

The Contribution of Choral Cultural-Artistic Amateurism in Slavonia to the Development of the Cultural Life of Towns in Eastern Croatia, in the Past and Today

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Summary: *Since the times of intensive development of the movement of cultural-artistic amateurism in Croatia, in the late 19th century, choral cultural-artistic amateurism has been considered extremely important because of its considerable implications beyond just music by way of influencing the shaping of the cultural climate of the area. The purpose of this paper was to establish whether there is an influence of choral cultural-artistic amateurism on the development of cultural life in the towns of Slavonia. The paper puts the historical activities and the contribution of amateur singing societies formed in the late 19th and the beginning of the 20th century from the Eastern Croatian regions in relationship with their contemporary contribution to creating the cultural life of towns in which they act.*

Keywords: *choirs, choral conductors of Eastern Croatia, choral cultural-artistic amateurism, choral singing, community culture, music in Eastern Croatia, musical heritage, singing societies.*

Introduction

Choir singing as an art in many ways affects humans both as individuals and as members of the social community. While primarily helping individuals develop their musical abilities and satisfy their musical needs, it is through

participation in the activities of an ensemble of similarly inclined members (who usually belong to the most diverse sociodemographic groups) that the individual benefits from the non-musical aspects thereof as well. Studies have shown that choir singing fosters a sense of belonging, responsibility, and self-respect, as well as the subjective sense of psychological well-being (Clift et al 7), encourages understanding and tolerance between members, and of course, the establishment of a cultural climate and identity of the community in which the choir is active (Chorus America 8–10). Owing to their inclusive and collective nature, choirs as ensembles provide even amateur musicians with the opportunity to attain outstanding artistic achievement in their personal time despite their frequently insufficient musical education. In a structured collective led by a musical professional, i.e., the conductor, such individuals participate on equal footing by virtue of their personal talent, perseverance, and exceptional commitment. These individuals, depending on their available leisure (which according to Dumazedier's definition is »an activity – apart from obligations of work, family, and society – to which the individual turns at will, for either relaxation, diversion, or broadening his knowledge and his spontaneous social participation, the free exercise of his creative capacity« (682)), thus develop their personal culture as well as the culture of their community. The basic characteristic principles of structured leisure, as laid out by Ruskin and Spector (qtd. in Vidulin 64) – including perseverance and tenacity, the drive for success outside one's vocation, significant personal effort, long-term benefit, personality development, fulfilled moral and social life—are observable in amateur choirs. The benefits gained through said activities are subsequently enjoyed not only by the direct participants but also by the wider community. Therefore, it is not surprising that choir singing as a form of structured leisure has been greatly appreciated since the earliest stages of this art form (Radočaj-Jerković 89).

Given that this paper discusses amateur singing societies, we must emphasize that the topic is approached solely from the perspective of serious leisure activities that, according to Stebbins, are characterized principally by structure and continuity (134). Furthermore, the research included solely the societies that through their century-long work fulfil the above criteria in their entirety. The artistic value of the ensembles and the subjective cultural and social contribution of the members and leaders to the community were entrusted to the judgment of the program beneficiaries.

1. Amateur Choirs in Croatia

Civic cultural and artistic societies in Croatia started emerging in the 19th century, during which time their musical programs leaned upon ecclesial and folklore traditions. It was not long before the idea of strengthening the civic cultural identity and

national cultural awareness displaced such traditions by way of forming (mostly all-male) city choirs. The raising of the Croatian national consciousness, the ideas behind the Illyrian Movement, and the effort to make the Croatian language official (which encompassed the cultural plain) created a need for writing and performing new musical pieces in Croatian. It was precisely the newly established civic singing societies that were the driving force behind the creation of such literature. Singing societies and choirs were founded and structured in the European style, modelled primarily on Austro-Hungarian singing societies. »Zora«, the first Croatian singing society, was established in 1858 in Karlovac, and was soon followed by many others: »Kolo« (1862, Zagreb), Singing Society of Osijek (1862), »Lipa« (1872, Osijek), »Zvono« (1863, Križevci), »Sloga« (1872, Vinkovci), »Jeka« (1874, Samobor), »Lipa« (1875, Varaždin), »Zvonimir« (1884, Split), »Gundulić« (1893, Dubrovnik), »Zoranić« (1908, Zadar), and »Danica« (1872, Sisak). The societies' activities often extended outside the scope of their activity with the sole purpose of awakening national consciousness. Other than the more straightforward Croatian folk pieces, they performed more complex compositions from European musical literature such as masses, oratorios, and Croatian and foreign secular compositions. The singularity of the first singing societies – not unlike today – lay in the sheer assemblage of singers they brought together from a variegation of generations, professions, and sociodemographic and class backgrounds: what ultimately connected these individuals was the equality with which they contributed to their joint musical performance (Weber 3). Importantly, the aim of these societies was not solely a musical one – the societies wittingly strived to contribute through their activity to the advancement of the musical culture of their cities. By the end of the 19th century, the Croatian musical movement developed to such a degree that nearly all cities, towns, and even villages had singing societies that brought together thousands of amateur singers.

2. Historical Overview of Singing Societies of Eastern Croatia

A historical overview of the singing societies in eastern Croatia reveals a wealth of cultural heritage and values passed from generation to generation. Their purpose and underlying organizational function remain unchanged. Between the many societies whose activity deserves a historical context, this paper will cover only those that are still in existence. In chronological order, they are as follows:

1. Croatian Singing and Musical Society (CSMS) »Dunav« Vukovar (1865),
2. Croatian Singing Society (CSS) »Davor« Slavonski Brod (1871),
3. Croatian Singing Society (CSS) »Lipa« Osijek (1876),
4. Croatian Singing Society (CSS) »Rodoljub« Virovitica (1880),

5. Croatian Cultural Society (CCS) »Lisinski« Našice (1889),
6. Croatian Singing Society (CSS) »Vijenac« Požega (1894),
7. Croatian Singing and Musical Society of Craftspeople (CSMSC) »Zrinski« Osijek (1896),
8. Croatian Singing Society (CSS) »Matija Petar Katančić« Valpovo (1905), and
9. Croatian Singing Society (CSS) »Tomislav« Cernik (1905) (Proleta 3).

It is noticeable that Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer and other church dignitaries from eastern Croatia supported the establishment and artistic work of most of the listed choral societies both financially and morally.

2.1. CROATIAN SINGING AND MUSICAL SOCIETY (CSMS) »DUNAV« VUKOVAR

Established in 1865 in Vukovar, CSMS »Dunav« aimed at inspiring and spreading music, nurturing and creating a singing and musical heritage, encouraging musical literacy, and performing at important city festivities (Ban 39). The establishment of this all-male choir was prompted by a group of young men inspired by their desire to create a society to represent the art and culture of the City of Vukovar. The society originally performed pieces written in German, but the need to perform in Croatian and nurture Croatian musical literature soon prevailed. By the start of the 20th century, the society regularly held joint concerts with renowned fellow societies, toured throughout Croatia, and revived the social life of Vukovar. The Vukovar daily paper reported about the society's performances regularly. On one such occasion, the paper described the society's activity as particularly meaningful for the cultural identity of Vukovar: »As one of the prime singing societies in all of Slavonia, CSMS 'Dunav' achieved with their concert (. . .) what is likely their most notable success in the recent years in vocal and instrumental music, (. . .) guided by the confidence of their outstanding teacher, Celine. The spectrum of quality and diversity in their vocal and musical abilities allow the setting of operetta performances under the guidance of Ljudevit Fadjević« (Horvat and Hegeduš 26).

Despite having to suspend their activities during the post-World War II period, the sense of belonging and pride of the society remained strong, as did its repertoire. Following the Croatian War of Independence and the peaceful reintegration, CSMS »Dunav« was revitalized and continues to exist through several sections: children's choir »Vukovarski golubići«, mixed choir, *tambura* orchestra, as well as children's and adult folk-dance groups.

2.2. CROATIAN SINGING SOCIETY (CSS) »DAVOR« SLAVONSKI BROD

Founded in 1871 in Slavonski Brod at the initiative of citizens and students Hugo Badalić and Josip Baumeister, and Franciscans Ignjat Brlić, Toma Laktović, and Zefir Marc, CSS »Davor« continues to exist as one of the city's major cultural (musical) entities. Originally motivated by political reasons, the society also served the need of the citizens for a more active music scene. Initially, it comprised solely of an all-male choir, but it soon expanded to an all-female group. The society's primary activity—to foster folk music by performing Slavic songs—was defined in its first social rules adopted immediately upon the society's establishment. The new social rules of 1896 brought a major change: Slavic songs were to be replaced by Croatian songs. Members accepted the new rules and lived and acted in accordance with the guiding principle: »*Bud'mo pjesmom rodu svijest*« (Jerković 439). The importance of CSS »Davor« was further confirmed when bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer blessed the society's flag on its 25th anniversary and by having Croatian writer Ivana Brlić Mažuranić as its godmother. The broader political significance of the society is observable from the remarks of Slanaček and Medved (14–15) on the banning of the designated society flag that promoted Croatian identity:

As the Croatian coat of arms was sewn on a silk, gold-embroidered flag, the administrative authorities did not allow it. Although the crown of St. Stephen was subsequently embroidered on the Croatian coat of arms, the authorities nevertheless kept their ban. Therefore, they removed the Croatian coat of arms from the flag and sewed an ordinary musical emblem in its place: fiddles and bows and the year of the dedication of the flag.

The society was very active at the end of the 19th century. It performed at almost all major festivities and events in and around Slavonski Brod and had several notable performances abroad. Over time, the society saw the number of its members decrease as well as their performances, and ultimately it disbanded at the start of World War I. In 1919, the society employed a new choirmaster, Josip Fulgosi, to resume its activity and reassemble the singers. In a turning point following World War I, the pursuit of musical progress replaced the patriotic role of the society, which increased their number to 80 active and 180 supporting members. The membership saw another fluctuation amid World War II, and yet again effectively suspended its activities in 1947. During the Croatian Spring, the cultural and political movement, the society saw an initiative to reassemble, but the political structure of the era soon banned all its activities.

In 1991, the society reactivated. The mixed choir reassembled through the exceptional efforts of the Croatian conductor Josip Jerković, who stood behind similar

attempts in the 1970s. Jerković believed that the newly active society should promote and foster the unique cultural heritage of Slavonski Brod. The ensuing years were the apex of the society's artistic activity.

2.3. CROATIAN SINGING SOCIETY (CSS) »LIPA« OSIJEK

CSS »Lipa« was founded in 1876 in Osijek with the goal to develop and foster Croatian music and enrich life in Osijek through a rich, sound, and artistically mature music scene. One of the first patrons of CSS »Lipa« was Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer, who was appointed as its social patron on February 24, 1878. »The emergence of »Lipa« resolutely upended the centuries-old veering. It accomplished a new, folk-oriented direction of Osijek vocal art that is tied with its heart and soul to the homeland and our Slavonic people« (Marijanović 14). At its outset, CSS »Lipa« already fulfilled its goal: its numerous performances and concerts elated the citizens of Osijek. Sadly, the shining start was abruptly interrupted on political grounds, specifically by Germanization – a movement that required all songs to be performed exclusively in German. After not including songs in German in their last concert, »Lipa« was forced to suspend its activities. »Lipa« was renewed in 1900 and they commemorated the occasion with a blessing of the flag. At that point, CSS »Lipa« comprised an all-male, an all-female, and a mixed choir, that were successful through their countless concerts, performances, and collaborations with fellow singing societies.

CSS »Lipa« once again had to suspend its activities at the start of World War I, but owing to choirmaster Josip Kamnikar, the society was given another life. By enriching it with an even more diverse repertoire, the society performed and gave concerts of a high level (Marijanović 88).

The end of World War II marks the start of the third era of CSS »Lipa« that offered to its members a diverse and wide range of options: »choir singing was no longer the dominant form of amateur musicianship, but rather replaced with the unique model of amateur societies with multiple sections, one of which is a singing choir. Faced with a consequential transformation of the purpose and aim of its singing activity, CSS »Lipa« was put at risk of ceasing to exist as an independent singing society« (Marijanović 156).

The society withstood the challenges. In subsequent years, it expanded to form new sections: a theatre choir and a children's choir. To celebrate its long history, the society commemorated its 110th anniversary, owing mostly to the efforts of the then society president Vjekoslav Burić. The musical gala under the baton of conductor Jelena Burić as the central event concluded a long and successful period of CSS »Lipa« (Marijanović 213–214). The society's next and current chapter main-

tains the success achieved in its previous years. Between 1996 and today, under choirmaster Valerija Fischbach, the mixed choir of CSS »Lipa« has continued to give numerous concerts and perform at many competitions to critical acclaim and strong audience reception.

2.4. CROATIAN SINGING SOCIETY (CSS) »RODOLJUB« VIROVITICA

CSS »Rodoljub« was established in 1880 in Virovitica. At first, the society mainly performed in German and Hungarian; Croatian was less favorable due to the political climate of the time (Feletar 44). Its social rules required members to exhibit seriousness and commitment. Following the resignation of the then director and choirmaster Gjuro Žakić, it was choirmaster and conductor Jan (Ivan) Vlašimsky under whose direction the society lived its most productive and successful period. CSS »Rodoljub« flourished in every sense: its repertoire was broadened extensively, the number of concerts increased, and its artistic activity expanded. In addition to the male choir, the society expanded to a mixed choir, an all-female choir, a violin orchestra, a *tambura* orchestra, and theater activity, among many others.

During the war and interwar periods, the society experienced setbacks in terms of the number of members, concerts, performances, as well as frequent alternations and resignations of choirmasters and conductors, and the overall dynamic of human relations between members. Following World War II, the city of Virovitica started a new cultural and social life that created the path to a bright, successful, and rich future. CSS »Rodoljub« burgeoned during this period, much like all other cultural and artistic establishments of the city of Virovitica: »Forming part of this path, aside from other establishments and individuals, was CSS »Rodoljub«. Between 1945 and today, it contributed significantly to the advancement of cultural activity in our city and the region« (Feletar 101).

Despite a small body of members diminished by World War II, choirmaster Fran Mikolić managed to reawaken their enthusiasm and will for performing patriotic songs. Adding to the all-male, all-female, and mixed choirs, the society formed a youth vocal and instrumental group in 1974. The same year introduced another novelty—the first issue of the society magazine *Rodoljubov glasnik*. The society's anniversaries were anticipated with enthusiasm not only by members, but also by citizens of Virovitica who held »Rodoljub« and its values and heritage in high regard: »The »Rodoljub« anniversary is rightly expected to be not only a celebration of its members and the citizens of Virovitica but also a holiday of music and good song in general. This is a long tradition that speaks of the origins of our folk songs and cultural amateurism, that documents the decade-long effort to uphold a people through song« (Feletar 196).

2.5. CROATIAN CULTURAL SOCIETY (CCS) »LISINSKI« NAŠICE

CCS »Lisinski« was founded in 1889 in Našice to foster musical heritage. The society originally comprised only an all-male choir that was active until World War I. The society's drama section was similarly prolific. »Lisinski« remained inactive during World War II, but the keen interest of singers galvanized the revival of the society. Over the years, the many initiatives to add new sections to the society came to fruition: a folk ensemble was formed, new members joined, and the repertoire broadened. It changed a part of its name: 'Croatian Singing Society' was replaced with 'Croatian Cultural Society'. In the 1980s, the society expanded to welcome a *tambura* section.

2.6. CROATIAN SINGING SOCIETY (CSS) »VIJENAC« POŽEGA

Established in 1894 in Požega, CSS »Vijenac« was first an all-male choir that later expanded to a mixed choir. During that time, Požega was a major economic and cultural center with a burgeoning culture and music scene, and »Vijenac« reveled in the favorable atmosphere. Already in its first years, under the direction of choir-master and composer Viliam Just (who sought to awaken national consciousness and develop an affection for Croatian and Slavic songs) »Vijenac« achieved great success in its performances and concerts that included vocal and instrumental pieces such as masses and operettas.

But as World Wars I and II began, the golden era of »Vijenac« came to an end, the society's activities subsided, and the number of members decreased. Kempf points out that »with the arrival of the new government and the change of political systems in 1945, all ties with traditional values were suddenly broken, along with the radical changes in the attitude toward musical amateurism that primarily became a means of implementing the governing ideology« (Kempf 198). The idea of joining »Vijenac« with the newly founded Singing Society of Trade Unionists »Jedinstvo« was realized at the end of 1946. In 1962, the society was renamed Workers' Singing Society »Papuk«. Even at its 100th anniversary, the society's existence and activity and the fostering of choir tradition of Požega were still being strongly endorsed:

Even when this society, much like all other societies after 1945, was forcibly cast in the role of the ideological arbitrator by the socio-political system, its original vigour never quite died. Perhaps this was owed to the music that always manages to touch upon the general values and approach the truth, no matter how strong the attempts to manipulate it are (Kempf 183).

2.7. CROATIAN SINGING AND MUSICAL SOCIETY OF CRAFTSPEOPLE (CSMSC) »ZRINSKI« OSIJEK

CSMSC »Zrinski« was established in 1896 in Osijek. Singing societies were an essential component of the rich cultural, social, and musical scene of Osijek, and therefore the tendency has always been directed toward creating exceptional and diverse singing societies. Precisely this underlies the establishment of the Singing Society »Smilje« composed of craftspeople of Osijek with a penchant for singing: »They were craftspeople of Croatian orientation who played a major role in preserving the Croatian consciousness over the past 100 years through singing, entertainment, message and socializing« (Sršan 16). Members of the society performed on the occasion of all major Christian feasts: Easter, Christmas, Corpus Christi, Pentecost, St. Anthony, etc.

A key social determinant is observable in the ensemble's all-male profile, conditioned by the fact of male figures having played key roles in the history of the Croatian people. Despite their efforts and optimism, the work of the society and its members was under constant threat of conflicts with the authorities. In 1900, hoping a name change would solve this, members chose to rename »Smilje« to »Zrinski« (after Nikola Šubić Zrinski, an important figure in Croatia's history), reasoning that such a move would be interpreted as the society promoting and emphasizing the importance of the history of Croatian people. The society's golden age stopped with the eruption of World War I: »It may therefore be said that on 1 May 1914 the first stage of the work and activity of »Zrinski« that started in December 1896 came to its end. Authorities, political parties, and individuals did not hold back in their attempts to disband the society, but it managed to survive and shine through its noble work that supported Croatian history and culture through song and word and to point to the long and rich Croatian tradition« (Sršan 30).

The post-World War I period brought new goals and changes, but also new needs of the society. Importantly, the new rulebook, adopted in 1925, changed the society's title to Croatian Singing Society of Craftspeople »Zrinski« in Osijek. The year 1946 brought a new age and new political arrangement that inevitably reflected on »Zrinski«. The decision to form an all-male choir and *tambura* ensemble was accepted, and the society continued its activity under a new name: Cultural and Artistic Society »Obrtnik«. The choir brought together 52 singers and stayed active for several years under the direction of versed choirmasters Lav Mirski, Dragutin Savin, Dragutin Trišler, and Vladimir Stahuljak. Over the years, the society gradually decreased its activities, the number of members, performances, and concerts. Its rich, successful, and long-standing activity places CSMSC »Zrinski« among the most relevant singing societies of the City of Osijek, whose history and tradition continue.

2.8. CROATIAN SINGING SOCIETY (CSS) »MATIJA PETAR KATANČIĆ« VALPOVO

Founded in 1905 in Valpovo, CSS »Matija Petar Katančić« started strong with the implementation of its program in its earliest years. Though halted briefly by World War I, in 1923, several members initiated a restart of the society and tried to encourage progress by expanding sections and being more active. The rebuilt society was active until 1924. In the post-World War II period, CSS »Matija Petar Katančić« choir was active as part of the Workers' Cultural and Artistic Society »Zlatko Baloković« (Milošević 12). The new restart of the society, in 1991, jumpstarted its golden era through several notable performances, concerts, and tours, and increased the number of members. Through frequent concerts and performances at major events, the society continues with enthusiasm and fosters the tradition of the City of Valpovo.

2.9. CROATIAN SINGING SOCIETY (CSS) »TOMISLAV« CERNIK

CSS »Tomislav« was established in 1905 in Cernik at the initiative of professor Franjo Kumić and the desire of townspeople for Cernik to have a cultural and artistic society. In its beginnings, the society counted around 40 singers who formed the all-male and mixed choirs. The society also had a folk, *tambura*, and drama ensemble, formed of members from various town classes:

Members of CSS 'Tomislav' included people from the ranks of craftspeople, teachers and professors, municipal staff, and vocally and musically gifted common people (Sokić 16).

The society was forced to stop its activities between 1914 and 1919, after which it reassembled. They sought to expand their activities by selecting new pieces and organizing more performances and concerts.

World War II reflected on the activities of the society that did not recover from the ensuing crisis until 1950. Through many performances, a rich and diverse repertoire, and appearances in many nearby towns, the society managed to raise its musical level. In the subsequent years, »Tomislav« remained active both in Croatia and abroad; through many touring performances in Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia, »Tomislav« presented Croatian choral heritage at a high level. The society discontinued during the Croatian War of Independence. Between the post-war period and today, the society continues to give concerts and renew its repertoire.

The significance of CSS »Tomislav« Cernik in the development of amateur choirs in eastern Croatia is evident in composer Josip Kaplan's letter to »Tomislav« mem-

bers sublimating the meaning of choral societies for the culture of communities in which they are active: »Your repertoire and the highly commendable performance thereof transcend the real possibilities of a small community like Cernik. You ought to be proud of your accomplishments. What particularly stroke me was a sense of union, the large audience and you the performers were one—as one big family« (Sokić 85).

2. Methodology

The goal of this research was to affirm the opinions of conductors and leaders of choirs, orchestras, and ensembles regarding the contribution of their choral societies to the cultural development of communities.

In accordance with the established goal, the following problems of the research have been emphasized:

1. to question the opinions of conductors and ensemble leaders regarding the role of their choral societies in the development of cultural life.
2. to ascertain whether there are differences regarding the purpose and contribution of the choral cultural-artistic amateurism societies to the development of cultural life in Slavonia today and in the past.

The research was conducted in spring 2020 by way of a semi-structured interview of conductors and leaders of choirs, orchestras, and ensembles. It was conducted on a sample of nine (9) ensemble leaders, one per every previously mentioned choral society. The intention of the research was not only to examine the opinions of respondents but also to serve as a source for collecting information on the current state of the societies they run, given that there is no publicly available data on which to draw conclusions and comparisons. Of the nine respondents, six (6) are conductors (music directors) and three (3) presidents of the society. All six conductors are also choirmasters, while one of the three surveyed presidents of the society is a choir leader, one an orchestra leader, and one a choir member. The interview consisted of three parts. The first part of the interview consisted of the main sociodemographic characteristics of participants and their choirs. The rest of the interview consisted of two main following units:

1. questioning the opinion regarding societies' present activity in arts and culture and its contribution to the community,
2. questioning the opinion regarding the comparison of past and present state and activity of the society.

The gender and educational structure are as follows: five (5) men and four (4) women participated in the study. All women are also choir conductors, while among men there are three choirmasters and two presidents of the society. Respondents answered a question regarding the degree and area of education of the music leader of the society. It turned out that seven leaders had completed their music studies, with six (6) completing university studies in music culture or pedagogy, and one (1) being an academic instrumentalist musician. In the academic sense, two societies are led by amateur musicians, one leading a tambura orchestra and the other a choir.

The respondents were asked to provide an opinion on the effect they find their ensemble has on creating a cultural community.

The obtained data contained relevant information on the societies' current activities, their section and member structures, their institutional and artistic activities, and their role and image in their respective communities. Through the transcription of interviews and the qualitative descriptive analysis (Yin 275) (determining of coding units, classification of relevant terms, grouping of terms into categories), the obtained data was used to create topical categories as follows:

- the type of establishment (legal status, type of ensemble/section, status and qualification level of active members, funding method, ownership structure);
- members' sociodemographic background (age, gender, employment status, qualification level);
- societies' activities in arts and culture (program policy, type and frequency of performances, frequency and regularity of rehearsals, collaboration with fellow establishments);
- social presence and impact; and
- opinions of society directors and managers on their own cultural identity, contribution to the community, and comparison of the past and present state and activity of the society.

The analysis of the obtained data identified the organizational, establishment, and program determinants of the societies' activities that is directly indicative of the type and intensity of the societies' impact on the community, the cultural identity, and the broader cultural image of the community in which they are active. Respondents' opinions assisted in defining the space for improvement in their work and suggestions for government bodies for improving their contribution and aiding amateurism in art and culture.

3. Interpretation of Research Results

Most (seven) of the cultural and artistic societies included in the research are registered as civic associations. CSS »Davor« Slavonski Brod operates as part of the city's cultural center, and CCS »Lisinski« Našice as an arts organization. The observed societies all have choir sections. In CSS »Vijenac« Požega, CSS »Davor« Slavonski Brod and CSS »Matija Petar Katančić« Valpovo, the (mixed) choir is their only section. Sections of CSMS »Dunav« Vukovar include a *tambura* orchestra and a folk ensemble; CSS »Lipa« also has a children's choir; CSM-SC »Zrinski« an all-male *klapa*. In terms of the largest number of sections, CSS »Rodoljub« Virovitica has four (mixed choir, *tambura* group, *klapa*, *tambura* orchestra), and CSS »Tomislav« Cernik five (different choir and *tambura* sections). The societies meet, carry out their activities, and work either in rented properties (Vukovar, Cernik, Požega) or utilize public, city, or private properties at no charge (Slavonski Brod, Osijek (»Lipa«), Valpovo). CSMSC »Zrinski« Osijek is the only society that owns its premises.

The majority (6) of the observed societies' conductors are college-educated musicians – predominantly music pedagogues and one instrumentalist (Našice). The remainder (CSMS »Dunav« and CSMSC »Zrinski«) are directed by amateur musicians. Conductors-ensemble directors are compensated either through part-time contracts (five societies) or as the society's full-time employees (three societies). CSMSC »Zrinski« Osijek is directed by a volunteering conductor.

The societies' funding differs greatly, ranging from local self-government appropriations, membership fees, donations, and sponsorships. Major artistic achievements, international performances, audio and video publications, and anniversary commemorations are co-financed by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia. Recent years have also seen a trend in project grant applications. Additional income is generated through commercial performances staged for various institutions (tourism and social events, graduation days, etc.).

Of the observed societies, four are smaller, with 20 to 30 members (Požega, Slavonski Brod, Valpovo, Osijek (»Zrinski«)), three are medium-sized, with 60 members (Virovitica), and four are larger societies, counting over 100 members (Cernik, Osijek (»Lipa«), Našice, Vukovar). These differences in size, i.e., member count correlate with the number of sections. In terms of gender, the ratio of female to male members is optimal to satisfactory in most societies (if observing the societies' mixed choirs as a balance criterion). Percentagewise, the ratio ranges between 60 to 40 percent and 70 to 30 percent in favor of female members. A less favorable female to male percentage ratio was observed in CSS »Matija Petar Katančić« (80 to 20) and CSS »Vijenac« (90 to 10). An exception is the all-male CSMSC »Zrin-

ski«. Some societies reported either a downward trend in the number of male singers or an insufficient influx of younger male members (Požega, Valpovo). This may be indicative of a likely transformation of mixed choirs into all-female ones.

In observing the membership structure regarding their employment status, the collected data are as follows:

- CSMS »Dunav« Vukovar has the largest number of young members (50 percent of members are pupils and students with an average age of 20);
- CSS »Tomislav« Cernik, CSS »Vijenac« Požega, and CSMSC »Zrinski« Osijek have the largest number of retirees (70 percent or more);
- CSS »Davor« Slavonski Brod, CSS »Lipa« Osijek, and CSS »Matija Petar Katančić« Valpovo have the largest number of employed persons (over 70 percent);
- CSS »Rodoljub« Virovitica and CCS »Lisinski« Našice have near-equal ratios in all categories.

Most societies declared not having a significant number of professional musicians between their members.

In terms of repertoire, half of the observed societies foster art and folklore heritage, Croatian and foreign as well as popular music (»Davor«, »Lipa«, »Matija Petar Katančić« and »Rodoljub«), while the other half focus on Croatian classical and folklore music. The majority of the observed societies find it unnecessary to introduce musical premieres into their repertoires, while the repertoires of CSS »Lipa« and CSS »Rodoljub« include choral premieres and choral and *tambura* premieres, respectively. To a greater or lesser extent, all observed societies collaborate with fellow culture organizations (cultural and artistic societies, choirs, orchestras, etc.), humanitarian organizations, public institutions (culture, education, health, etc.), trade associations, competitions, and festivals. In recent years, these collaborations have crossed state borders and taken place abroad with increasing frequency.

Based on the reported total number of performances, most societies give over 20 performances per year. CCS »Lisinski« Našice gives the largest number of solo concerts per year (approximately 20), while other societies give between one and five. Many of the said performances entail commemorative and joint concerts as well as commercial performances (the latter three are mostly held by CSMS »Dunav« Vukovar, CSS »Davor« Slavonski Brod, and CSS »Lipa« Osijek). Other concert categories include collaborative concerts and a small number of magnum opus performances. All societies report regular, twice-weekly rehearsals.

The choir, orchestra, and ensemble performances are held annually before a large audience of several hundred to several thousand people. The audience is largely

composed of members' families, pupils, and the general population. The next largest audience category is composed of dignitaries, delegates, and other special invitees. The smallest portion of the audience is composed of foreign citizens, but this category is becoming a frequent occurrence.

The observed societies mostly communicate with the general public via press releases and social networks. Most societies have active social network profiles and pages for quick communication with the general public, members, and supporters. Major events of public interest are transferred orally by the societies' members. A major communication method entails promoting events through city culture departments, tourist boards, and the organizers themselves (city and county administration, religious communities, educational establishments, economic entities, etc.). The importance of communication with the public is reflected in the methods of enlisting new members, a key role in which is that of social networks, media channels, and spoken communication of current and potential members. The decision to join the society is influenced by the following reasons (in order of importance): personal desire to engage in music, socializing, desire to perform and travel, active leisure, and adoption of new skills.

In terms of their audiences formed of regular followers, supporters, and patrons (ticket sales, donations, fundraising, etc.), all societies had only positive remarks. Both society members and most of the audience find that their societies are a generator of the cultural scene in their respective communities. A large part of the audience also perceived a decrease in the number and size of the performances and events where choirs, orchestras, and ensembles are title acts of solo concerts and festivals or competitions.

Though most societies reported satisfaction with their current musical achievements (regarding human, financial, and wider social circumstances), they also stated that the level, i.e., the standard of their past musical activities used to be somewhat higher. As main reasons for that, they cited larger bodies of members, better funding, a more positive cultural and artistic climate, better standing of cultural and artistic organizations (both within the ranks of the audience and local and state government).

The observed societies are substantial from the standpoint of their establishment year, long tradition (continuous or discontinuous), and the major positive impact on the society that they themselves perceive and that motivates them further. They strive to abide by their founding principles but understand that modern times command venturing into new musical expressions and appealing repertoire novelties.

Conclusion

The historical overview and the analysis of the current contribution of the observed societies to the culture of their respective communities revealed that all societies were established with the goal to provide cultural (musical) values driven by the need to strengthen the Croatian national identity. In this regard, the core of their repertoires was entrenched in fostering Croatian song, language, and tradition by setting it apart from the dominant German and Hungarian influences exerted at the end of the 19th century. The societies were established and financially supported by affluent intellectuals and membered by singers from various social backgrounds (priests, attorneys, medical doctors, tradespeople, craftspeople, and workers) joined by a common interest in the art of music and their personal singing facilities. The challenges brought by the world wars invariably suspended their activities due to the smaller number of active members and general scarcity. Despite such crises and hardships, the enthusiasm and impulse of the observed societies' members to preserve the cultural values of their communities managed to restore the societies and safeguard their continuance. This is solely owed to the fact that these societies represent the fundamental and critical culture and performance identity of their town or city. In the post-World War II period, singing societies underwent a transformation conditioned by the socialist and communist ideologies: pre-war repertoires that celebrated Croatian identity were suddenly required to include pieces colored with anti-fascism, national liberation, brotherhood and unity, and similar communist ideals. The flexibility of certain societies in these new-found directions allowed their activity to continue. Others either underwent a restructuring and renaming to continue to exist or ceased entirely. The selfsame aspirations that underlie the establishment of the societies in the 19th century were the driving force behind their resurgence amid Croatia achieving independence in the 1990s. The aspirations to strengthen the Croatian national cultural identity prompted the need to strengthen choral societies that could contribute to the preservation of national and regional consciousness and belonging. Insight into the past and present of the societies has shown that the leaders of the societies in the past and today were prominent in the cities in which the societies operated. These are conductors, composers, and music teachers who have created and improved the cultural life of their cities through professional work. Their actions are woven into the identity of the society within the time in which they operated and are differently visible regarding the social circumstances in which they worked. Sometimes the circumstances were more favorable, and sometimes, like today, the circumstances were very challenging. Nevertheless, it is noticeable that the societies experienced progress and growth in times when they were musically led by conductors recognized by their profession as important musical names in Slavonian cities covered by the research.

Nowadays, singing societies exist to serve a larger purpose. Choirs propel the musical culture of the communities in which they are active and which they represent. Their repertoires rarely carry a national component. Due to the lack of suitable modern Croatian choral literature, they mostly perform foreign pieces. Though not necessarily unfavorable, especially given the exceptional world choral literature, it affects partial loss of the societies' century-long cultural mission. In their past, motivated by the need to form a national identity, societies commissioned pieces from Croatian authors, thereby supporting the development of Croatian choral art. Premiere performances were ordered for anniversary concerts, and ceremonial concerts were often attended by composers, often in the role of conductors or honorary members. From the list of names of composers who wrote new compositions for these societies, the following stand out: Franjo Kuhač, Nikola Faller, Rudolf Matz, Anton Dobronić, Zlatko Špoljar, Franjo Dugan Jr., Milo Cipra, Kamilo Kolb, Ruldof Taclik, Josip Kamnikar, Vladimir Stahuljak, Ivan pl. Zajc, Franjo Vilhar, etc. Thanks to the performance and commissions of new compositions, the societies have contributed to the advancement of choral art in Croatia. Such a principle is nowadays almost entirely lost. Only conductors of two societies stated that they occasionally commissioned new compositions from Croatian composers, which they then premiered. The absence of core funding affects the depletion of the body of Croatian choral literature. Circumstances of diminishing financial support, unsettled property rights issues of societies' premises, the unfavorable professional status of society directors, and the frequently poor community sense for the societies' efforts are genuine threats perceived invariably by all the observed societies. Despite this, the societies continue their activities by virtue of the enthusiasm and the altruistic devotion of individuals. They are the members of the societies who regularly invest their private time into preparing repertoires for the community, i.e., the audience (and its needs) who selflessly support their endeavors. In analyzing the past and present of the societies, we cannot escape the impression that their continued activity has unquestionably earned them a far better status than the one they currently have.

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DOPRINOS ZBORNOGA KULTURNO-UMJETNIČKOGA AMATERIZMA U SLAVONIJI RAZVOJU KULTURNOGA ŽIVOTA GRADOVA ISTOČNE HRVATSKE NEKADA I DANAS

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Sažetak: *Od vremena intenzivnoga razvoja pokreta kulturno-umjetničkoga amaterizma u Hrvatskoj s kraja 19. stoljeća zborni amaterizam smatran je izuzetno važnim zbog primjetnih izvanglazbenih implikacija u vidu utjecaja na oblikovanje kulturne klime sredine. Svrha rada bila je ustanoviti postoji li utjecaj zbornoga kulturno-umjetničkoga amaterizma na razvoj kulturnoga života gradova Slavonije. Rad stavlja u odnos povijesno djelovanje i doprinos amaterskih pjevačkih društava nastalih krajem 19. i početkom 20. stoljeća s područja istočne Hrvatske s njihovim današnjim doprinosom u kreiranju kulturnoga života gradova u kojima djeluju.*

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