

DR. VINKO ŽGANEC AND THE SPECIFIC MODE OF TRADITIONAL SINGING IN MID-MEĐIMURJE

SUMMARY

The opinion held by Dr. Žganec that the folklore heritage was purest in mid-Međimurje, as it was not exposed to Slovenian music (as was Upper Međimurje), and Hungarian music (as was Lower Međimurje), led me to an intensive search for data, listening to singers in that area. In the very beginning in Vratišinec, where I started working as a teacher of music, I noticed a soft placing of the voice by the female village singers. Later, as conductor of the choir in the village, I found almost all the singers had similar placing of the voice. I very soon noticed (particularly among the female singers) equalised registers i.e. very smooth binding of the lower and higher tones. It is well known that the middle register is crucial to such binding of the lower and higher tones, in which the mixing of the chest and head registers takes place (the manner in which the voice is placed). Naturally, countless questions arose to which I was not able to find immediate answers: How was it that these singers had a developed middle register? How was it that the village had so many "cultivated" and preserved voices? Was it merely a matter of a gift from nature, or was it the result of the influence of many years of multi-part singing in the church and lay choirs. I remember the remark made by Vinko Žganec when I mentioned my dilemma: "There's nothing to be surprised about; why half of Vratišinec sang in the choir". Undoubtedly, the best village singers are those who sing in the church and lay choirs, and they are the ones who act as "vižari" (leaders of the song) at various gatherings: weddings, entertainments, *čeharas* (*čehara* - get-togethers at which the soft down is stripped from feathers), or some other celebrations. Due to the fact that these singers with their singing voices i.e. by heart, provide and retain the tonality in which the gathering will sing as they lead off with the songs within their developed middle register, the broad group gradually develops its range, but also imitates the "vižari" i.e. the soloists. They strive towards a more cultivated manner of singing and, of course, unconsciously try to achieve a softer placing of the voice, as they hear from their "model", the soloist. The untrained singer does not know how a tone comes into being, but he recognises the difference between a harshly and softly placed tone. Listening to his "model", he will become aware of his own resonance, listening to the tone and trying to find the most pleasing solution for it. That "most pleasing solution", in the majority of cases, is arrived at through soft placing of the tone, particularly among natural sopranos, altos and tenors.