with a posthumous letter from Benozzo's sons, Diego and Jacopo, and includes contributions concerning his musical collaborations, friendships, scholarly relationships, and connections with Wales, Galicia, the Faroe Islands, and other cultural contexts. Other contributions include a touching farewell letter from Benozzo's luthier, Michele Sangineto; Franco Cardini's portrayal of Benozzo as an errant knight; a recollection by his musical partner and friend Fabio Bonvicini; and a poetic farewell by the Mancuso Brothers. Gabriele Sorice recounts the considerable undertaking of transferring the library of Benozzo's mentor, Mario Alinei, to the University of Bologna, while Gianni Braglia recalls their adolescent circle of friends in the Apennines. Cesare Cevolani discusses the completion of the *Dizionario del dialetto di San Cesario sul Panaro*. Three commemorative poems by Paul Kane, John Strachan and Alan Wildeman follow. Pino Serpillo remembers Benozzo's

[2] The Ridge and the Song – Harp Concert at Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-rmXVCmVdw (consulted on 30/09/2026).

stoic example of freedom; Kristian Blak reflects on their collaboration through his record company TUTL in the Faroe Islands; and Sue Ballyn recalls Benozzo's connections with Wales. The Galician scholars of the *Desperta do Teu Sono* group – J. M. Barbosa, M. Dovigo, R. Palomera and X. M. Paredes – remember their long-standing collaboration and shared commitment to Atlantic and Celtic culture, oral heritage and landscape poetry. Gonzalo Navaza Blanco closes the second section with recollections and photographs of Benozzo's many visits to Galicia.

The photographs accompanying these accounts (and also the critical essays) add another documentary layer, preserving moments and relationships that cannot be conveyed through scholarly analysis alone. The inclusion of such personal material is significant for a volume concerned with the figure of the bard. Memory here operates not simply as biographical evidence but as a form of transmission. Anecdote, poem, recollection, photograph, and story become ways of preserving a cultural and intellectual legacy. In this respect, the second section complements rather than merely follows the scholarly essays: it demonstrates how a person's intellectual influence may continue through the memories and practices of those with whom he worked.

The volume was presented on 1 July 2026 in the gardens of Palazzo Antonini at the University of Udine, where Benozzo performed on so many significant occasions. The event celebrated Benozzo's creative and scholarly work through speeches, poetry readings and live music, with contributions from the editors Antonella Riem, Andrea Fassò, Luigi Contadini and Gabriele Sorice, alongside Mattia Mantellato. It also featured a poetic tribute by John Strachan, a *requiem laico* by the Fratelli Mancuso and *Di legno e di pelle* performed by Trio Ciocaia[3].

Among the volume's most useful scholarly resources is the primary bibliography of Benozzo's writings compiled by Gabriele Sorice and Stefano Themel. Given the breadth of Benozzo's activities across philology, poetry, translation, music, and related forms of cultural production, such a bibliography provides an important means of tracing the development and range of his work. It also offers a foundation for future research by bringing together publications that might otherwise remain dispersed across different disciplinary and literary contexts.

The volume also documents the international campaign for Benozzo's nomination for the Nobel Prize in Literature. The campaign, initiated in 2015 by Gonzalo Navaza with the Spanish PEN Club and subsequently supported by academic and international networks, such as the Partnership Studies Group (PSG) and the Global Academy of Liberal Arts (GALA), based at Bath SPA University[4], forms part of the historical record presented in the book. The inclusion of this material is valuable not because it settles questions of literary

[3] See both videos of the presentation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QfcAncEFB3A, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXkAruh-wp4 (consulted on 30/09/2026).

[4] Following its first nomination of Francesco Benozzo for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2024, the Partnership Studies Group renewed his nomination for 2025. See both the PSG and GALA websites: https://partnership-studiesgroup.uniud.it/?page_id=1359, https://gala.network/members/rebeccams/buddyblog/my-posts/5739/ (consulted on 30/09/2026).

evaluation, but because it documents the international networks of scholars, writers, and institutions that formed around Benozzo's work and the conception of him as a contemporary representative of oral and landscape-based poetic traditions.

Taken as a whole, *Io sono un Bardo* occupies an interesting position between memorial volume, scholarly collection, documentary record, and bibliographical resource. Its significance lies partly in the range of materials it assembles. The critical essays provide contexts for understanding Benozzo's intellectual work; the personal contributions preserve the perspectives of those who knew and collaborated with him; and the bibliographical and documentary materials establish a record of his extensive activity across several fields. The volume also raises broader questions about the place of the bard in contemporary scholarship. In Benozzo's work, the bard is not presented simply as a historical figure associated with an earlier oral culture. Rather, the term describes a mode of intellectual and artistic practice in which scholarship, poetry, music, landscape, and communal memory remain connected. *Io sono un Bardo* explores this conception from different perspectives without reducing Benozzo's work to a single disciplinary category.

For readers interested in Francesco Benozzo, the volume provides an unusually broad collection of materials through which his scholarly, poetic, musical, and collaborative activities can be approached. For scholars of philology, oral traditions, landscape studies, and contemporary poetry, it also offers a record of a particular approach to the humanities, one in which textual scholarship exists alongside voice, performance, place, and memory. Its lasting value will therefore depend not only on its function as a memorial to Benozzo, but also on the extent to which the materials gathered here encourage further study of the intellectual and cultural questions to which his work was devoted.

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