

## *Bagpipe Festival* in Baranja

The tradition of the art of playing and making bagpipes in the eastern part of Croatia is an intangible cultural asset of the Republic of Croatia. Irrespective of the recognition and safeguarding it hence receives, the liveliness of bagpiping still depends on a few tradition bearers. *The bagpipe festival* held in Baranja is a new attempt to revive the bagpipe tradition and invest in its future.

In February this year, the *Bagpipe Festival* was held in the municipality of Draž, in the villages of Draž, Gajić and Topolje. Baranja has a long tradition of bagpiping, and it was primarily in the previously mentioned and other villages of the Danube Region in Šokadija that bagpipes were the main bearers of musical practice until about 50 years ago. It is important to note that the term bagpipes is used in two contexts - the first is a general term for bellows-driven wind instruments, and the second is for a specific three-part wind instrument with a single reed of the clarinet type that is characteristic of the Baranja area. Bagpiping, which includes playing and making bagpipes, is a long-standing tradition in Croatia, which unfortunately has not been sufficiently researched in professional literature.

In the past, bagpipes and bagpipers were an indispensable part of various music and life events. Bagpipe music was an important component at weddings, (dance) parties, celebrations, annual customs, church celebrations outside the church, regular accompaniment at dances and all larger and smaller gatherings in the community. Bagpipers were highly valued and respected members of the community, musicians, soloists (who played for a fee), singers and entertainers.

Over time, tamburitza and tamburitza ensembles took over, and bagpiping tradition almost stopped being passed down and the tradition almost stopped being kept alive in continuity and almost died out within a short period. The transfer of knowledge and skills from generation to generation and the development and innovation of interpretation and creation came down to a few individuals, mostly of advanced age. The existence of the danger of irreversible disappearance of this tradition resulted in the joint work of its bearers and experts in 2008 resulting in the adoption of a decision by the Ministry of Culture, which gave the art of making and playing bagpipes and single drone *dudas* in eastern and central Croatia the status of intangible cultural assets. Such a decision greatly affects the logistical and financial support provided by the local and national authorities, designing, supporting and implementing projects linked with the safeguarding, documentation and recording of intangible cultural heritage. In addition, it has a significant importance, and it provides recognition for individuals and communities who are constantly striving to impart intangible knowledge and skills. Even though the intangible heritage is on one hand protected from disappearing, bagpiping in Croatia is still dependent on the engagement of several individuals. Bagpipes have long since moved from the life of communities



Figure 1. Detail from the concert in the Church of St. Peter and Paul in Topolje, photo by: Edi Tajm

to the stages and performances of (mostly) cultural-artistic societies, as well as occasional courses, seminars and workshops within which knowledge is transferred. This festival was created with the intention of changing the contemporary situation in terms of bagpipes and to raise awareness of the richness of the inherited tradition of playing bagpipes. The festival lasted three days, at the same time as *Fašange – Baranjske buše 2024 (Carnival – Baranja Buše 2024)*, and the programme focused on the exploration of intangible cultural property both in the local and global context, as well as its safeguarding and presentation.

### BAGPIPE FESTIVAL

The Bagpipe Festival was opened with a conference and the panel discussion *Bagpipes and the Bagpipe Tradition in Europe and Croatia*, which was held at the Museum of Slavonia in Osijek. Filip Golubov, as the organiser of the festival and the director of the Tourist Board of the Municipality of Draž, presented the goals of the festival and the reasons why it is held. Its aim is to build the recognisability of the area of Baranja, Osijek-Baranja County, and especially the Danube Region-based Šokadija through bagpipes, where, irrespective of the development of rural tourism and the agricultural sector, continuous emigration (especially of young people) is still visible. On the other hand, as a bagpiper, connoisseur and bearer of the traditional culture of Šokadija in Baranja, one of his goals is to introduce traditional instruments into the curricula of music schools and academies, and to introduce children from kindergartens and elementary schools to a tradition that is at the same time being lost and yet also still very well known.

Since the introduction of traditional instruments, including bagpipes, into curricula in some European countries has come to life, guest lecturers from Hungary and France shared how they achieved this and how it helped revitalise the bagpipe tradition in their countries.



Figure 2. *The Mišina Orchestra* with guests from Hungary in the carnival parade, photo by: Edi Tajm

Mátyás Bolya, a musician, composer, ethnomusicologist and head of the Department of Traditional Music at the *Liszt Ferenc* Academy of Music in Budapest, briefly presented the history of formal traditional music education in Hungary. Through the years of development to the present day, it is present at all levels - from elementary music school to doctoral programmes. Bolya, PhD, also spoke about the challenges and peculiarities of learning traditional music, the problems of (written and audio) recording, the flexibility of the music itself and the variations of the same melodies, and how the uniformization of traditional music has been successfully avoided.

Yan Cozian, a musician, composer, researcher and educator from France, spoke about the revival of the practice of playing the Occitan bagpipes. In 1975, Cozian discovered that there were *boha bagpipes in Occitania* that differed from other bagpipes in France. Since there were no living bagpipers in the area and very few sources that testify to the existence of this tradition, Cozian had no one to teach him to play and make bagpipes. However, thanks to the players who transferred bagpipe music to other instruments, he learned the musical repertoire. Over the years, the number of people interested in playing *the boha* bagpipes grew, and gradually and together with the students, he designed a methodology for learning to play the bagpipes, which since 1999 has also been taking place at the level of the conservatory in Mont-de-Marsan.

The first part of the panel referred to foreign bagpipe traditions, examples of institutionalisation on solid long-standing foundations and the others that have disappeared and have been successfully revived and maintained. The second part of the panel was dedicated to bagpipes in Croatia, the current situation, the future and the possibilities of institutionalisation of bagpipes in the educational system. The discussion was moderated by Anamarija Bertin, president of the Cultural-Artistic Society *Baranjski Šokci* Draž, and the guests were an ethnomusicologist from



Figure 3. Bagpipers in the carnival parade, photo by: Edi Tajm

the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, prof. Naila Ceribašić, the only professional bagpiper in Croatia, a musician soloist on traditional instruments in *the National Folk Dance Ensemble of Croatia LADO* Stjepan Večković and a bagpiper and bagpipe builder who has dedicated a large part of his life to researching and recording the bagpipe tradition, professor from the University of Pécs, Andor Vég, PhD. Everyone spoke about their experience of preserving tradition and about the directions in which bagpipng could or should go.

Prof. Naila Ceribašić, PhD, pointed out that there is a regulated system of preserving tradition in Croatia and that we need to find examples that can help us to further strengthen it. She presented the basic elements that contribute to the preservation of traditions and their practice. On the other hand, she pointed out that there is a lack of recent research, as well as the (in)visibility of the bagpipe scene in which the circle of people is very limited.

Mr. Stjepan Večković noted that today the situation is much better compared with the last 50 years, as he is meeting more and more people who express interest in bagpipes and other traditional instruments. Since he has been holding workshops, seminars and courses for years, he has encountered the problems of the methodology of learning to play the bagpipes, devising the teaching system and the determination of the levels of education in terms of content and period. He added that it is also important what is played, *world music* may be closer to the younger generations in terms of genre, which is potentially a way to attract the interest of the audience.

Andor Vég, PhD, spoke about the difficulties and one of the main problems he encounters is the audience itself. According to him, there will be bagpipers when they have someone to play to. Another problem is the playing itself – is it reduced to playing and performing at parades and



festivals where the main bearers of tradition are cultural-artistic societies or will it be a living tradition present in everyday life. He pointed out that bagpipes are not only a field of culture, but the issue of demography as well as that of spatial planning are also included in the revitalisation of bagpipes. He noted that it must be borne in mind that Croatia is divided into regions and that bagpipes and *dude* would be experienced differently, for example, in Split or Dubrovnik, so that the programme for traditional music at all levels would have to be adapted to make it suitable for each region.

In the context of the introduction of traditional music programmes into school curricula, one of the conclusions was that programmes certainly need not be uniformised. What already exists are tamburitza programmes in primary and secondary music schools, as well as at the Academies in Osijek and Zagreb, and the common proposal of all the panellists is that the existing departments could be expanded to traditional music departments. On the other hand, the venue for this panel discussion was originally intended to be at the Academy of Arts and Culture in Osijek, but the co-operation did not materialise. Moreover, none of the students or professors from the Academy were present, which indicates a lack of interest on the part of educators and professional musicians from the largest music-education institution in the area.

The first day of the *Bagpipe Festival* ended with a concert in the church of St. Peter and Paul in Topolje. The church was completely full, and the minimalism of the interior of the church was harmoniously accompanied by lighting with only a few lit candles, which, together with the music, created a unique and mystical atmosphere. The programme was very diverse and many bagpipe traditions from Europe could be seen and heard. The concert began with a performance by the *Mišina Orchestra* with members from Croatia and Hungary, and they performed traditional music from Baranja, Banat, Podravina and Macedonia. In several appearances, *Virtus Dudazenekar* from Hungary presented Hungarian bagpipe music from various regions. *The Pipers Band* from Bulgaria presented the Rhodope bagpipe tradition in two appearances. Stjepan Večković played the music he performs in the *LADO Ensemble*. Tomislav Livaja presented the bagpipe tradition from Srijem. Edi Tajm performed bagpipe music from Serbia in one appearance. Dominik Kunić presented the Scottish bagpipes and their music, and Filip Butković played Slavonian bagpipe music.

The second day of the *Bagpipe Festival* was integrated into *Fašange – Baranjske buše 2024* (Carnival - Baranja Buše 2024<sup>1</sup>). The *Mišina Orchestra*, together with the tamburitza band *Bujdoši*, accompanied the *beautiful and terrible buše*<sup>2</sup> in the parade through the villages of Draž and Gajić. In the spirit of the *buše* and a very relaxed atmosphere, bagpipers and tamburitza players were with the *buše* until the very end. Music was an indispensable part of the parade through the streets, when they danced Šokac wheel dance or *kukunješće*, in the courtyards where the hosts would welcome and entertain the *buše*. They played the typical music for carnivals and other music for this occasion from the Danube Region of Baranja, and they also occasionally sang *bečarac*. In addition to the hosts, guests from Hungary also participated, who played Croatian bagpipes in the parade.

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1 *Buše, poklade* or *fašange* are a carnival in Baranja. *Buše* are mask wearing carnival characters who visit the villages of Šokac, and the name is used in both masculine and feminine form.

2 Beautiful *buše* (*lipe buše*) are dressed in festive folk costumes and they are often women. Terrible *buše* (*strašne buše*) wear wooden zoomorphic masks with horns and sheepskin coats, fur-side out, *klepke* and *kleptaljke*, i.e. old bells and rattles and clappers.

On the same day, in the evening, a bagpipe concert was held at the Ethnographic Museum in Mohács. The reason for this co-operation is the shared tradition of the peoples from the area of Croatian and Hungarian Baranja, who until a hundred years ago lived in a common geopolitical space. The audience was interested and delighted with a rare concert with a rich programme of various traditions of bagpipe music.

On the third day, *the Bagpipe Festival* ended with a closing ceremony and the reception, and the participants expressed their gratitude for the occasion and the opportunity to meet and exchange experiences with musicians from other countries.

## CONCLUSION

In its second edition, *the Bagpipe Festival* provided a very diverse and high-quality content. The cunning camouflage of the festival in *Carnival* has enabled it a greater visibility, but also the consequent causal connection and revitalisation of traditions. The presence of bagpipes in such a celebration of customs informally, perhaps even on a subconscious level, provides conditions for further transfer of practice and knowledge.

In only three days, the programme was designed to bring together various audience profiles at different locations – professional musicians, ethnomusicologists, ethnologists, educators, amateur researchers, instrument builders, bagpipers, students, amateur musicians, tradition enthusiasts, members of communities in the municipality of Draž and the town of Mohács, the general public. The festival was dominated by members of the younger generations, both as performers and as audience, which is a positive indicator of the current interest and that there is a great potential that with continuous dedicated work on promoting the art of playing bagpipes, it can be truly actively preserved and continue being transferred.

Throughout the segments of the festival, one could get a general impression of what bagpipng actually implies. During the festival, various roles of bagpipers could be seen as bearers of tradition, researchers, organisers, educators, musicians, artists, improvisers, students and entertainers. Bagpipng is an intangible cultural asset of the Republic of Croatia, but we had an excellent insight into the bagpipe traditions of other countries and their good practices and ways in which they preserve and transmit their heritage. The inclusion of related traditions and practices has shown the public the richness of togetherness and the possible intercultural preservation of tradition.

In my opinion *the Bagpipe Festival* is already creating and achieving sustainable, quality and long-term results. I was extremely happy to see the living bagpipe tradition beyond the official programme, spontaneous music-making after receptions or during breaks, which proves that bagpipng does not live only on stage. This festival is a great place to meet, reflect, learn, exchange, inspire and primarily a starting point. Tradition is alive only when it is changeable, and all of us have the responsibility to decide whether to revive it and in what way.