

Ladarice – From Love to a Cultural Brand

Ladarice are a female vocal nonet founded with the aim of nurturing Croatian musical heritage. Thanks to their extensive activities on the Croatian music scene, a series of performances at traditional folk music and popular music festivals, frequent appearances on radio and television, participation in theatre plays, performances featured in popular Croatian films (for example, the performance of the song Podravina ravna in the TV series Gruntovčani, created by Dubravko Ivančan and Živan Cvitković), Ladarice have evolved into a cultural brand. However, the general public is mostly unaware that the group Ladarice was founded independently of the Lado Ensemble, and that it operated as such until 2008. The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of the activities of Ladarice from their forming in 1966 to the present day. From the analysed material, it is possible to deduce that, thanks to their of music, they managed to remain active for many years and evolve into a cultural brand. Today, the singers of Ladarice operate within the framework of the Lado Ensemble, while their work differs significantly in terms of primary motivation, the number of singers, the mode of work, and artistic programme.

Keywords: Ladarice, Božo Potočnik, traditional folk music, cultural brand

INTRODUCTION

Ladarice were formed prompted by a need to express themselves musically, in addition to their dance activities within the Lado Ensemble. In conversation, the members of Ladarice stressed that the joy of singing, the beauty of spending time together, the connection they felt, as well as the harmony and togetherness helped them last for so long, despite the physically demanding work in the Lado Ensemble, touring and private obligations. They did not perceive their involve-

ment in the Lado Ensemble and Ladarice as work, but lived and breathed Lado and Ladarice, their private lives intertwining and nurturing close ties to this day.

In the beginning, they performed artistically rendered songs belonging to the “national heritage” and compositions inspired by folk songs linked to the Kajkavian regions of Croatia (their first performances were songs from the region of Hrvatsko Zagorje), while over time the programme expanded to include folk songs from other parts of Croatia.

They regularly recorded songs for the former Folk Music Programme of the Zagreb Radiotelevision, and performed in many shows thematically devoted to folk musical heritage. In this way, they saved from oblivion several hundred traditional songs from the regions of Hrvatsko Zagorje, Prigorje, Turropolje, Pokuplje, Moslavina, Međimurje, Podravina, Posavina, Slavonija, Baranja, Dalmacija and Burgenland. It merits emphasizing that Ladarice performed not only traditional music arrangements, but also newly composed songs based on traditional influences. The lyrics of these songs were written by poets and renowned songwriters. As their popularity grew, a need arose for Ladarice to record several songs of popular music, the most famous of which were *Dok sunce sja* (1972) and *Tragom karavele* (1972). According to their manager Božo Potočnik, this was aimed at attempting to reach the audience who did not have an affinity for traditional folk music. Since they were active during the former Yugoslavia, Ladarice performed folk songs from Macedonia, Slovenia, Serbia, Kosovo,... and also included Partisan songs in their repertoire.

Thanks to their exceptional musical abilities and artistic uniqueness, they were recognized both by a wide audience and the professional community. Along with musical authorities such as Ivica Krajač, Miljenko Prohaska, Vladimir Kranjčević,¹ they were praised by renowned musicians such as Arsen Dedić, Tereza Kesovija, Igor Gjadrov, Karlo Metikoš, Josipa Lisac, Goran Bregović and many others.

They received a number of awards and recognitions for their artistic work. They were awarded at the *Festival of Kajkavian Songs* in Krapina and the *Slavonija Music Festival* in Slavenska Požega several times. They also won an award at the *Festival of Danube Countries* in Novi Sad. They were awarded the Order of the Croatian Interlace for their special contribution to the advancement and standing of the Republic of Croatia and the well-being of its citizens (1999). They received a plaque of the Croatian Composers' Society on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of their successful artistic activity (1998) and the *Status* gold plaque of the Croatian Musicians Union (1998). They were also twice awarded a Porin award for their albums *Iz kajkavske glazbene riznice* (1999) and *Vezovi i jorgovani* (2005).

Ladarice achieved enormous popularity on the Croatian music scene, but also on the territory of former Yugoslavia². Therefore, it is safe to say that they became a brand in its own right. Today Ladarice no longer perform with the line-up with which they became recognizable, however, the name Ladarice is still synonymous with hearty and vocal folk singing of the highest quality.

1 In a 2016 conversation with maestro Kranjčević, I remember he spoke about Ladarice with admiration stating that “they sang like an orchestra” (author’s note).

2 In a conversation with Ivan Ivančan Jr., he recalled the Lado Ensemble performance in Zavidovići. A sign in large letters at the entrance to the town said: “Welcome Ladarice”, and only below it also said “and Lado”. They experienced this more than once and it also speaks to their popularity.

A brand creates an image of a product, it is identified with quality, and creates an emotional relationship with consumers, or in this case, the audience. Referring to a brand, Anholt (2007: 4–5) states that “a brand is a product, service or organization, which we consider in combination with its name, identity and reputation”, and cites brand identity, image (brand perception), purpose and market value of the brand. Ladarice satisfy all these aspects of the brand.

In literature, it is possible to find different definitions and interpretations of the term brand (Vranešević 2007: 11, Thompson 2003: 84, Blackett 2003: 13–27), but they all coincide on the “recognizability”, “quality”, “image”, ... and address its clearly devised and meaningful placement in the public sphere (Skoko 2004: 23–25, Vukić 2013). This was not the case with Ladarice, who instead became a brand spontaneously.

The research work was carried out in 2021, as well as one portion in 2016 (interviews with Božo Potočnik). The primary methodology was based on interviews conducted with Božo Potočnik, the leader or head of Ladarice, and individual members of Ladarice (Ana Kelin, Jadranka Gračanin Putnik, Mira Tunuković and Morena Kovač), as well as their archival materials containing performances, rehearsals, programmes, newspaper articles.³ The interviews with Božo Potočnik and his text *Godine ljubavi, Ljevakovićev Lado indiskretno*, were of significant help in understanding the artistic concept and history of Ladarice. It should be noted as well, that the research included listening to almost their entire musical catalogue. Branko Ivanković wrote a valuable textual contribution on Ladarice.⁴ This paper is based on field research and is part of a future more extensive research that will elucidate the phenomenon of Ladarice.

THE FOUNDING OF LADARICE

For a clearer understanding of the moment in time in which the group Ladarice was formed, it is necessary to examine the social context of the period in the context of music, especially traditional music. This may be discerned from the text written by Ladarice artistic director and “spiritual leader”, Božo Potočnik.

“In the early 1960s, it was already quite obvious that a commercial sort of *folk fair* music, bearing the absurd name of newly composed folk music, was vehemently making its way in the broader sphere of Croatian folk music practice, even in its organized circles – the cultural-artistic societies active in rural and urban areas, particularly in terms of producing records. The modest and anonymous folk music production was relegated to the confines of museums, and only a small portion of the folk cultural heritage remained on the contemporary scene, where it was mercilessly and inexpertly exploited, until the point of saturation. Individuals and institutions earned popularity and financial gain with the ‘new’ music, far removed from any consideration of the traditional characteristics of Croatian musical heritage. The performers in rural areas were confused, and in some places discouraged, because the sophisticated folk music, refined over centuries, could not withstand the aggressive advances of the stereo and the equally aggres-

3 Newspaper articles were mostly cut out without references about the name of the newspaper and the date, so the year and month of publication are only discernible from the article itself, yet the exact date and source remain unknown.

4 Ladarice (vokalni ansambl) – Wikipedija (wikipedia.org)

sive promotion of 'folk music' stars from all corners of former Yugoslavia, including Croatia. The moment had come to take a stand against that."⁵

In the mid-1960s, the artistic activity of the Lado Ensemble was primarily focused on folk dance, while songs only accompanied the choreography. At that time, Lado did not yet have a developed musical repertoire and there was a lack of musical material. At the same time, Lado had great vocal potential since most of the dancer-singers were young and had an inner need and desire to express themselves musically even further. Undoubtedly, the long-running tours, intense socializing, youthful enthusiasm and mutual connection influenced the birth of the idea to founding a female vocal ensemble.

The formation of the female vocal ensemble that would eventually become Ladarice, began in 1965 with a group of six singers. However, the real beginning happened a year later (1966), when the brothers Potočnik prepared arrangements of lesser-known folk songs from northern Croatia for polyphonic singing. Nine of the best singers from the Lado Ensemble were selected to perform these songs.

Božo Potočnik describes the beginnings of Ladarice:

"The first gathering of the six female singers happened in the same place, next to a masonry heater. I invited the girls to learn to sing a hit Russian 'excursion' song (*Oh, Vanja, you Vanja...*) which someone had brought from who knows where. On tours, all sorts of songs would get hummed, and we were thrilled by its polyphony. We met two or three times after work. It could not last because then, under the brown ceiling, there was no room for any such attempts outside the official programme ('Maybe you had better learn the songs in the programme...'). We had to wait for a more favourable moment. The moment came after a few months, during a period of inactivity when attention was slack or the *Old Man* was out on a field trip... My own brother Zlatko (he played the bugarija – the response stroke), usually prone to criticizing, casually told me, by the masonry stove, that he would like to start... I don't recall exactly... a singing choir or an ensemble or a group, like the one I had already tried to start... I was shocked... but I didn't refuse. All right, I said to him, let's do it, we'll ask the girls... how many of them (?). We debated on the number of singers... Zlatko (if I recall) had twelve vocals in mind. Nine would be better, I thought... Why nine exactly, and not eight, for example? Well, the folk songs of the Zagorje region are three-voiced, and nine is divisible by three, three sections each with three voices... that would work... neither too many, or too few"⁷

5 From the booklet of the gala concert *Godine ljubavi, Božo & Ladarice*, celebrating 30 years of activity of Ladarice. The concert was held at the Croatian National Theatre on 5th June 1998, p. 9.

6 Potočnik is referring to the artistic director of the Lado Ensemble, professor Zvonimir Ljevaković. That is how the members of Lado used to call him amongst themselves, but this does not detract from their respect for him.

7 From the text written by Božo Potočnik *Godine ljubavi, Ljevakovićev Lado indiskretno*, 2017., p. 4.



Picture 1. *Ladarice*, Archive *Ladarice*, 1998.

The ensemble started with regular rehearsals held at the Lado Ensemble spaces.⁸ Rehearsals were led by Zlatko and Božo Potočnik, each for their own musical arrangements, while Božo Potočnik conducted all the compositions. Around that time, they also started frequently recording for the Radio Zagreb programme.

THE LADARICE NAME

At first, the group operated without a name. After some time, it was named *Devet mladih* (*Nine Young Ones*) at the suggestion of Zlatko Potočnik, after the then popular male vocal group *Sedmorica mladih* (*Seven Young Men*) from Belgrade. The Ladarice archive contains the following note about the group's name: "Originally, the group worked under the name *Devet mladih*, but in 1969 it assumed the name *Ladarice* (a name familiar in folk customs of northern Croatia) and presented itself as such to the audience at the festival of Kajkavian songs *Krapina 71*, with two compositions by Božo Potočnik to the lyrics written by Drago Bahun."⁹

8 "The rehearsals were held at Lado's space, upstairs in the orchestra area. There was an upright piano and we had some peace and quiet. Lado had no extra expenses, we practiced for another two hours after work. The leadership did not object. Ljevaković couldn't do anything about it, we stayed after working hours." From an interview with Božo Potočnik.

9 Ladarice archival material 1. (1971 – 1975). Recorded by Ana Kelin.

Božo Potočnik describes in detail how the name Ladarice came about:

“Some facts have been forgotten over time and can only be established by agreement, for example, about our beginnings; for me, the group was formed when the first six vocals got together in 1965, for Mira, the beginning was in 1966, when she joined the group, and some of the singers maintain that the real beginning was when the group assumed the name *Ladarice*. However, by then, the nonet had already done some radio recordings. I cannot recall exactly how I introduced them on the radio at the time, but I think they were recorded as members of the Lado Ensemble...

Miroslav Gavrilović (Mirko to us), the folk music editor at (the one and only the time) Jugoton, occasionally conducted the tambura radio orchestra and after one of the recording sessions, offered me to record something for Jugoton with the girls. That would be nice, I told him... but the group still does not have a name. (Zlatko unofficially called them *Devet mladih* after the Belgrade *Sedmorici mladih*.)

- Well, then, give them a name... here, Ladarke... – Mirko blurted out the first thing that came to mind. But that was the name in the domain of authorship of Cossetto and then also Ljevaković. However, it rang... warm, warmer... hot!

- *Ladarice!* – I decided relieved, this is good: they are not *ladarke*, nor *Ladovke*... The distinction was clear, as was the conceptual path I wanted to lead them on: maintaining a connection with the Lado Ensemble, as well as traditional heritage, albeit in a slightly different way... Gavrilović didn't mind, and Zlatko didn't react (as far as I remember), but he certainly wasn't against it. But we'll see how the *Old Man* and the other Lado members would take it...

A meeting with Ljevaković at the administrative office:

We had a chance encounter at the administrative office (a busy place, the doors always open, telephones ringing...). I told him that we would record four songs at Jugoton for an EP and that the group would be called Ladarice. He must have already heard something about it because he was ready and suspicious. He shot me a furious glance, but there was also a hint of resignation. In any case, he could no longer make any decisions at Lado without the self-governing collective, trade union (the same thing), party organization (elected) and political director. Admittedly, he may have given up on the 'battle of opinions' too soon, because there was still enough willingness in the ensemble to follow him despite his feverish nature that often irritated everyone around.

- Everyone can call themselves whatever they want these days. Even dogs' droppings! - he snapped, apparently looking intently at his notebook. He noticed I was petrified, so he continued a bit more mildly:

- Do you know that Ladarice is a term for girls aged 9 to 11?

- I do, professor, but it is just symbolic...

He rushed out of the office. His white hair just fluttered in the hallway... There was no conversation or mention of it for a long time. He would not discuss it. His objection hurt me, but I had no other solution. After all, I hoped his anger would pass once he realized that the entire activity going on inside me happening in his direction, except it was opens to new tendencies of our time” (Potočnik 2017: 6).

ARTISTIC CONCEPT

For a better understanding of the artistic concept, programme and general characteristics of the female vocal ensemble Ladarice, it is necessary to become acquainted with the artistic personality of their musical director Božo Potočnik.

Božo Potočnik was first and foremost an instrumental musician, he was not a singer and had no pedagogical experience in singing. With many sacrifices, he graduated from the Faculty of Humanities in Zagreb to become a Croatian teacher, while life circumstances did not afford him the opportunity to enrol in music school. Two people who exercised a great influence on his artistic development were Zvonimir Ljevaković¹⁰ and Emil Cossetto¹¹. Ljevaković instilled in him a deep respect and love for true traditional values, while he learned about singing from Cossetto at singing rehearsals at Lado's orchestra room. Potočnik used to stay behind for singers' rehearsals after orchestra rehearsals (the other players would go home) under the pretext of waiting for his wife Anđela. He observed the rehearsals from the corner of the room and gradually discovered all the complexity of working with a choir.

“It was really edifying for a musician with a thirst for knowledge, young enough to learn, yet quite experienced in group and mixed music making... it was as if I was reading a life book of music. I didn't get in their way, I sat, kept quiet and observed their work intently... I was getting acquainted with their voices and hidden potentials, and their personal relationships to singing.

...

I can say with absolute certainty that Ljevaković and Cossetto and their expansive spirit of tradition were present in the singing of Ladarice, right up to the last note they sang together. And I thank them for that” (Potočnik 2017: 2–4).

Potočnik stresses that Ladarice are recognized on the domestic scene for their unique way of polyphonic full-voiced singing, nurtured in the tradition of the Lado Ensemble, in the framework of which the group was created. He also adds that it was neither simple nor easy for him, but he did not give up. He was persistent and little by little began to understand the singing style and the reaction of the human voice to emotion as the foundation. He searched and listened. Božo Potočnik's wife, prominent Lado soloist Anđela Potočnik, was his most reliable support as a singer. Anđela grew up surrounded by song since her early childhood, coming from a family “where songs were a part of everyday life, where people sang even when life was not easy”.¹²

10 Zvonimir Ljevaković is the original founder and long-time artistic director of the Lado National Folk Dance Ensemble of Croatia.

11 Emil Cossetto is a composer, conductor and music educator, whose music is inspired by traditional and folk heritage. He joined Lado in the 1950s and is most responsible for Lado's elementary instrumental and vocal expression.

12 Her uncle Vlatko Herceg, better known as “Kufća”, was a famous accordionist, singer of traditional songs and master of ceremonies at weddings in Zagorje. From an interview with Božo Potočnik.

THE NONET

Ladarice was the only female vocal ensemble in former Yugoslavia, and quite some time passed before others appeared. Time has shown that the decision to have nine female singers in the group was a wise one. All the members were excellent singers and could sing in three- and four-voice polyphony. In addition, the vocal material in a small ensemble is more flexible than in a large choir and thus can be used better.

Potočnik writes how a nonet turned out to be a lucky number:

“As mobile as an octet, as confident as a choir, small enough to organise and handle sudden changes, and big enough to produce a respectable image and sound on stage, for nuances in tempo and dynamics, for safety in *a cappella* performances... Such a musical entity quickly becomes cohesive, while still maintaining the necessary individual exposure. There is enough room for soloist contribution, and no room for imposing anyone’s will, to the extent that collectivity feels like comfortable, rather than as loss of personality. Here an individual feels a sufficiently high degree of responsibility for their role, which is suddenly lost in a larger choir, and greatly increased in smaller groups or solos. The feeling of insecurity (jitters) in any situation is reduced to a minimum because it is shared with eight other such emotions. The audience does not demand nor expect a nonet to be visually dynamic and (in my personal opinion) perceives the singing itself far more than the visual appearance (compared to a smaller ensemble). Perhaps these assessments would not be valid in a foreign country where an audience has a different mental structure and musical experience” (Potočnik 2017: 4).

SELECTING FOLK SONGS FOR THE LADARICE REPERTOIRE

Božo Potočnik (2017: 4) writes that both he and his brother Zlatko were looking for older folk songs that were no longer sung, *Išla je dievojka za goru po vodu, Svečica dogarja, polnoči dohaja...* Zlatko got his hands on Kuhač, and he knew how to select songs that were both beautiful and simple from among the records: *Zbirajte mi majka škrinjicu, Mesec sveti ober kleti, Grad se beli preko Balatina*. In a broader media space, these songs were all new.

Božo Potočnik chose compositions based on good lyrics. For him, the most important thing in a song was the story. If the text made sense to him, he would know how to convert that meaning into a melody, rehearse it and reach the heart of every singer. Ladarice first had to get goosebumps before they sang. In conversation with members of Ladarice, they confirmed that they experienced each song deeply. When they performed the song *Mura, Mura duboka si voda ti* several of them admitted that they would sometimes cry.

Mira Tunuković

“That is how we experienced every song. First, we thoroughly worked on each song. For a very long time until we perfected it. A lot of work went into it. A combination of melody and lyrics was important to me, so that you know and understand what you are singing and that you are able to convey the emotion.”¹³

13 From an interview with Mira Tunuković.

Ana Kelin

“It happened to me many times during rehearsals that I would get overwhelmed with emotion, my throat tightened and tears just started to flow. It happened to the others too and the experience was so magnificent it made it worthwhile being a member of Ladarice. I will never forget Anđela angelic voice in the song *V sakoј hiži sveća* and others, Čukla’s singing in Baranja songs, the inimitable deep voices of our famous altos Eta, Mira and Đula.”¹⁴

MEMBERS OF LADARICE

The lineup of the nonet changed due to various circumstances, but the distinctive sound of Ladarice was embodied by Anđela Potočnik, Ana (Papeš) Kelin, Antonija Precca, Vjekoslava Bauer, Nevenka Šokčić, Mira Tunuković, Mira Šulina, Đurđica (Čarija) Šuster, Jadranka (Kuren) Gračanin-Putnik, Jelena Andrijanić, Slavica Košutić, Katica Petričević, Morena Kovač, Branka Krsnik, Gabrijela Zalepugin, Milena Vučković and Ljiljana-Janja Ivančan. Anđela Potočnik, Ana (Papeš) Kelin, Đurđica (Čarija) Šuster, Eta Precca, Jadranka (Kuren) Gračanin-Putnik and Mira Tunuković were members of Ladarice from the first to the last day. Morena Kovač joined Lado in 1971, and that same year, at the invitation of Božo Potočnik, she joined Ladarice and sang in Ladarice until they disbanded (2003). In the years that followed, the membership varied, but the nine voices was always a constant of the ensemble.

Potočnik believes that Ladarice probably would not have existed without Anđela, and certainly not at that level. Ladarice were truly a team of united women who were ready to subordinate their individuality to the whole of the sound precisely because they had a true artistic model before them.

Speaking about Anđela Potočnik, Mira Tunuković relates:

“Anđela was special. Everyone admired her, the way she sang, the way she enunciated, her facial expression that said it all. She really had it all, a smile, facial expression that adapted to each song. Everything in perfect measure, exactly as much as needed... It was as close as I got to the source.”¹⁵

The stylistic purity of performance and the virtuous harmony of their unique vocals are the main characteristics of Ladarice. Ladarice themselves also mention that each section had to be heard separately, but none of the three voices in the section was allowed to stand out.

Jadranka Gračanin Putnik speaks about Božo Potočnik and his work with Ladarice:

“Through luck of the draw Božo chose us and we had him. We had each other. Božo is an unparalleled author, creative, knowledgeable, never made a mistake with anything. He knew how to transfer his knowledge and his emotions to us. We never sang a single song without emotion. He always made an effort to explain to us what we were singing about, he insisted on style unwaveringly. And that suited us very well, most of all that he instilled in us an emotion that we could later present and experience.

14 From an interview with Ana Kelin.

15 From an interview with Mira Tunuković.

...

He never deviated from the original, if you were doing a Romani song, you knew which harmonies were appropriate. If we did a song from the Dalmatian Hinterland, there was a proper way to do it. He had vast knowledge, invaluable; there might never be a person like him. I am not sure if people are aware of what a great artist, composer, arranger and excellent teacher he is. There is no one like him. I see a Dalmatian *klapa* vocal group from Zagorje. Today everyone thinks they can do anything. For example, they sing a *klapa*, Dalmatian song is sung in Zagorje, Kajkavian style. This is wrong. If Božo worked with them, you would not know if they were a *klapa* from Dalmatia or Zagorje.”¹⁶

Morena Kovač says that in those first years of Ladarice there were no other female vocal ensembles and other female ensembles started to appear only later.

“Božo set the framework and established the rules of our singing. Božo would usually explain which region the song was from, what meanings it conveyed, how it was sung and how it should be interpreted. In the end we knew exactly how to sing a song from a certain region and abide by its musical specificities.

The groups that came later started imitating us, which is good, because they recognized us as something worthwhile, something they can look up to. We had no one to look up to, except Lado. No one around us was doing anything like that at the time. ...”¹⁷

Many pop music stars admired performances of Ladarice. Mira Tunuković remembers a collaboration with Josipa Lisac and the song *Dvanaesta je majka Slavonije*, which they sang together and won a competition for best revolutionary song. Josipa admired their overtone singing and said she could not do it.

Mira Tunuković highlighted that they had great respect for the original creators.

“Ladarice were a role model for the people in rural areas, and they were a role model for us, we emulated them.”

Ana Kelin

“Looking back, when I think about what Ladarice meant for me and how I experienced it all, I know and I am sure that it was pure pleasure, food for soul. The singing, appreciating the beauty of the voice, of the sound, the harmony, and the lyrics. Of course, as you can imagine, it wasn't just humming in the shower or while making lunch. A lot of meticulous and sometimes hard and painstaking work went into it. Countless hours and days were spent with the girls and Božo at rehearsals, practicing our material.

Božo's way of working and his insistence on rehearsing every section to perfection, every polyphony, often really exhausted us, but we surrendered to his vision completely, trying to achieve in every song exactly what he envisioned and wanted.”¹⁸

16 From an interview with Jadranka Gračanin Putnik.

17 From an interview with Morena Kovač.

18 From an interview with Ana Kelin.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LADARICE AND THE LADO ENSEMBLE

For Ladarice, the Lado Ensemble always came first. Lado was their home and starting point, while the vocal group Ladarice offered them an additional artistic outlet. The nonet's performances were arranged only after they received confirmation from the Lado administration that they do not have any performances scheduled on the requested dates. This is the main reason why their activity was mostly focused on recording and festival performances and to a much lesser degree on independent concerts.

Jadranaka Gračanin

“Lado always came first. They offered us to do tours in Russia, which were highly lucrative at that time. We refused all that, because there were still nine of us. And when nine people are missing from a collective, you can feel the difference, it's not the same. It never occurred to us to put Ladarice before Lado. Although we really loved Ladarice. We performed whenever we had a chance. On prestigious stages, with prestigious soloists and orchestras. We were highly revered. We even dared to go into *popular music*. We were on pop music chart for a month with the song *Kad sunce sja*. We had an affinity for various musical genres.”¹⁹

LADARICE ACTIVITIES

Ladarice's breakthrough on the music scene began with their first performance and victory at the Festival of Kajkavian Song in Krapina in 1971. On the occasion, a newspaper article stated that *Only Ladarice can do better than Lado, Ladarice vocal ensemble – a big surprise at Festival in Krapina*:

“They first appeared at the Festival of Kajkavian Song in Krapina 71 and immediately drew attention to themselves. Ladarice, a new vocal ensemble, nine representatives of the fairer sex who won the hearts of listeners, viewers and expert judges with their overtone singing. With the concert composition *Zestale se babe četiri* by Božo Potočnik and Drago Bahun, they convincingly won first prize and the sculpture by professional painter Ivan Kožarić.”²⁰

In continuation, the article relates that the well-deserved applause that Ladarice received at the end of their performance echoed around the hall for a long time. Potočnik relates that Arsen Dedić approached him afterwards and said in surprise: “... Božo, this was very brave, it left me breathless...”

Ladarice regularly performed at that renowned festival until 1981, when they were prevented from doing so due to Lado commitments. From the first performance in 1971, to the last one in 1998, Ladarice performed 15 times at the Krapina Festival, winning several awards. They won a total of twelve jury and audience awards.

19 From an interview with Jadranka Gračanin Putnik.

20 From the article titled *Only Ladarice can do better than Lado, Ladarice vocal ensemble – a big surprise at Festival in Krapina*, of unknown date and source (the content of the article indicates that it dates to September 1971). Ladarica archive.

Music critic Ante Batinović, in his article *Kajkavian Folk Songs "Krapina 92"*, *Vitality of the kajkavian word* particularly cites the performance of Ladarice and the composition *Pri svetom Roku*:

"One song, however, does not fit into any of the existing categories and it was a real treat of the final evening. It is the song *Pri svetom Roku* performed by Ladarice and Jegeduš, primarily owing to such a convincing statement of authenticity of Kajkavian music, its beauty, vitality, liveliness and ingenuity. It is almost exotic for someone who has little or no knowledge of the music of Hrvatsko Zagorje.

It is not difficult to compare it to some achievements of Hungarian or Bulgarian music or music from some other parts of the world, which we usually refer to as *world music* in recent years. Ladarice, for example, do not fall short of Yanka Rupkina and her singers from Bulgaria, who is highly renowned, particularly among pop and rock musicians. The composition *Pri svetom Roku* has all the qualities of an exceptional song and an equally exceptional performance, possessed of beauty that is valid not just regionally but also globally. Such examples are a veritable hit in international circles and among consumers of pop and rock music. *World music*, popularized by Peter Gabriel, Paul Simon, David Byrne and many others, is today regarded by students even as a sort of musical alternative to pop and rock. Yuppies also listen to it, as do all other groups of pop music consumers."²¹

In the newspaper article titled *Through the Thorns to the Stars* written by Željko Suhadolnik, responding to a question about their success, Ladarice relate:

"...it came as a result of our long-time, painstaking and diligent work, our attitude towards music filled by enthusiasm, not the desire to make money, and our firm decision to make quality our number one priority. Of course, our talent has a lot to do with our success, and it would be false modesty not to mention it as well."²²

In addition to the festivals in Krapina and Slavonska Požega, Ladarice also performed at other festivals not devoted to folk music. For example, on 23rd November 1975, they performed the song *Dvanaesta je majka Slavonije* by Strahimir Bosnić, to the lyrics of Božidar Stanić together with Josip Lisac, at the *1st Festival of Revolutionary and Patriotic Songs Zagreb '75*, winning the first prize of the audience.

From 1971 to 1999, Ladarice performed in approximately one hundred television shows on Zagreb Television, as well as on other television stations of former Yugoslavia. On some shows, they sang one or two songs, while in others they were had performances that were 30 minutes or longer. New Year's Eve shows were especially popular. The so-called author's shows were significant too, which were conceived and entirely directed by D. Bahun, M. Raukar, B. Potočnik. These shows were also covered in *Večernji list*, in the *Studio* special, accompanied by photographs of Ladarice across an entire page.

21 *Večernji list*, 13 September 1992, journalist Ante Batinović, article *Kajkavian Folk Songs "Krapina 92"*, *Vitality of the kajkavian word*, p. 13.

22 From the article titled *Through the Thorns to the Stars*, section *Conversation over Coffee*, journalist Željko Suhadolnik, 1974, date and name of newspaper unknown. Ladarice archive.

They also collaborated with theatre companies such as the City Theatre Komedija, Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb, Histrioni Acting Company and Gavella Drama Theatre. It should also be highlighted that their participation in more than 200 performances of the first Croatian rock opera *Gubec-beg* created by I. Krajač, K. Metikoš and M. Prohaska (1975). Ladarice also sang in the pop-opera *Les Misérables* by C. M. Schönberg, A. Boublil and J. M. Natela (1982); and in *The Goldsmith's Treasure* by A. Šenoa (Cibona Hall, 1988); *Ognjište* by M. Budak (Croatian National Theatre Zagreb, 1991), both directed by J. Sedlar. In a reduced lineup, they also performed in Gavella theatre's play *The Return of Filip Latinovicz*, directed by Z. Vitez, and *The Birch Tree*, directed by K. Dolenčić.

In addition to the aforementioned theatre engagements and regular performances with mostly folk repertoires, Ladarice also tried their hand at other musical genres. In addition to the previously mentioned pop music hit *Dok sunce sja* written by B. Potočnik and M. Doležal, in 1973 they sang the famous gospel song *Oh, Happy Day* for the purposes of the television show *TV zima*. They also collaborated with G. Bregović and rock band *Bijelo dugme* on their self-titled album (1984), and a year later with H. Džinović and the ensemble *Sar e Roma* on their third studio album *Roma Songs*.

The collaboration between Ladarice and the RTV Zagreb Tamburitza Orchestra (today's Croatian Radiotelevision Tamburitza Orchestra) should certainly be highlighted. In addition to studio recordings, they performed together throughout Croatia and Yugoslavia at the time. In addition to regular performances with B. Potočnik, they also collaborated with many other composers and conductors such as Dinko Fio, Stjepan Mihaljinec, Mario Bogliuni, Vladimir Mutak, Zlatko Černjul, Miljenko Prohaska, as well as television directors Anton Marti, Igor Michieli, Drago Bahun, Eduardo Galić, Dominik Zen and Mladen Raukar.

They also collaborated with eminent poets and renowned songwriters such as Tito Bilopavlović, Drago Britvić, Anto Gardaš, Drago Bahun, Ivan Ernoić, Vjekoslava Schiel, Miroslav Dolenc-Dravski, Pajo Kanižaj... from whom they received lyrical material of lasting value.

Their first record release came out in 1969 under the title *Ladarice – Croatian Folk Songs*. This was followed by singles: *Dok sunce sja / Bratec Miškec*, Jugoton 1972; *Zelena zemla / Ekte - sekte*, Jugoton 1972.; *Još nitko ne zna / Tragom karavele*, Suzy 1972; and in 1980, the single *Jugoslavijo*. They also recorded an LP of revolutionary songs *Šume, šume* in 1978, and albums *Vu plavem trnaci mi hiža stoji* (1982) and *Lepi bregi zeleni* (1984). They also released CDs: *Iz kajkavske glazbene riznice* (1998) Croatia Records, *Pri svetem Roku*, Croatia Records (2002) and *Vezovi i jorgovani*, Orfej/HRT (2004), which was awarded the prestigious Porin music award.

SOLO CONCERTS

In the course of their long and successful activity, Ladarice performed only two independent concerts. Their commitments in Lado prevented them from realising their artistic goals in this respect. They held their first solo concert on 22nd December 1973 at the large hall of the *Alojz Vulinac* Cultural Centre in Ivanić.

The next performance was held on 5th June 1998, celebrating their thirty years of activity with the concert *Godine ljubavi (Years of Love)* at the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb. The programme included guest appearances by the Lado Ensemble, the Croatian Radiotelevision Tamburitza Orchestra, the *Jegeduši* ensemble and the youth cultural and artistic society *Trešnjevka*.

Denis Derk writes in *Večernji list* about the jubilee of Ladarice and Božo Potočnik:

“The gala concert, held coincidentally just as Lepa Brena was making headlines, demonstrated that Ladarice are light years removed from Lepa Brena and all her followers, of whom there are many in Croatian murky musical waters as well.

Singing songs composed or arranged by Božo Potočnik, Ladarice once again asserted themselves as an ensemble of unrepeatable interpretive charm and deep emotionality.”²³

After that concert, Ladarice performed sporadically until 2003.

LADARICE TRADEMARK

Ladarice came up with their trademark sign spontaneously and on their own. Being a well-known vocal ensemble, they received New Year's greeting cards to which they wanted to respond. All the members of Ladarice had long hair owing to the nature of Lado performances, so that they would not have to weave artificial braids in their hair. They decided to make a braid, to braid it themselves out of yellow wool. It was a finger long and they tied a red bow at the end of it. On the right-hand side of the card, they glued the braid, and on the left, they wrote a New Year's greeting (*Happy New Year, Ladarice*). They started using the braid as their trademark spontaneously. Croatian painter and friend of Ladarice, Dragica Lončarić, created the visuals for the poster and programme booklet for each celebratory concert of the *Godine ljubavi, Božo & Ladarice (Years of Love, Božo & Ladarice)* using precisely that braid adorned with flowers.²⁴

LADARICE TODAY

Ladarice came under the auspices of the Lado Ensemble in 2008 at the instigation of Lado's artistic director Ivan Ivančan Jr. and with prior consent from Božo Potočnik. At the 43rd *Festival of Kajkavian Songs* in Krapina, the new Ladarice officially performed as part of Lado's artistic repertoire for the first time. The female portion of the Lado Ensemble, which now operates under the name Ladarice, differs significantly in terms of elementary motivation, number of singers and their status, as well as in the intensity and mode of work, and artistic programming.

Jadranka Gračanin believes:

23 *Večernji list*, article *The Ladarice and Božo Potočnik Jubilee, A Chest for Singing*, journalist Denis Derk, June 1998 (date unknown). Ladarice archive.

24 This paper also contains attachments in the form of a Ladarice greeting card with a braid, a poster and a programme booklet for the concert *Godine ljubavi, Božo & Ladarica*. Ladarice archive.

“They should have preserved a nonet to perform this programme. Since the group was broadened, with twenty female singers, it no longer has that sound. I don’t like this, not all of them are equally skilled and the singing is different. After all, a choir is a choir, and a nonet is a nonet.”²⁵

Potočnik addresses the responsibility of the Lado Ensemble for the artistic activity of the new Ladarice. His wishes for Ladarice to remain an inspiration and guiding force to future generations in interpreting the riches of Croatian folk tradition.

“In recent times, Lado, from which they originated, has assumed the responsibility for Ladarice in terms of institutional organisation, content, concept and name. It could not and should not have been otherwise. However, it is important to underscore that in doing so, Lado has also assumed the obligation to keep Ladarice active. A name is a concept that fades very quickly if it is not supported by action. Ladarice stand for the artistic practice and activities that have entered the consciousness of Croatian audience, both at home and abroad. Therefore, I expect today’s Lado to open up its display cases, take a deep breath and return Ladarice to action, expertly and steadily.

The times have changed, but the needs – have not.

The first Ladarice who are still around, and me along with them, will joyfully applaud our Lado and the new Ladarice!” (Potočnik 2017: 12).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we may say that Ladarice became a brand spontaneously, without a well-conceived branding process commonly used, as mentioned in the introduction citing renowned theorists. In their case, this was achieved thanks to the great commitment and love of Božo and Ladarice, who devoted themselves emotionally and artistically to musical creation. Their artistic excellence has led them to become a brand that remains alive to this day.

The paper underscored that they were foremost members of Lado, while Ladarice came second. Both emotionally and existentially, Lado came first. Being a part of Ladarice, they were not motivated by profit, they did not “market” themselves according to typical branding standards, instead primarily valuing sincere artistic and musical expression. That is why they only performed two solo concerts and did not tour as Ladarice, since Lado would not have been able to perform without them during this time.

Looking at Lado’s creative policy since Ladarice “returned” to the fold in 2008 until today, apart from the fact that it was decided that the entire female section of about 20 singer-dancers would be called Ladarice, and that Lado, along with the Lado Vocal Group and the Lado Orchestra, would receive another performing entity trained for solo performances, it is possible to conclude that there is no real artistic concept for the activity of the *new*²⁶ Ladarice. With Ladarice,

25 From an interview with Jadranka Gračanin Putnik.

26 Within Lado, there is a distinction between the *old* Ladarice (who were active until 2003 and built the Ladarice brand) and the *new* Ladarice, referring collectively to female singer-dancer members of the Lado Ensemble since 2008, when Ladarice came under the auspices of Lado.

Lado has certainly gained a valuable brand, however, this brand has not yet come alive in its “new” iteration in a way we would be aware of their presence on the Croatian music scene.

This is certainly one of the biggest and most important challenges placed before the artistic leadership of Lado! In the first instance, it requires vision and systematic work, in order to validate the name Ladarice.

REFERENCES

- Anholt, Simon. 2007. *Competitive Identity, The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions*. Palgrave Macmillan. New York.
- Arhivska građa Ladarica 1. (1971. – 1975.). The archive managed by Ana Kelin.
- Arhivska građa Ladarica 2. (1976. – 1988.). The archive managed by Ana Kelin.
- Arhivska građa Ladarica 3. (1989. – 2003.). The archive managed by Ana Kelin.
- Arhivska građa Ladarica 4. (newspaper articles). The archive managed by Ana Kelin.
- Bahr Thompson, Anne. 2003. *Brand positioning and brand creation*, in Clifton, Rita and Simmons, John (ed.): *Brand and Branding*, The Economist, London, pp. 79-97.
- Blackett, Tom. 2003. *What is brand?*, in Clifton, Rita and Simmons, John (ed.): *Brand and Branding*, The Economist, London, pp. 13-27.
- Godine ljubavi, Božo & Ladarice, On the occasion of 30 years of activity of Ladarice. Croatian National Theatre, 5 June, 1998, concert programme.
- Potočnik, Božo. 2017. *Godine ljubavi, Ljevakovičev Lado indiskretno*.
- Private archive (discography releases, posters, photographs) of Ana Kelin.
- Private archive (newspaper articles and photographs) of Morena Kovač.
- Private archive (newspaper articles and photographs) of Jadranka Gračanin Putnik.
- Skoko, Božo. 2004. *HRVATSKA – identitet, image i promocija*. Školska knjiga. Zagreb.
- Vranešević, Tihomir. 2007. *Upravljanje markama (Brand Management)*. Accent. Zagreb.
- Vukić, Feđa. 2013. *Grad kao identitetski sustav*. Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Arhitektonski fakultet, Studij dizajna. Zagreb.

List of informats:

- Božo Potočnik, Head of Ladarice
Ana Kelin, member of Ladarice
Jadranka Gračanin Putnik, member of Ladarice
Mira Tunuković, member of Ladarice
Morena Kovač, member of Ladarice