

THE POPULARIZATION OF SLOVENIAN FOLK MUSIC BETWEEN THE LOCAL AND GLOBAL: REDEMPTION OR DOWNFALL OF NATIONAL HERITAGE

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Through cultural and political changes, and different periods of time and locations, this article observes the dynamic variation of folk music in the local, national, and global context and illustrates this with examples. It focuses on the role of cultural policy, scholarship, and other factors in the process of the nationalization of folk music in the past and present, and questions the concept and use of the term “tradition” in Slovenian folklore and folk revival discourses.

Keywords: folk music, folk revival, nationalization, globalization, tradition.

S pomočjo kulturnih, političnih, časovnih in prostorskih premen avtorica opazuje dinamični preplet ljudske glasbe v lokalnem, nacionalnem in globalnem kontekstu ter jih pojasnjuje na podlagi konkretnih primerov. Pozornost usmeri na vlogo kulturne politike, znanosti in drugih akterjev v procesu nacionalizacije ljudske glasbe v preteklosti in danes, pri čemer podrobneje preizprašuje koncept tradicije in njegovo rabo v slovenskih folklorističnih in folk revival diskurzih.

Ključne besede: ljudska glasba, folk revival, nacionalizacija, globalizacija, tradicija.

SUBVERSIONS OF THE NATIONAL, LOCAL, AND GLOBAL

Folk song has always been connecting nations throughout the world because it is the most elementary expression of the soul, the way of life, and aspirations of all people. For us Slovenians, the song was particularly important as a weapon in the struggle for national existence and here lies its irrepressible power of connecting people. [Edvard Kardelj 1975; Strajnar 1998: 90]

Despite the fact that the comment above – with its various meanings and agenda – was written by one of the most important ideologists of Yugoslavia’s “old regime,” without any special modification in substance they could have been ascribed to any of a number of researchers, scholars, artists, politicians of the past or present – that is, to anyone that stresses the universal attributes of the folk song and, at the same time, ascribes national connotations to folk song heritage.

Kardelj’s polarization of the universal and specific or particular – which as models of thought dominated cultural discourse for the entire 20th century – is more symptomatic than seems at first glance because of the implication of problematic dichotomies between “Us” and “Them”.¹ However, at same time, in some other way, through a post-modern

¹ Here I also considered the relationship of “our” tradition, culture, ethnicity, etc. with the “Other.” Negative effects of universalization (as an emancipation of the entire world on the basis of the equal-

ripping of the canvas of great ideas and the stitching of smaller gaps, this also provides a deeper understanding of culturally dependent constructions, such as (musical) traditions, (national) identities, and so on.

These ascribe sense, operate, and circulate through complex and multi-layered interactions between an individual and his (imaginary or actual in space, time, and society) community – the local and regional with the national and global.

In a period of intense and pervasive flow of people, capital, technologies, and ideas, when the identifying concept of “national” is being displaced by “European,”² *the local and the regional, the national and global have become closely related to a “globalness” of interconnected relationships* [Baumann 2001: 11] that are anything but stable, fixed, and eternal. Due to this dispersion, instability, uncertainty, and transitivity, the existing concepts of cultural identity are in an uncertain situation again.

This means that, on the national, regional, and local levels as well as through everyday life practices of individuals and groups, the authenticity of “ours” – musical tradition and other markers of cultural identification (i.e., what we consider to be common and therefore use to differentiate ourselves from others) – must be newly negotiated and established. All these common determinants are also being questioned through the domain of folk music as some sort of common consciousness or, even better, property,³ which is, as material and symbolic reality,

always changing, never purely local or global, traditional or modern, and always reflecting the vibrant colors of its ecological, political, cultural, scientific and social character – is not at all disappearing into the dustbin of history. On the contrary, it is becoming more and more a scene of a robust and tangible fight. [Goldman 1998: 14; McCann 2001: 90]

ity) are characterized by colonization, modern missionary work, and globalization. In the end, cultural relativism or stressing the particular (i.e., the preservation of local, regional, and national traditions at any cost) may lead to self-ghettoization, perverse ethnocentrism, and fundamentalisms [Baumann 2001: 10].

² Baumann argues that in the future this concept will become more important, in terms of a “Europe of cultures” or a “Europe of nations.” Therefore he introduces the concept of a “Europe of regions,” which includes certain European regions in an organization of festivals. Through music, song, and dance workshops, participants learn traditional music from other European countries or regions and in this way they create new forms of cooperation in which essentialist interpretations of authentic traditions fuse [Baumann 2000: 125]. Similar examples can be found in Slovenia as well. A summer camp in the Istria region in southwest Slovenia called Etno Histria – operating under the auspices of the Folk Slovenia cultural association, following the example of Swedish Falun and similar music camps in Europe (e.g., Great Britain, Ireland, Belgium, Estonia, and Macedonia) – is designed for the socialization of young non-professional musicians predominantly from European countries. Through musical interaction, musicians present their own music and at the same time attempt to understand and appreciate foreign musical traditions and practices.

³ The Irish ethnomusicologist Anthony McCann named this difficult-to-limit common property, as opposed to the enclosure of hegemonic authority of copyrights and property, “the commons” [McCann 2001].

This fight does not take place in the field of copyright protection for folk music only. In a more extensive aspect, one can also explain it through modern popularization of individual segments of traditional culture. This is reflected in the most various processes of reactualization, reaffirmation, revitalization, and similar transformations of national, regional, and local (music, dance, and singing) traditions, which have also been present in the Slovenian cultural space for over a century. What the modern forms of revival have in common is that, due to the all-pervasive presence of media and technologies, the local and regional (without intermediation of the national) can correspond with the transnational or global (and vice-versa).⁴ Despite this, the tendencies for the nationalization of folk music today should definitely not be neglected.

DISTURBING “THE CLEAR STREAM OF LIFE OF THE NATION”

Each product of national literature should actually be considered national only when preserved in the form in which it was captured from the clear stream of life of the nation. [Karel Štrekelj in Stanonik 2001: 356]

The first phase of nationalization (or Slovenianization, if speaking of Slovenian cultural space) of locally and regionally specific elements of folklore, which took place from the second half of the 19th century until World War II, also points to universal characteristics of such processes in general with its specific manifestations.

For a few decades, theorists of nationalization have been introducing the fact that the formation of the “nation” construct could be ascribed a meaning only with modern communication (such as the press, print media, and educational systems), which was a consequence of industrialization and modernization [cf. Anderson 1983; Gellner 1983]. In order for the concept of the nation to operate as a symbol of integration (rural, local, and regional) and identification,⁵ it had to overcome particularistic thinking and attach itself to emotionally determined cultural conceptions and particularities of pre-industrial, rural life [Baumann 2000: 122–125]. In the case of Slovenia, which regionally, culturally, and linguistically has such specific and diverse particularities and ways of life, the nationalization of folk culture was not simple or *a priori* a successful process. Ethnocentrically colored nationalization (and related folklorization) of the elements of folk creativity was completely successful only when it was anchored in the local and regional cultural and political structures, which, in Slovenia, were represented by the nation-strengthening movement, which included reading

⁴ Why should a direct radio broadcast of a regional meeting of folk singers within the framework of the exchange of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) be considered something other than a direct correspondence of the regional with the global?

⁵ The identification was (like any other) primarily based on the differentiation and delimitation of the Self from the Other (i.e., Slovenian/Slavic from Austro-Hungarian or German) by thinking, constructing, and stressing national characteristics of mostly an ethnical and cultural character.

rooms and politically orientated gatherings referred to as “camps” (Sln. *tabori*). On the other hand, early folklorists and amateur collectors – with their various campaigns for collecting and documenting, on the basis of which they (mostly due to esthetic preference) kept records of the authentic elements of the traditional culture of the lower classes,⁶ which, in a time of modernization, industrialization, and urbanization, experienced radical structural changes – contributed to the historical placement and conscious nourishment of the nation as a common denominator of cultural heterogeneity within a certain ethnic territory.

Due to their passion for rural particularities, Renato Ortiz waggishly referred to folklorists of the 19th century as provincial intellectuals. He claims that folklorists are aware of the fact that they are operating within a margin of official history. His thought is contrary to global views; he is faithful to his romantic roots, contradicts enlightenment universality, and (therefore) he cannot discuss social phenomena in their wholeness [Ortiz 1992: 49–50; Ó Giolláin 2003: 36]. Such reduction of understanding the dynamics of social structures is negotiated with the fact that, in the spirit of an essentialist interpretation of culture, folkloristics reified folk music heritage⁷ or, in other words, defined tradition as a universal analytical category referring to timeless entities, whereby it paid insufficient attention to tradition as one of the way »to speak of ways of thinking and doing our experience« [McCann 2003]. To use Bourdieu’s terminology, this neglected the significant improvisational quality of tradition, its *habitus*; the fact that »as an ongoing reconstruction of social life it is symbolically constituted« [Ronström 1996: 14]. Otherwise it would be long gone. Instead, the perception and evaluation of tradition in folklore studies and even folk revival discourses is still reproduced via the problematic concepts of tradition and modernity, continuity, and discontinuity. The greatest disadvantage of such dichotomies is that they blur the perception of transformations and hybrid forms of culture that skillfully wind between both poles. When folklorists act as merely serious defenders of authenticity,⁸ they are rejected despite the fact that these dichotomies existed (to a lesser extent) in or near folk culture the entire time and that they are extremely important within the processes of the nationalization of folk elements. For the same reason, we still lack more relevant folkloristic discussions on the phenomenon of “national pop” music and its modern variations (so-called “turbo folk”), post war urban and rural “folk singer-songwriters” (such as, e.g., Vili Fajdiga from Trbovlje), and modern forms of folk music revival, which for future-oriented Slovenian folklore studies is definitely one of the basic fields of research.

⁶ Here I also include the campaign of the Committee for the Collection of Slovenian Folk Songs.

⁷ Thereby it unintentionally contributed to the construction of folk music traditions as “reproducible commodified objects” [Ronström 2001: 50] which today are a prerequisite for any representation of folk music – in folklore groups, revival movements, public appearance of local source singers and musicians, and folk festivals.

⁸ Authenticity itself is a very questionable esthetic quality. The fact that, as an indicator of heritage of national importance and the issue of historical reality, it is a subject of legitimating and common consensus, which, from time to time, and from social group to social group, changes and concomitantly negotiates, has been discussed elsewhere [cf. Juvančič 2004].

TRADITION AS AN AUDIO EXPERIMENT: UNIVERSALITY AND IDENTITY OF LOCALITY

We began to produce folk revival, we introduced something that has been happening in Europe since 1970, when we were clueless. When D. informed us of this – he traveled to France and Europe a lot – we began studying like crazy, the folk revival, everything that was happening worldwide. [KL KP, (Istranova), personal interview, 2002]

The first visible and conscious deviation from national manipulation of tradition and from folklorisms within folklore dance groups and, partly, national pop music as well, is represented by the period of experimentation with the sound of the tradition from 1970 through the late 1980s. This could be regarded as an incubation period, from which carefully planned reconstruction and recreation of authentic Slovenian music and a singing tradition later developed. The impact of this period on the further development of the singing-songwriting scene cannot be overlooked either.

The international avant-garde movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which was significantly represented in the American and West European folk revival,⁹ played one of the crucial roles in the altered relations towards Slovenia's own music traditions, where the global, without special interference of the national, directly collided with the local and individual for the first time. Or, as Baumann claims, the romantic-collective concept of regional or national music was replaced by the individualization of experiences within the multicultural context [2001: 14].

Franco Juri, one of the founding members of the legendary Istrian folk revival group Istranova, describes in a detailed anthropological manner his own generation's experience, radically alienated from the feelings of nationalization and nationalisms that were incorporated into authentic ways of recreating Slovenian folk music practices in the 1990s:

Music is universal - all folk musics of this world ... demonstrate that man is a universal generic creature. Via music, the universality of my generation, which was young in the 1970s and 1980s, was never infected with nationalisms. I still claim that nationalism is the institutionalization of provinciality, rigidity, and closure. Therefore, expression via music was one of the ways of expressing universality. [Franco Juri, interview with Miša Čermak, Stop 2003]

Istranova is therefore an heir and the first important witness of the transnational currents of universality in the story of Slovenian folk revival. In a way it is also a predecessor of contemporary global experimental tendencies, where it is the musicians that individually select, newly configure, sample, historicize, innovate, and synthesize folk music samples from

⁹ Here one should not forget the nationalization of such cultural, political, and musical practices in other countries following this movement. In this case, Slovenia was no exception.

the diverse possibilities and configure their own, autonomous musical narrative constructs [Baumann 2001:14].¹⁰

At the same time the activities of the aforementioned group represent the main impulse for the later forms of the revitalization of traditional music, singing, and dance in such specific locations as (Slovenian) Istria. With the assistance of young enthusiasts (researchers and revivalists of the Istrian folk tradition) and local cultural policies, Istria autochthonized itself from within [Juvančič 2002: 65–68]. With concert activities and media promotion that raised interest in this type of music among musicians involved in popular music, and stimulation of active participation in the spontaneous music-making and singing among the rural population, which later became organized meetings of local source singers and musicians, Istrian folk revivalists enabled the revitalization of tradition as well as implanting esthetic and ethical qualities of their own musical heritage to the Istrians, and thereby incorporating it within the important factors of Istrian identity.

Similar examples of self-autochthonization based on the revitalization of local folklore can be traced all over Slovenia nowadays. In addition to individuals, local associations, and institutions, they were definitely stimulated by the ongoing ethnomusicological recordings that the Institute of Ethnomusicology and Radio Slovenia carried out during fieldwork.¹¹

Nowadays various presentations and activities, which include folk traditions and folklore on a local and regional level, are being financially supported by local institutions as well as policies.

Actual financial and moral stimulation is also provided by the national cultural policy, especially within the framework of the Public Fund for Cultural Activities of the Ministry of Culture, which, at least partly, also finances other projects and associations that operate on a national level, including the Folk Slovenia association with most of the leading figures in modern Slovenian revivalist music.

“ORTHODOXIES” AND “HERESIES” OF NATIONAL TRADITION

I would say the following: nothing dramatic happens with our “tangible substance of eternity.” As well as with our “archetypal heroes,” who should be mocked every now and then. This is more a sign that we are growing up as a nation. I think that it is puerile to cling, like an infant to his mother,

¹⁰ Even though this refers to individuals and groups that have a “freer” attitude towards taking and adopting elements from their own tradition, the transformation procedures cannot be denied, not even in those that declaratively refer to originality, because each performance of a folk song is a musical narrative construct by itself.

¹¹ On the basis of the recorded material, Radio Slovenia has offered weekly broadcasts for decades (e.g., Slovenian land in song and word) with a good response from the audience. In the last few years, the Institute of Ethnomusicology has been publishing CDs with recordings from its extensive archives.

to the surviving models of national identity today. [Evald Flisar, Delo, 19 March 2005]

Cultural policy is, according to Shikaumi's definition, "a body of operational principles, administrative and budgetary practices and procedures, which provide a basis for cultural action by the State" [in Baumann 1991: 22]. These operational principles are based on rigid or flexible conceptual definitions including folk (i.e., traditional, authentic) music, culture, heritage, tradition, and so on.

The agreement on what national music heritage is or, better, is not, constantly re-establishes itself through social power relations and cultural (as well as media) influence; through objectification, commodization, and homogenization of diverse ways of thinking and acting within the framework of our experiences that we call tradition. When thinking of and creating national (and other) traditions, as Swedish ethnologist Owe Ronström argues, in spite of changes and innovations, a core must exist, which is »easily recognizable to both insiders and outsiders and which functions as a kind of a brand name« [1996: 14].

The core or a brand name of Slovenian folk music tradition, as well as agreement on what this core should include or exclude, is created by the revivalist policy, as well as by cultural and academic institutions and individuals closely connected with them, whereby one should consider many doubts and inner conflicts as well as different interpolations coming from outside.

With regard to artistic and esthetic preference, various aims, and motives, different interpretations of tradition and authenticity emerge among doers, experts, and makers.¹² The two most transparent interpretations are orthodox and heretical according to Ronström [1996] and usually depend on the ways these people identify with music.

Concerning the heretical interpretation of tradition, an important role is played by development and changes. Here, this is considered to be an expanded cultural concept that accepts and includes the Other as an equal entity – as an independent simultaneity or mixture of musical styles, or even as a transnational, individualized musical concept that abandons stereotypic categories of the national. Cultural diversity is understood as a heritage of humankind, from which each artist can draw, independent of the principle of location, in order to cultivate his or her own creativity [Baumann 2001: 20]. This is demonstrated by the following statement:

And if this was done with our music, not searching for the identity in the roots of the Slovenianness "somewhere down below" and patronizing it, and if we simply let this windiness of folk music become expressed ... if only

¹² In the field of modern folk music or revival, Rönstrom differentiates between three typical positions or work distributions, which may also be combined in one person. These are the "doers," whose main motive is to create music, for whom the "knowers" should expand knowledge and sources (these include academics and amateur researchers whose objective is an abstract knowledge of music), and "makers" – producers, sellers, and promoters that distribute and sell the results of the activities of the other two [2001: 54–55].

what we know, what is close to us, was combined into one new Slovenian music. And this, in my opinion, would be authentic. [CB LJ, personal interview, 2002]

The orthodox explanation, which cohabits with the heretical and is also widespread among Slovenian doers, makers, and experts, derives from the ethnocentric view of culture or tradition and is closely connected to the idea of folk tradition, which is an important integration factor of national culture. It defends authenticity and purity, and insists on preserving the old ways of living and music-making. The prevailing opinion is summarized by the narrative of my informant:

I believed it was necessary to primarily show what we have, i.e., the original music. If I am considered an interpreter, I wish to be as close to the core as possible. Until this memory grows, I will not be doing arrangements. [JL LJ, personal interview, 2002]

It would definitely be wrong to claim that polar communication between the two does not exist or that one concept necessarily outlives the other. On the contrary, different concepts of thought may simultaneously express themselves in different situations and even in the same protagonists, depending on the concept of declaring, which has also been demonstrated by interpreters and experts in Slovenian traditional music.¹³

One of the main objectives of each folk music revival as well as folkloristic discourses is the limitation of the field of the individual's interest and activity, with which the question of what should be considered Slovenian folk music is connected.

Even though presumed and, to some extent, intimate features are considered "the most important indicator of the national identity" [Golež Kaučič 2001: 118], we might be saved from the traps of nationalization by presuming that Slovenian folk music (and more broadly, culture) is nothing more than a generally valid (and changeable as well as adoptable) consensus among the experts, doers and makers, cultural policy, its intermediates, and consumers.

Folk music by itself is not directly and causally connected to the nation, because in the past the autarchic sound was never bound to certain national specifics [Muršič 1994: 88].

As such, music primarily does not construct our feeling of identification through the prism of nationality, but *through direct experiences it offers of the body, time, and sociability* [Frith 1996: 124], through the esthetics of performance practices. Only on the basis of these experiences musical identity is created, by the help of which musical and submusical actions can be incorporated into other imaginary narratives, even such as nation and tradition.

Therefore, instead of discussing what Slovenian folk music and tradition are and what they are not, we should ask ourselves as Anthony McCann did, what ways of thinking and doing are influential in my, your, and people's experience [McCann 2003]. The research of

¹³ The cooperation of Ljoba Jenče and Tibetan monks, as well as the collaboration of the group Katice with the popular musicians and producers Magnifico and Shatzi, are two good examples of an interaction of these two positions within one group or performer.

my and your human experience is the redemption factor that draws us away from the tiring observation of the subjectification phenomena – consuming, popularization, and nationalization of folk music heritage – to the social dynamics of the acting and creative essence of tradition, hidden in (possibly only apparently) completely trivial questions, which are asked by the researcher as well as her or his grandmother. The reasons why the latter still sometimes sings “old” songs and I sing along might be equally importantly unimportant as well as unimportantly important for the downfall or redemption of my, her, or our tradition.

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POPULARIZACIJA SLOVENSKE LJUDSKE GLASBE MED MEANDRI
 LOKALNEGA IN GLOBALNEGA – (OD)REŠITEV ALI PROPAD
 NARODNEGA IZROČILA

Termine, kot so ljudska tradicija ali nacionalna identiteta, obravnava avtorica kot kulturno pogojene konstrukcije, ki se oblikujejo v zapletenih procesih interakcije posameznika z njegovo skupnostjo, lokalnega z regionalnim, nacionalnim, globalnim. V času transparentnih in vsenavzočih globalizacijskih procesov obstoječi koncepti kulturne identitete izgubljajo perspektivo stabilnosti in trajnosti, zato se morajo na novo izpogajati in definirati. Vse te skupnostne determinante pa se izprašujejo tudi s pomočjo popularizacije ljudske glasbe, kar se izraža v najrazličnejših oblikah njene revitalizacije.

Članek osvetljuje težnje ponarodovanja pa tudi avtentizacije in reifikacije ljudske tradicije v 19. in 20. stoletju, v katerih je folkloristika odigrala pomembno vlogo. Hkrati pa opozarja, da percepcija in vrednotenje tradicije preko dualističnih shem (kontinuiteta : diskontinuiteta; tradicija : modernost) zamegljuje pogled na hibridne oblike popularne kulture, ki soobstajajo in se prepletajo z ljudsko.

Na podlagi analize sodobnih in zgodovinskih oblik oživiljanja ljudske glasbe avtorica razpravlja o procesih nacionalizacije, regionalizacije, globalizacije in avtohtonizacije ljudske kulture iz zornega kota institucij in kulturne politike ter jih vzporeja z individualnimi izkušnjami vpletenih akterjev. Te vidike prikaže na primeru preporodne glasbe v jugozahodni slovenski pokrajini Istri.

Slovensko ljudsko glasbo nadalje obravnava kot konsenz, ki ga krojijo predvsem razmerja moči, oblikujejo pa različne mišljenjske strukture v revivalistični politiki in z njo povezane akademske in kulturne institucije ter posamezniki. S tem v zvezi poudarja spregledano dejstvo, da tradicionalna glasba ni in ne sme biti reificirana entiteta, saj sama po sebi ne konstituira našega občutka istovetnosti skozi prizmo nacionalnosti, temveč se ta nacionalizira ali globalizira šele na podlagi naših družbenih in kulturnih izkušenj, performativnih in habitualnih praks, v katerih je najbolj pregibna in izvirna.

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