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## **FOLK MUSIC ENSEMBLES OF HRVATSKO ZAGORJE**

In this article focus is on several types of instrumental ensembles of Hrvatsko zagorje: violin ensembles, wind ensembles and tamburitza ensembles. At the regional and local level these types of ensemble are given prominence as folk ensembles and they are a regular feature at various social gatherings (from baptisms, weddings and dances to funerals) at which they sometimes perform music of the earlier tradition, but much more frequently newly-composed songs in the Kajkavian dialect and/or in local vernaculars. But at the state level, creativity is still entrusted to the performances of cultural and art societies whose performances are adapted to the stage, and who frequently perform old songs and dances that are rare in spontaneous performances by groups of people.

Key words: instrumental music, Hrvatsko zagorje, Croatia

Until the 1970s, ethnomusicological research both in Croatian and in Central and Eastern Europe was largely oriented to the village tradition, where efforts were made to uncover autochthonous values and, through them, to affirm and further develop national culture. Hence, research attention was focused largely on older local songs, and then on music-making on traditional village instruments. Old village musical instruments were studied with particular emphasis on the way they were made, their technical possibilities, use in local music practice and their wide diffusion (see, for example, Kuhač 1877-1879, 1882; Širola 1932, 1933a-b, 1937; Galin 1977, 1983). When it had been established that particular instruments had been adopted from other peoples and cultures or were not the outcome of domestic workmanship, but were produced in factories or store-bought, they were not considered to be folk instruments and did not, therefore, provoke the particular interest of researchers. In addition, because melography in Croatia was done largely without the aid of tape-recorders until the 1960s, the notation of instrumental

music, particularly as performed by ensembles, required special skill and specialist knowledge (cf. Marošević 1992:116). Therefore, 20th century folklore music collections contain mainly transcriptions of songs, with only rare transcriptions of instrumental music.

The situation is also similar with the music sources for Hrvatsko zagorje.<sup>1</sup> The largest ethnomusicological source for that region – the Vinko Žganec collection (1950, 1952, 1971) – contains 745 transcriptions of songs and only a few one-part of instrumental melodies, while the ethno-organological papers are largely limited to descriptions of how early village musical instruments were built (Širola 1932; Galin 1977, 1983). Although numerous researchers also mentioned the activities of diverse instrumental groups in their papers, they paid them little heed because of the reasons given above. However, in 1973, in his study on the music in the area around Donja Stubica, Jerko Bezić also directed interest to the activities of the instrumental groups using new instruments, which were either factory-made or of cottage manufacture (see in Bezić 1973). The state of research into the music of Hrvatsko Zagorje prompted me to focus my research particularly on instrumental groups, the more so because, from the 19th century until the present day, they have been the most prominent participants in music practice,<sup>2</sup> both in representation and in significance.

By adopting the theoretical postulates of contextual folklorists, ethnomusicology in Croatia expanded the subject of its research during the 1970s and 1980s to include "all music that is spontaneously performed by various groups of people, not merely in the villages, but also in the towns and in the suburban settlements; (...) music that a group of people have freely chosen, both from traditional repertoire and from contemporary, and even 'author's' music creativity, from their own environment and from nearby and distant regions" (Marošević 1992:123). The interest of researchers was oriented to examining continuity and changes in tradition, the multi-layered nature and diversities of the music world, the process of assimilation, acculturation and the transformation of folklore music phenomena that had come about through the permeation of various cultural influences and the interaction between traditional and contemporary culture (ibid.:124).

The attention of ethnomusicologists was also absorbed by the relation between music and cultural identity and the possibilities and ways in which "music... symbolises as well as... shapes culture, i.e.,... absorb and produce meaning that exceeds its primary code" (Marošević 1998:70). Ethno-

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<sup>1</sup> Hrvatsko zagorje is the north-western part of central Croatia. The region is mostly located in the Krapina-Zagorje County, while the remainder is in the Varaždin County.

<sup>2</sup> This article draws from my MA thesis "*Svirači, mediji i identitet Hrvatskog zagorja*" [The Musicians, Media and Identity of Croatian Zagorje], defended in 2005 at the University of Zagreb under the supervision of Dr. Grozdana Marošević.

musicologists today take a broad view of music as a powerful field of social integration, creation of the feeling of belonging and community, structure and expression of social processes, and also the creation of meaningfulness within a particular community and the creation of identity (see Ceribašić 2003:12).<sup>3</sup>

During the 1980s and 1990s, the emphasis on research into instrumental music also shifted from the examination and description of the technical features of the instruments and their classification, to repertoire, and/or to the creation and performance of music. For, although instrumental music is limited by its material sources (that is, to the performing possibilities of the musical instruments being played), it is frequently also the intersection of manifold old and new music styles, by which it enriches and modifies the overall music practice of a particular region. A contribution was undoubtedly made at this turning point in the field of musical instrument and instrumental music research by the perfection of music recording and reproduction techniques, and by the development of the mass media, which considerably simplified the monitoring of the field situation, with the accompanying growth in the number of specially trained experts (see Elschek 1995:9).

Various instrumental ensembles participate in the musical life of Hrvatsko zagorje. As in other Croatian regions, the most highly represented are the ensembles with amplified instruments: one or two electric guitars, a bass guitar, and an electronic keyboard and drums. Such groups perform diverse repertoires, which usually include hits from domestic and foreign popular music. They play at parties, weddings, in restaurants, and during various social gatherings. Along with these popular ensembles, there are also several types of ensemble which figure in the region itself as folk ensembles. Some of them, largely the tamburitza ensembles, are active within amateur folklore groups, mainly providing instrumental accompaniment for folklore festival performances. Others participate in contemporary musical life, developing newly-composed folk tunes<sup>4</sup> which perform primarily at regional music festivals, at various social get-togethers and on the radio. Depending on the occasion, the musicians involved sometimes move to other groups, playing as the accompanying instrumental group for amateur folklore groups, as a contemporary folk group at regional festivals, or even as a contemporary pop group at weddings.

I have devoted my research primarily to groups that the inhabitants of Hrvatsko zagorje themselves regard as "their own", as "folk ensembles", as groups that appear at the most diverse social events in the region. I did not take into consideration the music groups that are active within cultural and art

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<sup>3</sup> For more on the development of ethnomusicology in Croatia see Bezić 1998; Ceribašić 1998; Marošević 1998.

<sup>4</sup> By "newly composed folk tunes" I mean songs written by authors in folk style (*Volkstümlich*).

societies [KUDs]. Those groups are usually uniform, that is, they are tamburitza groups (see the examples in the descriptions of KUDs in Marušić 2002) and they almost always appear in the public life of Hrvatsko zagorje only as the accompaniment to choreographed folk dances. Such groups of musicians in folklore amateurism did not stem from the original traditional music practice of Hrvatsko zagorje, but were the consequence of the influence of the concept imposed in folklore festivals in the second half of the 20th century.<sup>5</sup> It should also be mentioned that store-bought musical instruments – string and wind instruments – which were already prevailing in the Zagorje ensembles at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, were not regarded as authentic folk instruments. The tambura was an acceptable replacement for them at festivals and, although also bought and made in workshops, through frequent use in amateur folklore practice, it ultimately achieved the status of a folk musical instrument.

Furthermore, I did not deal separately with popular groups that use electrical instruments, which are also a part of contemporary music practice and thus contribute to the overall music practice of Hrvatsko zagorje. Namely, with their activity and repertoire they try to fit in with general trends in the field of popular music, and thus do not represent any "Zagorje" specific practice. Additionally, because they are indirectly represented by the groups that I discuss later, since they function in a twofold manner (the same musicians play as members of folk and popular groups, depending on the occasion and the instruments they use). Brass bands and/or wind instrument orchestras were also not included in the research, since they too, although they are included in many social events, are not regarded as "folk" ensembles.

### **Types of folk music ensembles**

As was the case in other regions of Central Europe, the music life of Hrvatsko zagorje, both in the past and still today, has been marked by small instruments ensembles: *violin* and *wind instrument* ensembles, as part of common European cultural resources, and *tamburitza* ensembles that spread throughout Croatia at the end of the 19th and during the first decades of the 20th century.

Unlike soloist music-making, the realisation of which depends on the technical capabilities of only one instrument and the skill of only one musician, playing in instrumental ensembles assumes the combining of two or more instruments into a harmonious entity with interaction and co-operation between two or more musicians. Depending on the technical possibilities and the sound quality of musical instruments, the number of individual types of instrument in the ensemble, and the role allocated to them in the ensembles –

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<sup>5</sup> For more on folklore festivals, see Ceribašić 2003.

– the performance of melody or harmonious and metrorhythmic accompaniment – individual ensembles create a specific sonority, which makes them special in relation to other ensembles. In this process, they follow certain "sound ideals" (*Klangideale*, see Elschek 1992:369), both those confirmed in the traditional music region in which they are active and those promoted by modern popular groups. Sometimes the ensembles are expanded by doubling of the same or even by the addition of new types of instrument because of the desire to create a different sound, or they change, as the result of adaptation to the circumstances under which they are playing, the acoustics of the space, the audience, and the repertoire they are performing.

Right up until around the mid-20th century, instrumental groups primarily accompanied dance. In that process, music and dance – both functionally and stylistically – existed as an integral phenomenon (see Elschek 1990:171). However, already by the end of the 19th Century, the beginnings of change that would gradually weaken the dance function of music during the first half of the 20th century became apparent. Some authors link these early changes with the practice of stylised folkdance music among the circle of European composers who, inspired by traditional music, themselves created new dance forms during the 19th century; these were intended to be listened to, and not to accompany dance (see *ibid.*:172). This also had a feedback effect on village musicians. Still, when speaking of the Hrvatsko zagorje region, instrumental dance music continued to be predominant in the first half of the 20th century – along with traditional dances (which largely belonged to the broad Central European region, such as, for example, the polka), and repertoire also consisted of dances adopted from urban dance repertoire (such as, for example, the waltz, mazurka, tango, samba, the *rašpa*, and later the twist and rock'n'roll, see Ivančan 1973:284).

With the further development of popular music (in which vocal-instrumental forms prevailed in the second half of the 20th century) and its growing accessibility (made possible by the development of the mass media), the repertoire of village musicians increasingly lost its dance character. From the 1960s, their repertoire was dominated by vocal-instrumental genres (pop songs, newly-composed folk songs and songs from regional popular music festivals). Such repertoire even prevailed at dance socials evenings. Young people danced to the pop songs and newly-composed folk songs that did not originally have a dance character (see Marošević 2002:112).

As changes in repertoire were taking place, there were also changes happening in the instrumental ensembles. Increasingly, new types of ensembles were often appearing in the musical practice of village communities in the northern parts of Croatia, similar to those in the sphere of popular music – the accordion and various amplified instruments, primarily electric guitars and electric bass guitars and drums, joined the traditional

ensembles. During the 1970s and 1980s, such mixed ensembles conquered the area of public entertainment (dance socials and weddings). Violin and wind ensembles withdrew from public musical life or transformed into mixed ensembles, while the purely tamburitza groups persisted primarily in the sphere of amateur culture and art activities.

However, the influence of popular music created new possibilities for the activities of folk ensembles. Namely, on the model of the popular music festivals that begun in the mid-1950s, regional festivals were established in Croatia during the 1960s, for example, *Melodije Istre i Kvarnera* [Melodies of Istria and the Quarnero] in 1964, *Festival kajkavske popevke* [The Festival of Kajkavian Songs] in 1966 and *Muzički festival "Slavonija"* [The Music Festival "Slavonia"] in 1969. These festivals were similar to the popular music festivals in organisation, structure and performers. Entertainment singers performed (usually as soloists) accompanied by the festival orchestras and they sang new songs, in which individual traditional patterns and regional features were linked with contemporary popular music expressions. The regional character of that creativity was achieved primarily through texts and motifs that were dialect-based, and less through musical components. The composers, writers of the texts and performers were not exclusively connected with a particular regional festival (often they were not from the region represented by the festival), but also participated at other festivals of popular music (see Marošević 1988:89-90).

Thus, the festivals mentioned did not represent the musical creativity of the region in question nor did local instrumental groups perform there. However, such festivals influenced the establishment of festivals with local significance, particularly in northern and north-western Croatia. For example, only two years after the founding of the *Festival kajkavske popevke* in Krapina, a festival called *Igrajte nam mužikaši* [Play for Us, Musicians] started to be held in Bedekovčina at which, from the outset, ensembles made up of Zagorje musicians performed their own new compositions, primarily vocal-instrumental pieces. They adapted their creativity to the taste of the audience, for which they otherwise played, and that festival was much more popular in the regional framework than the *Festival kajkavske popevke* in Krapina (see Marošević 1988:90). Regional festivals, like the one mentioned in Bedekovčina, opened up the way for individual ensembles to present themselves to the broad public, at the same time making it possible for them to take part in the programs of local radio stations, and to make recordings. This is also the most frequent way in which folk ensembles communicate with their public today, since dance socials are rarely held, and popular groups usually play at weddings.

### Violin ensembles

We learn from historical sources that "purely" violin ensembles existed in Croatia in the 19th century (Kovačić 1985:240; Širola 1942:41), with the addition of *žvegla* [flute] (Kotarski 1917:73), with a flute and *bugarija* tambura (Širola 1933a:205), with a dulcimer (Žganec 1971:47, 48), and in the second half of the 20th century, also with an accordion (Bezić 1973:327; Ivančan 1973:271; Marošević 2002:111). Zagorje ensembles of this type were called *mužikaši*, *cicari* and *guslari*, and when they played at weddings, they were called *veselniki*. They do not have particular names today or people refer to them descriptively as "those with violins" while *Radio Krapina* call them "violin-dulcimer ensembles", expressing in that way its inclination towards the older configuration of the violin ensembles, before the accordion was added. In other words, the majority of today's violin ensembles are made up of violins, an accordion, a guitar (or a *bugarija* tamburitza) and a *bajs*, or contrabass. Of the 18 violin ensembles whose activity I documented throughout my research from 1997 to 2003, as many as 15 of them were mixed ensembles.

In these ensembles, the melody is performed by the violin, while the accompaniment is played by the other instruments, with the *bajs* (the tamburitza bass or the contrabass) and the guitar (or *bugarija* tamburitza) having an emphasised metrorhythmic function. The root (the fundamental tone of the chord) on the first part of the beat is performed by the *bajs* – usually by plucking with a plectrum or sometimes also using a bow (*lučec*) – while the chords in the second ("weak") part of the beat are played on the guitar or *bugarija* tamburitza, so that their parts and the instruments themselves are called *kontra*. There are often two violins in the ensemble. The first violin leads with the melody, while the second violin plays the second part melody. More rarely, the *kontra* instrument (the guitar or *bugarija*) in the ensemble is also doubled. Then both instruments play the same passage, intensifying the sound.

It is interesting to note the twofold role of the accordion in the instrumental composition: in the strophe, and sometimes in the introduction and the interplay, it performs the melody and also provides further harmonic accompaniment throughout the song. The musician most frequently plays only on the keyboard, completely neglecting the basses. Mere playing on the keyboard threatens to disrupt the balance of the violin ensemble's sound, and if the basses were also used they would completely drown out the sound of the violins. That is why, when playing along with violins, the accordion is played more quietly, while its sound is more emphasised in the passages without the violins.

There is a considerably smaller number of ensembles that continue the violin and dulcimer group tradition. These are mainly ensembles that were

founded during the 1990s in an effort to revitalise the early Zagorje music tradition (which almost died away during the 1970s and 1980s). During my research, I documented only three such ensembles: the *Cimbuli band* from Ivanec, which ceased playing in 2003, the *Visočki cajti* group from Visoko that performs in frequent intervals; and the *Kavaliri* from Bednja, who are the only really active "violin-dulcimer" group in Hrvatsko zagorje today.

There is no accordion in the violin ensembles with a dulcimer. With the strength of its sound, the accordion would completely "cover" that of the dulcimer. In such ensembles, the dulcimer plays the harmonic role and sometimes also performs the main melody (instead of the violin). It usually does so in the introductory passages of the song and in the interplay. The *Kavaliri* group has come closest to the ideal of the "violin-dulcimer" sound of the traditional Zagorje players. Although they, too, change instruments and repertoire depending on the circumstances and where they are playing, they have become popular among a wide audience precisely for their nurture of a special, old ideal of sound and playing. The lead melody, as well as the melody of the second part, is performed by the violins, the bass passage by the contra-bass-player using his bow, and for the *kontra*, the *Kavaliri* use the third violin instead of the *bugarija* or the guitar. It is important to point out that the violin-playing technique is essentially different when it performs the *kontra*. Unlike the players of the first and second violin,<sup>6</sup> the *kontraš* holds the violin vertically on his chest, which makes it possible for him to perform sharp and quick downwards strokes with the bow, providing accompaniment on the weak part of the beat. This difference in playing technique of the violin is found in the musical practice of other European countries (see Deutsch 1975:13). Compared to ensembles where the accordion provides a firm intonational base (because it is a tempered instrument) and, in combination with the plectrum-played instruments, creates a more sonorous, that is, more pronounced accompaniment, the sound of the *Kavaliri* is softer, less penetrating, with a less stressed and almost fluid metrorhythmic background (because of the generally quieter stringed instruments and the dulcimer). Due to the instrument construction, the manner of playing, and the non-tempered nature of the string instruments, that ensemble is more free in intonation. All of that, as well as the text of their songs in the local, *Bednja* vernacular of the Kajkavian dialect, makes the *Kavaliri* an ensemble which produces the emphasised "old-fashioned" ideal of sound, thus making it unique and identifiable among the violin ensembles of Hrvatsko zagorje. It is the non-tempered nature of the playing of the violinists that most creates the old-fashioned nature of the sound of the violin ensembles. While developing

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<sup>6</sup> The first and second violin hold the instrument under their chins, in the position that is customary in performing the melody, in which the technical capabilities of the instrument itself and the skill of its player are foregrounded.



individual playing styles, they also contribute as the lead musicians to the particularity and mutual differences between the individual ensembles.

Today, the violin ensembles perform largely authored songs. Elements of folk-popular music from the Alpine region are noticeable in the violin ensemble songs: most of the songs are in moderately brisk tempo, in the dance rhythm of the polka and the waltz, with melodies in the major-key that are characterised by the arpeggiating of the chordal tones, and sometimes with up-beat beginnings. The small part of their repertoire comes from old parlour songs of the Pannonian region or music features near to *Schlager* (as the most widely diffused genre in popular music). Those songs are characterised by a moderate tempo and gradual development of the melody, which is also sometimes in the minor-key. The harmonic progression in almost all these songs is reduced to its fundamental function, with occasional modulations in close tonalities at the end of the songs, that is, in the final repetition of one part or even of the entire refrain.

The texts of the songs do not differ in theme from the texts of popular music in the broadest sense. Most of them are love songs or jocular songs, but they are imbued with local colour and speak of love, home, the people of Zagorje and their way of life, about their *kleti* [vineyard cottages], their *gorice* [vineyards] and of wine. Almost all the texts we can hear in the violin ensemble performances today are in the Kajkavian dialect, often in a specific local vernacular. Thus, for example, almost all the *Kavaliri* ensemble's songs are in the Bednja vernacular, and are difficult to understand, even within Zagorje itself.

Apart from new songs, the violin ensemble repertoires also contain earlier Zagorje songs. These are songs that were, on the whole, written and/or recorded during the 1960s and 1970s, which, although written by authors, are regarded as "authentic folk" songs. They include, for example "Suza za zagorske brege" [A Tear for the Hills of Zagorje] by Zvonko Špišić, "Dobro mi došel prijatelj" [Welcome, Friend] by Vili Čaklec and "Veselo, veselo Zagorci" [Cheerily, Cheerily, People of Zagorje] by Franjo Boroš. And sometimes they perform also older traditional songs. Thus, for example, the *Haubiksi* ensemble included in their repertoire the well-known Zagorje wedding song "Zorja je, zorja" [It's Dawn, It's Dawn]. Variants of this song had been noted in the field by both Žganec and Bezić (Žganec 1950:254, 321, 365-366, 382; Bezić 1973:333-334), and it is often performed by contemporary folklore groups.

Violin ensembles perform on various occasions: at celebrations and events, sometimes at weddings, but still, most frequently at local festivals. Most of the ensemble members are from the same community in which they live and work. They are largely amateurs, although some of them, such as the *Kavaliri*, due to the number of their diverse performances, their recordings

and their frequent appearance on television, could well be called semi-professionals. However, the money they make playing is not their main income – all the members of the ensembles work at some other job. Most of the musicians are self-taught or were taught to play by older musicians in their villages. It is rare for them to have been taught by professional musicians or to have attended music schools. They mainly adopt the musical components of repertoire by listening and remembering ("playing by ear"), while they write down the texts. Sometimes they write the chords beside the texts of the songs. Still, most of the ensembles, including the *Kavaliri*, transform, through switching their instruments, into pop groups and, as such, play at various events (for example, at weddings and dances).

### Wind ensembles

The activity of wind ensembles in Croatian Zagorje was confirmed at the beginning of the 20th century. They used to be called *trumbetaši* [trumpeters] (Kotarski 1917:73) or *plehmuzika* [brass bands] (Širola 1933a:205; Žganec 1971:47, 48), while they were made up largely only of brass instruments, sometimes with the addition of a clarinet (Ivančan 1973:271). The wind instruments ensembles that we encounter today in the music practice of Zagorje are always mixed groups. They consist of a clarinet, a trumpet, a piano accordion, an (electric) guitar, a bass-guitar, and often also of drums. Groups of such composition – identical with that of the *Oberkrajner*-groups, which were widely diffused in the western Pannonian and Alpine zone (see Deutsch 1990) – are called *folk-popular groups* in the media, particularly by Radio Kaj. The main and accompanying melodic row in the wind ensembles is played by the trumpet, the clarinet and (sometimes) by the accordion, which also provides harmony, while the metrorhythmic function is entrusted to the electric guitar, the bass-guitar and the drums. Wind ensembles today usually perform in the same or similar instrumentation in which acoustic and electric instruments are combined. In this, they differ from the violin and tamburitza ensembles, which (because of the weaker sonority of the violin and the tambura) do not as a rule venture into such combinations. Frequent changes in instruments are also evident in the wind ensembles, even within one and the same performance. The trumpet and the clarinet are sometimes replaced by a saxophone, piano accordion, and the bass-guitar with a (baritone) euphonium or a trombone.

The traditional repertoire is usually played only on the acoustic instruments. For example, the *Fiškali* almost always play the older polkas in the following combination of instruments: trumpet, clarinet, accordion, guitar and euphonium or trombone, trying in that way to produce "the old-fashioned sound". Apart from the earlier repertoire, the wind ensembles in such an

(acoustic) instrumental combination sometimes also perform newly-composed songs, authored songs. Still, electric instruments and drums usually join this basic acoustic group for the performance of new songs. In such composition, they also perform pieces from popular music repertoire or, as has been mentioned in connection with the *Kavaliri* violin ensemble, completely replace the acoustic instruments with electric ones, thus changing from a *folk* to a *popular* music group.

Due to their musical characteristics, the songs of the wind ensembles completely fit into the style of the folk-popular music of the Alpine region, as I have already described it in the section on violin ensembles. It is very probable that it was just these wind ensembles that diffused it throughout Zagorje.

The themes of the songs are almost identical to that of the songs performed by the violin ensembles. They sing about love – happy and unhappy, home, wine, the vineyards, or deal with some particular motif from contemporary life, such as *Blatar's Band's* in the song about the Internet "Štief na internetu" [Štef on the Internet]. The song texts of the wind ensembles are generally in the Kajkavian dialect, although they are sometimes also in the standard Croatian.

As far as their repertoire is concerned (motifs and structure of the songs), and the sound ideal they achieve through the described combination of instruments, the Zagorje wind ensembles are essentially the same as ensembles of this type active in the broad region (cf. Weber 1999). The wind ensembles regularly have six or seven musicians, mostly amateurs, although it is not a rarity also to find the trained musician in this type of ensemble. The majority of the players obtained their first experience playing in wind orchestras (brass bands),<sup>7</sup> which prompted some of them to continue their training at music schools. Thus, although some of the members of the wind orchestra can read music, they still usually learn new songs "by ear" from recordings. Although individual musicians in some of the groups are professionals, the wind ensembles as a whole are not since the earnings they generate by playing are not a basic income for the majority of their members.

The popularity of the wind ensembles in Hrvatsko Zagorje has grown considerably over the last ten years or so. The regional and local radio stations played a major role in this increased popularity. Recordings of their repertoire are also easily available at many sales outlets (for example, at mixed goods stores and at gas stations). The reason for their high number and broad popularity, in relation to the violin ensembles, lies perhaps in their "more modern sound" that results from the use of electric musical instruments, in the texts of the songs which, although they are in the

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<sup>7</sup> Wind orchestras in Zagorje are usually active within volunteer fire department. Their music accompanies various social festivities, and they often play at funerals.

Kajkavian dialect, are without local particularities (and are thus understandable throughout the entire region) and, finally, in their exceptionally diverse repertoire which, along with their own new compositions and composition adopted from other groups, is made up of traditional music and of domestic and foreign popular music. This range in repertoire makes it possible for them to play on various occasions when people come together. In addition to playing at festivals and giving independent concerts, the wind ensembles perform at public celebrations and saint's day festivities, at weddings, and at funerals.

Compared with violin ensembles, the wind ensembles have always been more inclined to venture into what is new, aspiring to be active more broadly in musical life. In the past, they often drew on the repertoire of urban and military music, while today they are increasingly making their way into popular music, trying to penetrate outside the region, into the mainstream Croatian music scene. In contrast, the violin ensembles, which were more closely linked even before to local music styles, are still active today primarily as Zagorje folk ensembles who are not interested in emerging from their regional framework, but instead consciously nurture the "old-fashioned" style.

### **The tamburitza ensembles**

According to accessible sources, tamburitza ensembles started their activities in Croatian Zagorje at the beginning of the 20th century. Josip Kotarski testified to their presence, mentioning that they only played from time to time "in inns or free of charge on festive evenings, playing uninvited in front of the inn" (Kotarski 1917:73). Twenty years later, the tamburitza players were already fairly entrenched in the music practice of this region. Božidar Širola mentioned that the tamburitza ensembles had replaced "the music of the *muzikaši*", but also confirmed the existence of mixed ensembles, with tamburitzas and one violinist (Širola 1942:41). There is more information on the further activities of the tamburitza ensembles – exclusively tamburitzas, as well as those in which the violin was retained – in more recent sources (Žganec 1971:47-48; Bezić 1973:327; Ivančan 1973:272), and they were confirmed by my research.

During my research in Hrvatsko zagorje, amateur tamburitza ensembles were active largely in providing accompaniment to folklore groups. Tamburitza orchestras<sup>8</sup> are rare, which is also confirmed by the fact that not even one orchestra from Hrvatsko zagorje (see, for example, Dragun 2003)

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<sup>8</sup> Tamburitza orchestras play mostly original literature or arrangements written for tamburitza orchestras lead by a conductor. For more on the tamburitza see Andrić 1977; Bonifačić 1993.

was represented in the programs of the Festival of Croatian Tamburitza Music in Osijek at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s. However, there were a considerable number of folk tamburitza ensembles. According to data in written sources, such tamburitza groups did participate in the musical life of Hrvatsko zagorje during the 20th century, but they were far fewer of them than wind ensembles during the second half of the century. Their number increased in the first half of the 1990s, connected with the boom in tamburitza music in Croatia during those years,<sup>9</sup> but already in the second half of the 1990s the number fell, and the wind ensembles once again took the leading position among folk ensembles.

The rise and fall in popularity and/or the representation of tamburitza ensembles in the musical life of Croatian Zagorje can be traced in the programs of individual Zagorje festivals, for example, the *Igrajte nam muzikaši* festival, which has been held in Bedekovčina since 1968. Two tamburitza ensembles (with as many as fourteen wind ensembles) performed at that festival in 1987, there were also two (but only six wind ensembles) in 1991, while there were as many as six tamburitza groups (and only three wind groups) in 1994. However, their number started to fall from 1995: two tamburitza groups performed in 1995, one in 1998, and not even one after the 2000. At the same time, the number of wind ensembles at that festival started to grow once again: nine of them performed in 1995, twenty in 2000, fourteen in 2002, while there were sixteen of them in 2003. The absence of tamburitza-players from the Bedekovčina festival, however, was not only the result of the dying out of their activity, but also the consequence of change in the conception of that festival itself brought about by the increased popularity of wind ensembles among the public.

After the upsurge in the first half of the 1990s, the number of tamburitza ensembles in Zagorje did, admittedly, fall, but their activity in the musical life of the region stabilised. This is also illustrated by their representation at the *Zagorska krijesnica* festival, founded in 1997, where the tamburitza ensembles are lower in number than the remaining type of folk groups, but they are still permanently present.

During field research, I documented eleven tamburitza ensembles active over the period from 1997 to 2003. Their basic instrumental composition is made up of a *prim* tamburitza, two *brač* tamburitzas (sometimes with the addition of a *čelović*) along with a *bugarija* tamburitza and a bass. The melody is performed on the *prim*, the accompanying melodic row and the harmonical complementation on the *brač* tamburitzas (and the *čelović*) and the metrorhythmic background on the *bugarija* and the bass (using the plectrum technique). The playing style of the Zagorje tamburitza

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<sup>9</sup> For more on the boom in tamburitza-playing, see Bonifačić 1993.

ensembles changed during the 1990s. Listening to performances recorded twenty years earlier, it is easy to see that the tamburitza players at that time did not particularly ornament the melody. Some of the ensembles still nurture that style of playing even today.

However, the majority of tamburitza ensembles in Zagorje today perform songs that have been more richly ornamented, with lots of flourishes and passing tones – in both the melody and in the accompanying passages – by which they join the playing style and sonority of other tamburitza ensembles in Croatia.

A violin is often also present in Zagorje tamburitza ensembles, which plays the leading melody; or an accordion which, as in the violin and wind ensembles, has a twofold role: it performs the melody, and sometimes the harmonic (chord) accompaniment. Of the eleven ensembles mentioned, most had a violin or accordion added (seven), and only four were purely tamburitza ensembles. Although the *prim* tamburitza was absent in some of the mixed tamburitza ensembles, they nonetheless differed in their sound from the mixed violin ensembles: while the sound of the fiddler prevailed in the violin ensembles, the fundamental colour in the tamburitza ensembles was given by the plectrum-played instruments.

Today's tamburitza ensemble repertoire is made up primarily of new songs in the Kajkavian dialect, with themes similar to those of songs performed by contemporary wind and violin ensembles. The tamburitza-players, too, try to satisfy public demand: part of the Zagorje tamburitza songs and their music features (major melodies with leaps and bounds development, a moderately brisk tempo, polka rhythm) largely fit in with the style of Alpine folk-popular music, while partly following what is still the prevailing tamburitza repertoire in Croatia, based mainly on the tradition of the Slavonian parlour song. However, it is interesting to note the amalgam that is established in performances of new songs with the features of the Zagorje (Alpine) music idiom and the above-mentioned ornamented style of playing of Slavonian-Voyvodina origins – that ornamented style is most pronounced in the instrumental passages of the songs, for example, in the introduction and the interplay.

The Zagorje tamburitza-players participate at various social events, play at weddings and perform at festivals. They are well represented in the media, while the majority of them have made their own recordings.

### **Mediating music**

Change in the musical practice of Hrvatsko zagorje has been conditioned by diverse factors. Historical sources testify to changes in Hrvatsko zagorje

repertoire brought in by musicians during the 19th and 20th century as they adopted music from other musicians who visited their area, or whom they encountered when they themselves went to play in neighbouring or more distant regions (see Kovačić 1985:243-247; Kotarski 1918:11), or even in learning to play from sheet music (see Žganec 1971:47-48). A greater influence from media-mediated music in regional and local musical life commenced in the first half of the 20th century, thanks to advances in technology and the increased accessibility of devices for recording and reproducing music. At the mid-20th century, the diffusion range of radio stations expanded, and newer, cheaper devices for sound reproduction were invented, for example, transistor radios,<sup>10</sup> by which the interaction between media-mediated popular music and local music tradition also increased (cf. Malm 1992:211, 213).

Through the influence of the media and the music industry, the musical life of individual local communities started to change at an accelerated pace. Learning popular hits from all sides, musicians constantly broadened their repertoire, but also modified local ways of music-making, thus altering the musical life of their area. According to 1970s sources, Zagorje musicians adopted new repertoire primarily from gramophone records and then, following models from the field of popular music, they gradually transformed their ensembles into vocal-instrumental groups (see Bezić 1973:328; Ivančan 1973:285-286). However, the development of the media also enabled the promotion of local music genres. In the case of Zagorje, this was done by local radio stations (founded in the 1960s) and by gramophone records made by what was then the leading record company, *Jugoton*.

In the past, ensembles only performed live, while today for their continued existence and success is important their presentation through the various media. Each opportunity and performance venue places diverse demands on the musicians. There are the demands of the media corporations, the press, the experts, the festival organisers and the public (cf. Lundberg, Malm and Ronström 2003:29). This is particularly pronounced at the Zagorje festivals, whose organisers are often also editors of radio programs. Musicians who wish to promote their songs at festivals and on radio programs, have to satisfy their demands. Zagorje musicians largely present their new creative work by way of radio, festivals and recordings, which are mainly in the folk style, but also fit in with the music styles of popular music. The same ensembles gather at various social gatherings, such as saint's day celebrations and weddings, and perform music requested by the public along with their own songs. The requested songs are usually hits adopted from other Zagorje ensembles or popular hits adopted from recordings. Depending on the place where they have come together and the public, the musicians sometimes

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<sup>10</sup> Transistors were invented by J. Bardeen and W.H. Brattain in 1948. ([S.n.] 1980:726).

also play older folk songs and music for dancing that they have mostly learnt from older musicians. The musicians usually perform the traditional music for the purpose of promoting their particular area, particularly at events that are organised by the local tourist board.

Although the number of diverse occasions for performing music today has increased, the fact is that there are more and more musicians now and it is not easy to secure oneself a place in the public eye. Therefore, there is strong competition among musicians. More frequent appearances in public at the regional and local level make it possible for musicians to be noticed by a larger number of listeners, which brings them higher earnings and a higher position on the ladder of social and cultural worth. Musicians who have not reached a satisfactory level of visibility try to achieve it by imitating already affirmed musicians, performing music similar to theirs, or trying to make their name with completely different music. The third possibility is to seek out the financial and promotional support of various sponsors and the media.

Almost all the music ensembles in the Zagorje region commence their activities by playing at socials and weddings, performing the repertoire of others that they have learnt and adopted. However, the objective of the majority of the ensembles is to penetrate onto the regional and local music scene with their own compositions. The best confirmation of their worth as musicians is to perform at festivals and in radio programmes, which leads to greater demand for their music-making and also ensures them better earnings. Higher earnings and more frequent performances on a variety of occasions increases the possibility of their making recordings and enhancing the popularity of the ensemble in that way.

Festivals, radio stations, recordings and, more recently, Internet sites, are the main media for the contemporary mediation and distribution of music in Croatian Zagorje. During my research, they provided me with a rich source of information on the music ensembles and the musical life of that region. However, for now, the music of the Zagorje ensembles has remained at the regional level.

Although some of the ensembles would gladly venture outside the regional framework, it seems to me that none of them, at least at present, would be prepared essentially to change their conception, and adapt to meet the demands of the large recording companies and the broad public. They are satisfied, therefore, with good distribution of their recordings at the local and regional level.



## Conclusion

In the activity of the music ensembles – violin, wind, and tamburitza ensembles – there is a melding of the contemporary and the traditional. The "old-fashioned" combination of musical instruments is being used more and more, but in so doing the ensembles are rarely concerned that the sound they produce also be "old-fashioned". The media, the increasing use of tuned instruments, and the more frequent access to music education (music education is a composite part today of both elementary and general subjects secondary education) has had its influence on the sound ideal of the musicians – and perhaps of their audiences – for whom the old quite frequent practice of playing on instruments that were out of tune is "ugly, bad and inappropriate". By their playing and singing, these musicians try today to satisfy the taste of a relatively wide audience, that is, they adapt their performances to the demands of the market. At the regional and local level these types of ensemble are given prominence as folk ensembles and they are a regular feature at various social gatherings (from baptisms, weddings and dances to funerals) at which they sometimes perform music of the earlier tradition, but much more frequently newly-composed songs in the Kajkavian dialect and/or in local vernaculars. Still, creativity at the state level is entrusted to the performances of cultural and art societies whose performances are adapted to the stage, and who frequently perform old songs and dances that are rare in spontaneous performances by groups of people. The extent to which this is decided upon by the inhabitants of the region or whether it is a choice imposed by the powers-that-be and/or the laws of the market, remains, for the time being, an open question.

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## NARODNI ANSAMBLI HRVATSKOG ZAGORJA

### SAŽETAK

Etnomuzikološka su istraživanja u Hrvatskoj, kao i u Europi, do 1970-ih bila usmjerena uglavnom starijim slojevima seoske tradicije. Stoga su u središtu istraživačke pozornosti ponajprije bili starinski domaći napjevi, a potom i svirka na tradicijskim seljačkim glazbalima. Tako je i u Hrvatskome zagorju, što me potaknulo da istraživanje fokusiram upravo na sastave svirača, to više što su oni od 19. stoljeća do danas, i zastupljenošću i značenjem, najistaknutiji izvođači u glazbenoj praksi.

Na terenskom sam istraživanju zabilježila da u današnjem glazbenom životu Hrvatskoga zagorja sudjeluju različiti sastavi svirača. Kao i u drugim hrvatskim regijama najzastupljeniji su zabavni sastavi s instrumentima u kojih je zvuk pojačan električnim napajanjem. Uz zabavne djeluju i tri tipa narodnih sastava – kako ih kategoriziraju stanovnici regije. *Puhački* su najbrojniji, najaktivniji i najuniverzalniji; nastupaju u različitim prigodama te, uz izraženiju sklonost zabavnoj glazbi, češće kombiniraju akustične instrumente (trube, klarinet, eufonij, harmoniku) s električnima (klavijature, električne gitare i bas-gitare, bubnjeve). Zvuk violinskih sastava čine violine i gudači bas uz cimbal ili harmoniku ili violine uz tambure. Ti su sastavi najstariji i ne tako brojni. Više su vezani uz tradicijsku lokalnu glazbenu praksu te često nastupaju u različitim prigodama uz turističko promicanje kraja. Najmanji je broj tamburaških sastava, čija je zastupljenost ovisna o (promjenjivu) statusu tamburaša u Hrvatskoj. Nastupaju u različitim prigodama, izvodeći vlastite skladbe, ali i pjesme suvremenog tamburaškog repertoara. Nekada su glazbeni sastavi nastupali samo uživo, dok je danas za njihovo postojanje i uspjeh važno i predstavljanje u različitim medijima. U radijskim programima, na festivalima i nosačima zvuka predstavljaju uglavnom svoje novo stvaralaštvo, koje je (možda upravo zbog višegodišnjeg medijskog posredovanja) vrlo srodno i s obzirom na tekstualnu i glazbenu sastavnicu. Većinom je riječ o ljubavnim i šaljivim pjesmama na kajkavskom, s motivima iz zagorskoga života. Glazbeno, to stvaralaštvo spaja popularnu formu šlagera i obilježja glazbe zapadnopanonskoga i (još više) istočnoalpskoga prostora, zbog čega je ponekad teško razlikovati "narodni" i "zabavni" sastav. Svi ti sastavi nastupaju na zabavama, svadbama, u restoranima i u drugim prigodama. No, iako se nazivaju narodnima, vrlo rijetko sudjeluju u predstavljanju tradicijske kulture kraja, što je gotovo uvijek povjereno za scenu prilagođenim nastupima kulturno-umjetničkih društava, koja često izvode starinske pjesme i plesove koji su rijetki u spontanim izvedbama. Koliko je to odluka stanovnika regije ili je taj izbor nametnuo sustav moći, odnosno zakona tržišta, ostaje zasad otvorenim pitanjem.

Ključne riječi: instrumentalna glazba, Hrvatsko zagorje, Hrvatska