

NAILA CERIBAŠIĆ

Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, Zagreb

## **IN BETWEEN ETHNOMUSICOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL CANONS: HISTORICAL SOURCES ON WOMEN PLAYERS OF FOLK MUSIC INSTRUMENTS IN CROATIA**

The basic stimulus for this research was the widely disseminated conviction that women do not play folk music instruments, and particularly that they did not play them in the past. It turned out that both components of this thesis are faulty and that the in/visibility of the women players depends on (ethno)musico-logical and social canons. Their invisibility in ethnomusicology has been an outcome of the ethnomusicological limitation to *folk* music, its products and its most prominent representatives.

Women players' positions as members of a family and as participants in national-integrating and modernizing processes during the second half of 19th and the first half of 20th century made it possible for their musicianship to prevail over their gender. These were also the positions which women players shared with men players. The remaining women's positions were based precisely on certain stereotypes on women (from the woman player as a member of so-called fairer sex, to the woman player as a shameless woman, and the reverse of the stereotype in the woman player as a mannish woman) or on the (self)negation of serious musicianship (the woman player as a substitute for an absent man player, and the woman player of handy and substitute instruments).

Keywords: folk music, women musicians, history, Croatia

*Women do not play folk music instruments.* That was by far the most frequent response I encountered speaking with members and leaders of village folklore groups (which in Croatia are the main practitioners of the notion of "folk" music), with people who are professionally connected with music, as well as with researchers of traditional culture, either professionals or hobbyists. Still, some of them, frequently later, remembered some exceptions to contemporary practice, usually explaining them as examples of transformation of tradition into the contemporary. Therefore, I shall be drawing attention in this article to historical sources on women players of

folk music instruments. Following the new historicism in ethnomusicology, I shall try "to locate the strange in the familiar past, and to engage in dialogue with this past, reading texts against the grain, probing for their silences and aporias, particularly with regard to matters of gender and sexuality, to locate points of unfamiliarity whose interpretation might be put to productive use in the present" (Stokes 2001:392-393). The sources in question are varied remnants, primarily poorly documented photographs, notes in diverse written materials, lexicographic sources and scholarly contributions from other disciplines, and, only after that, texts which make up standard (ethno)musicological literature.<sup>1</sup>

### Women players and ethnomusicological canon

In his research on terms for instruments and instrumental music in five important Croatian general dictionaries published between 1649 and 1742 (Mikalja's *Croatian-Italian*, Habelić's *Croatian-Latin*, Della Bella's *Italian-Latin-Croatian*, Belostenec's *Latin-Croatian* and *Croatian-Latin*, and Jambrešić's *Latin-Croatian-German-Hungarian* dictionaries), Stanislav Tuksar tried to uncover the possible connections between musical terms and the social and cultural milieu which they linguistically reflected. Beside terms for men who played or built the instruments, terms for women who played the following instruments also appear:

<b>instrument</b>		<b>man player</b>	<b>woman player</b>
cimbala	<i>cymbals</i>	cimbalaš, cimbulaš	cimbilašica, cimbulašica
zvon(o)	<i>bell</i>	zvonar, zvonitelj	zvonarica
bubanj	<i>drum</i>	bubn(j)ar	buban(j)čica, bubnjarica
arfa/psaltir	<i>harp</i>	na struno igru popevač	koja na mnogo-strunjuku igra, struno-igravka
cimbal	<i>dulcimer</i>	cimbalaš, cimbolaš, cimbulaš, koi vu cimbal bic / igra	cimbilašica, cimbulašica

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<sup>1</sup> Over recent months some of my colleagues have drawn my attention to or reminded me of certain significant historical sources. I am particularly grateful to Grozdana Marošević.

citara	<i>zither / kithara</i>	citaraš, citarista, koi igra vu citaru	citarašica, kâ vu citaru igra
gusle [koji gudi]	<i>(one-stringed fiddle)</i> / <i>violin, [bowing]</i>	gudec, gudac, guslar, guslač, (h)egeduš	gudica, gudačica, guslarica, (h)egedušica
tambura	<i>(plucked lute)</i>	tamburaš, tamburdžija, koi v-tamburu igra	tamburašica
svirala [koji svira]	<i>(reed-pipe),</i> <i>[playing]</i>	svirac, svirač, sviralac, fučkavec, piskač, piskavec, surlar, svardoničar, šipuš, žvegljar, koi u piščal puše	sviravka, piskačica, šipušica, žvegljarica, koja vu piščal igra
trublja	<i>trumpet</i>	trubitel(j), trubljar, trubnik, trombetaš, trumbetaš	trumbetašica

However, in several places Tuksar found particular explanations why terms for women players could appear in the dictionaries which he researched. Thus, in connection with *guslarica* (woman player of the *gusle*, one- or two-stringed fiddle), he said: "The word *guslarica* is mentioned by four lexicographers (M, D, B, J) and in this case the emphasis of the semantic components... shifts toward the general 'woman player of string instruments', which uncovers indirectly (all lexicographers) and expressly (Della Bella, Jambrešić) the correlates in Latin, Italian and German. Today's basic meaning ('woman player of the *gusle*') is not registered at all, probably because of the rarity of the denotation" (Tuksar 1992:278).<sup>2</sup> However, if the lexicographers in question — correlating languages and/or following the structure of the Croatian language which is very precise as regards gender — concocted some of the female terms, there remains no answer to the question as to why they would have omitted a large number of the instruments from this exercise: these dictionaries contain no terms

<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in regard to Jambrešić's "rudimentary organological error" in correlating the Latin words *crotalistris* and *crotalus* with "svirač u tamburu" [player on the *tambura*] (the Croatian correlate) and "svirač lutnje" [player on the lute] (the Hungarian correlate), Tuksar is speaking in the section about a woman *tambura* player, and not a man player, while he comments on Belostenec's *trumbetašica* [woman trumpet player] in the following way: "Belostenec, even if he did not have to designate and/or register the appearance of woman player of the trumpet in the immediate reality of the life around him, needed such a term in order to correlate it with antique literary and/or contemporary iconographic sources" (ibid.:478). As far as *guslarica* is concerned, bearing in mind the diversity of music cultures, as well as the cultural aspect of linguistic correlation, it is not surprising that in Latin, Italian and German its "emphasis of the semantic components... shifts toward the general 'woman player of string instruments'".

or syntagmata for women players of the bass, lute, organ, end-blown double-duct flute, bagpipes, and horn, and there is no term for women builders of musical instruments.

The fundamental source on folk instruments from the 19th century is Kuhač's expansive ethnoorganological study in which the author expressly mentioned and described situations in which women players make music on the *gusle*, the *tambura*, aerophones of the flute type (*svirale*, *šaltve*), the *diple* (an end-blown double-duct flute with or without a windbag), the shepherd's horn and the drum, while in the list of terms there are also terms for women players of the violin, the harp, the zither and bells (*guslačica*, *gudačica*, *arfašica*, *cindrašica*, *zvonarka*). On the other hand, there is no female correlate in the basic text nor in the list of terms for the man player of the dulcimer, of some aerophones of the flute and oboe type, the trumpet, bagpipes and the jew's harp (*cimbalaš*, *dudukaš*, *frulaš*, *žveglavac*, *dvojničar*, *sopac*, *trub[lj]ač*, *dudaš*, *gajdaš*, *drombuljaš*) (see Kuhač 1877-1882). Kuhač's descriptions of the situations and contexts in which women play are threefold: they play instruments of specific use,<sup>3</sup> instruments which are very popular in class, age, gender, ethnic and/or regionally diverse groups,<sup>4</sup> and instruments which — also through Kuhač's very efforts — would, in addition to their popularity, contribute to the building of a unified national community.<sup>5</sup>

On the basis of Tuksar's reading of the general dictionaries from the 17th and 18th century, and the works of Kuhač, it seems that certain discourse confirms, does not notice or even ignores women players, following the entrenched canons, previous convictions and research orientations. So Tuksar finds particular explanations for mention of women players of folk instruments in the dictionaries which he studied, among other, certainly also because the synthetic ethnomusicological literature which he largely used does not give any reason for concluding that the terms for women players could represent reality.<sup>6</sup> For his part,

<sup>3</sup> The goatherd's horn "is largely used only by women and girls, because it is they who mainly keep watch over the goats" (Kuhač 1878/45:22).

<sup>4</sup> Kuhač speaks in that way of instruments of the flute type, of the *diple* and *gusle* (1877/41:12, 1878/45:8, 1877/38:7), and of the guitar (1893:97).

<sup>5</sup> This refers to the *tambura* and *tambura* ensembles. In a 1887 text, Kuhač expressed his satisfaction regarding the appearance of *tambura* ensembles which were active within academic urban singing societies and played from sheet music. He believed that such societies were "a great step forward for our folk music, because they reinforce within the urban classes a feeling for our folk art, and preserve, or at least they should preserve, our music tradition. For even greater success we should wish that our women assist in the preservation and dissemination of what is ours, that is, that they not shrink from the *tambura*, but instead practice as much as they can on the instrument. It should be mentioned that neither the instrument itself, nor learning to play it, costs much, nor does much time have to be spent on practice, but still the *tambura* is such a pleasant musical instrument, and it looks very beautiful in the hands of women" (1887:109).

<sup>6</sup> Very similar as regards the type of source, but a quite contrary example in interpretation, is given by Carol Neuls-Bates. According to her, "the work of more than twenty women troubadours has survived from southern France from the twelfth and early thirteenth

Kuhač mentions them or even reports on them in detail, among other, certainly also because his works were based on direct field insight and exceptional knowledge of the diverse (not only "important" but also "minor" and "marginal") sources about folk music, and because women players of popular instruments, and particular those who played the *tambura*, were useful in his efforts related to the construction of folk and national music.

The dependency of silencing/confirming on the discourse can be followed throughout the entire 20th century. One possible example is the contrast between the central, most influential, nationally-oriented discourse on folk culture during the 1930s, on the one hand, and the liberal bourgeois discourses, marginalized at that time when folk culture was in question, on the other. *Seljačka sloga* [Peasant Harmony], the organization which completely controlled the definition, production and reproduction of folk culture in public during the 1930s, stood to one side. The notion of folk which the experts of *Seljačka sloga* constructed has fundamentally influenced the orientation of the scholarly disciplines which deal with folk culture, almost up until the present day. In the conception and practice of *Seljačka sloga*, women appeared in the roles of singers and dancers, but not as players of musical instruments. I read in detail all the available material connected with its activities (its magazine, various publications, programs for the numerous festivals which it organized, newspaper articles, the legacy of its professional associates, and the like), and found only one piece of information on women players.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, I studied only superficially alternative discourses on folk music of that period. Despite that, for example, in only one annual edition of Radio Zagreb magazine I found photographs of as many as four women players, two of whom were Croatian: an unnamed player of the accordion ([S.n.] 1940b) and Anica Dobrić, a player of the *sopila* (shawm) ([S.n.] 1940a).<sup>8</sup>

Anica Dobrić was photographed in Novi Vinodolski together with another *sopila* player, Ivan Dobrić, on August 15, 1940 during a performance which was organized and broadcast by a Zagreb radio station. This photograph and the player's name in the weekly program

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centuries, and since the Provençal language includes a designation for the female troubadour as *trobaritz*, in contrast to the male *trobador*, undoubtedly numerous other women were active" (1996:21; underlining N. C.).

<sup>7</sup> In 1926, at the very outset of the organization's activities, a branch from Đelekovac near Koprivnica reported about an entertainment gathering at which "a peasant string ensemble consisting of five persons played very beautifully. This group is very interesting since the players are made up of the father as leader of the group, along with the mother and two grown-up daughters" (Stanković 1926:157). The informants with whom Ivančan spoke in the 1990s remembered the same ensemble. They were the Marcijan family from Kutnjak. The father and two daughters played the violin, the mother the bass, and someone called Šimek played the *bugarija* [the baritone *tambura*] (Ivančan 1999a:142).

<sup>8</sup> The remaining two were women accordion players from Germany and from the Soviet Union.

(No. 9:[unpag.]), is the only trace to date of this woman player. Although the associates of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research from Zagreb conducted comprehensive field research in that very place in 1964, and then several times during the 1980s, not one of the numerous informants mentioned either Anica Dobrić, or any other woman player of the *sopila*. Obviously, she has been hidden from view by the canon of Croatian ethnography, ethnomusicology and public practice of folk music, according to which women never ever play(ed) the *sopila*, and it would be "a great disgrace if a woman even tried to play one" (Jelenović, quoted in Zebec 1998:67).<sup>9</sup>

There is no doubt that women players were and have remained the exception in common practice, but the question remains of why they are absent from written material and the spoken word, even when, objectively, they were present. In the sense of narrower scholarly policy, the answer seems to lie in the fact that in the first half of the 20th century, following the conception of *folk music*, research was based on statements made by the oldest and, musically, the most authentic inhabitants of villages in question, and on the analysis of music (music sound) performed for research purposes. Attention was directed to the field of vocal music, partly because it fulfilled more adequately than instrumental music the criteria of collectiveness, non-professionalism, and resistance to foreign influences, which were some of the general validation criteria of folk culture, and folk music and dance within it (see, e.g., Bratanić 1941:14, 47). In other words, players were individuals who performed for certain material gain in taverns, at patron saint day fairs, and various entertainment gatherings, and expanded their repertoires with new content and forms, in that way meeting the demand of their audiences and/or building up their status as good players and entertainers. For that reason, ethnomusicologists concentrated more on singers than on players, and, as for latter, barely had contact with women players, since they did not belong among the most representative local musicians. Further, it seems that women players were usually younger rather than older, and were active for a relatively short time or only sporadically, which also meant that they could not have been appropriately encompassed by serious scholarly research. Finally, judging from available descriptions, a woman with a musical instrument was oftentimes sexualized (as a shameless woman or as a mannish woman), which was probably foreign to serious (and demure) Croatian ethnomusicology.

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<sup>9</sup> Over the last decade, quite a number of little girls, girls, and young women in Istria and the Quarnero Bay area have been playing the *sopila* (shawm), *šurle* (clarinet-type instrument) and *mih* (double clarinet with windbag). They have been taught to play these instruments at formally organized instrument-playing seminars and schools. Tvrtko Zebec mentioned them in his dissertation on the Krk *tanac*-dance (Zebec 1998:67), but in his book about contemporary Istrian singers, players, and folklore groups, Renato Pernić does not even mention them as a phenomenon, let alone in any detail (see Pernić 1997).

During the last decades of the 20th century, too, despite the proclaimed concept of *folklore music* during the 1970s, and even the all-encompassing *music* of the 1990s (on this point, see Ceribašić 1998), ethnomusicological and ethnoorganological works, as in the concept of *folk music*, continued to be concentrated on the musical instruments themselves, playing techniques and the repertoire (and not also on the proclaimed musicians, processes and contexts of music-making); and field practice continues to rely on contacts with established — the best, most prominent and most authentic players, that is, with players who nurture peasant, old and local repertoire and manner of performing.<sup>10</sup> Following such a canon (self-explanatory, and therefore unwritten) conditions the omission of women players from just the place in which, following a different self-explanatoriness, one would expect to find them: in the centre of the scholarly discourse, that is, in ethnomusicological and ethnoorganological works.<sup>11</sup> So it is that we learn about the women players of

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<sup>10</sup> It is rare for researchers to explicate their field work. An example of an exception is Jerko Bezić in his study of the Sinj region. He says: "Almost in all of the larger villages I learnt about several *gusle*-players. I do not provide the numbers since I do not avail of the data for all the villages of the Sinj region. I regularly noted down only the names of *the well-known and more skilful gusle-players*, except for in the villages of Turjaci and Lučane where I listed all those of whom I heard that they *know how to play the gusle properly*" (1967-68:187; italics N. C.).

<sup>11</sup> For example, in the regional studies and ethnoorganological articles of the ethnomusicologist Jerko Bezić, as in the articles of the ethnoorganologist Krešimir Galin, I found only one piece of information connected with women players, which is incomparably less than the data found about them, for example, in the works of the ethnochoreologist Ivan Ivančan (Ivančan 1971:82, 1973:71, 1982:31, 1988:79, 1989:208, 211-213, 215-216, 1999a:139-140, 142, 144, 1999b:14, 17). The existence of women players in Ivančan's studies — unlike those of Bezić and Galin — does not seem to be due to Ivančan's particularly gender-sensitive fieldwork approach, but rather to his conception of field and scholarly work. In the first part of his texts Ivančan always constructs only a thematic framework of certain aspects of dance culture, filling it in with the material itself, that is, with what he was told by his collocutors. It is precisely these transcriptions of their narrations which are the sources in question here. Galin touched on the women players phenomenon in his study about the water-drum of Banovina. He was "surprised by the information that the water-drum was *originally used only by women* ... in the Muslim tribes of western Africa", which he interpreted in the light of "fertility magic", "the symbolics of fertility", "connection of the female principle with the Moon" and "element of water", and the like (Galín 1985:535-536). He believed that "research into the traces of similar functions or beliefs linked to the water-drum in Croatia should... also provide an answer to the question of origin, and even the age of the use of such a drum on Croatian territory" (ibid.:536). Domestic players, whether male or female, are not mentioned in his interpretations of the symbolics of the water-drum and in the proposals for further research. Bezić's sole mention of a woman player refers to Ana Tota from Draškovec who "played as a girl... with her brothers in a small instrumental ensemble (two *tamburas*, a guitar and a double bass) on no less than a double bass" (Bezić 1982:86). Nor are women players mentioned in a whole series of papers about Croatian folk music, and particularly musical instruments — for example, Kuba 1899, Ocvirk 1923, Marić 1932, Širola 1932a, 1932b, 1933, 1938, Karabaić 1956, Lovrenčević 1963, 1964, 1971, Stepanov 1964 (bibliographic data about these texts can be found in Bezić 1974). In other sources it is

the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th from various fragments, primarily poorly documented photographs and notices in written texts. This situation regarding sources prevents (for the moment) documented writing of the history of women players in Croatia. It is possible only to *give an inkling of possible* social footholds and discourses which simultaneously enabled and restricted them as a phenomenon and as concrete historical personalities.

### Women players and social canon

It would be wrong to comment the position of women players only within the sex and gender framework. Only some social footholds are dominantly gender-based. Besides, they are not mutually exclusive — quite the opposite, they are often mutually supportive. Namely, in addition to being women, the women players are also members of a particular generation and social stratum, they share a particular local and regional culture, perform in a particular, narrower or broader socially, temporally and spatially specific context, for a particular public, social group and community, and play diverse and socially differently conceptualized musical instruments. In other words, there is no universal woman player, just as there is no universal woman. Some social footholds which support women players also support men, others are both class and gender, yet others should be observed in the context of regional differences, and so on. So, for example, three groups of women players can be identified in Lang's monograph of Samobor from the beginning of the 20th century: more prosperous Samobor tradesmen arranged "piano lessons for their female children" (Lang 1992 [1915]:718) and they probably played only in the private sphere; a smaller number of girls played the *tambura*, zither and violin, while at least some of them were taught to play at the Samobor *tambura* school (ibid.:719) and possibly performed in public from time to time; finally, the best known Samobor player in Lang's time was old Strnad who played the violin, taught his son and two daughters to play the accordion, and played professionally with one of his daughters, performing "largely in private houses at weddings and other celebrations" (ibid.:457, 719).

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repeatedly stated that women never play musical instruments (e.g. Furčić 1980-1988). Briefly, the most abundant ethnomusicological sources on women players of folk music instruments in Croatia have until the present day remained Kuhač's works, followed by two of Božidar Širola. In one, the author mentioned *sviroke*, a clarinet-type instrument which was played only by women on the islands of Olib and Silba (Širola 1937:5, 87, 105, 137); he also reproduced Kuhač's and Ivanišević's information that the *diple* was sometimes played by girls and women (ibid.:17, 299). In the second, Širola mentioned a *sviralica* made of straw which was played on the island of Rab by children and girls (Širola 1931:140), and provided somewhat more detailed information of an old lady called Nina, who was the last person on Lošinj to play the *lijerica* [lyre] (ibid.:158-159).



A kinship relationship with a man player — a father, brother or husband — very often made it possible for women to enter into the field of instrumental music in a more permanent, serious, and professional way. Apart from the examples provided by the members of the Strnad and Marcijan families mentioned above, and Ana Tota and Anica Dobrić, a large number of sources confirm this mode of women's musicianship.<sup>12</sup> Along with making possible the (semi)professionalization of women as players, the importance of this social foothold lay in its relative independence from regional differences, types of instruments and instrumental ensembles, and from the music genres connected with particular instruments.

The next important foothold were mutually connected national-integrating and modernizing processes constituting bourgeois society, which were gaining momentum in Croatia from the 1870s (Gross & Szabo 1992:13-19). Both ideas enabled women to make music in public as members of the amateur singing societies and *tambura* societies as well as

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<sup>12</sup> For example, the earliest named woman player, as far as I know, was called Mara, and together with her father, Jozo Luić Ciganin [nicknamed Gypsy], she played *Rakoci music* until he died in 1830. Her father played an oboe-type *svirala*, while Mara played a large drum (Brić 1885 [1838]:41-42). A century later, there was a family *tambura* ensemble in Drenovica in which Jelica Remetović (née Subotičanec, b. 1901) usually played the *bugarija*, as did her brother Jakup, her twin sister Katica played the *brač*, her youngest brother Petrina the *bisernica*, while Habjan played the *berde*. As girls, the two sisters "made the money for their own marriages", playing at weddings and feather-picking bee evenings (Ivančan 1989:215). Ivančan came across similar women *tambura*-players in Novigrad Podravski (1999a:139-140) and Podravske Sesvete (1989:212), as well as women *lijerica*-players in Šumetina (1973:71). Nevenka Dujmović (b. 1926) was the first girl in Jurandvor who immediately prior to World War II played the *sopila* with her father (Zebec 1998:67).

The same family mode of woman musicianship was also frequent in the Croatian migrant *tambura* ensembles in the USA, starting from the probably very first *tambura* ensemble on. Frank Hoffer from Karlovac, who moved to the USA in 1887, was most probably the first *tambura*-player and *tambura*-builder there; from 1891 he performed around the states of Illinois, Pennsylvania and Ohio with his *tambura* ensemble. Hoffer was the leader of the ensemble and played the *bisernica*, his daughters Mima and Katica played the *bugarija*, and Paval Pavlinac the *berde*. Later they were joined by the remaining two daughters/sisters: Frances on the *brač* and Anna on the *kontrašica* (Kolar 1975:3-4). Apart from them, there were other women who played in *tambura* ensembles in the USA with their fathers, brothers or husbands. They included Julie and Theresa Hegyi during the 1890s (ibid.:12-13), Julia Beleg, Mary and Helen Prstac at the very beginning of the 20th century (ibid.:16-17), Milka Stefanac, Stephie and Linda Crljenica during the 1910s and 1920s (ibid.:13-14), and Olga Perkovich in the 1930s (ibid.:55). Martha Elias played with her father and brother from 1924 until 1945 in the *Elias Serenaders*, one of the rare professional *tambura* ensembles at that time in the USA (ibid.:22, 25, 34-35).

It should be added that many of today's women players, whom I do not deal with here, are also from players' families, and that this mode of musicianship is neither a specificity of traditional music, nor of Croatia. For example, among the musicians from the field of art music — written largely about in this sense — are the pianist and composer Clara Schumann, and the composer Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel.

in other organized amateur instrumental ensembles.<sup>13</sup> During the 20th century, *tambura* ensembles served as a means of reconciliation at various levels and in various contexts between traditionalism and modernism, as well as between the multiple differences within the national and/or state community: ethnic, regional, class, worldview, age and gender differences. Each of the political projects included the *tambura*, which facilitated it becoming the most widely disseminated traditional music instrument and one of the main symbols of Croatian traditional culture. It is possible to find postcards from the beginning of the 20th century depicting imagery of gender-mixed "Croatian *tambura*-players" (IEF Postcard No. 155) or that entitled "little Croatian girl", identified as such obviously because of her stylized folk costume and the *tambura* she is holding (1911-1912, IEF Postcard No. 151). However, in addition to national imagination, women *tambura* players at that time really did play in mixed or even all-women *tambura* ensembles, mostly in urban settings.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The perspective available to us here is the external reception of the broader social community, since available sources give no data on the personal motivation and direct support given to a particular woman player who participated in music amateurism. In this sense, the women players contributed to the ideas of national integration and/or modernization of Croatian society, although their personal motivation and the most direct support for their musicianship could have been completely different. In other words, amateur instrumental ensembles could bring (and probably brought) together relatives by birth or marriage, but their organizational foundation was still in music amateurism, and not in the family.

<sup>14</sup> For example, mixed *tambura* ensembles were active in 1910 in Petrovina (photograph of the Tambura and Singing Society in the Jastrebarsko City Museum, IEF Photograph No. 43626) and in 1911 in Zagreb (postcard of the *Zvezda* Tambura and Singing Society, IEF Postcard No. 154). Around the year 1900, there was an all-women *tambura* ensemble in Zagreb whose leader, it seems, was Milutin Farkaš (photograph in Ranitović 1974:237), while the Women's Tambura Choir of the Home-Helps' Co-Operative performed in 1939 at the concert given by Zagreb *tambura* ensembles (HGZ [Croatian Music Institute] Program No. 1939/41).

The growth in the number of *tambura* ensembles among Croatian migrants in the USA prompted their increasing distinctiveness during the 1930s, so that children's *tambura* choirs and orchestras appeared in which young girls participated only somewhat more rarely than boys, and during the 1930s and 1940s there were several exclusively women *tambura* ensembles in Illinois and Pennsylvania: *Katarina Zrinska, Rožmarin, Vesele djevojke, Chicago's All-Girl Tamburica Orchestra, Slovenski djevojački tamburaški zbor "Lira"*, and *Hrvatske kćeri* who were active for the longest time (see Kolar 1975:21, 56-57).

Mirjana Škunca provided valuable data about the Split amateur women and men players in the second half of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century (1991:338-343). Judging from the sources which were available to her, in Split between 1882 and 1918 *tamburas* were played predominantly by women (Ana Nikičević, the Bulat, Gentilizza, Kolombatović, Kosta, Ljubić, Nazor, Rafaelli, Tecilazić and Zanelli sisters, along with only two men — G. Dević who played the *brač* and was a *tambura* teacher, and the *tambura*-player Gjuro Gentilizza). Because of the incomplete data (mostly only the initials of the personal names), no conclusions can be drawn on the portion of men and women among those who played the mandolin (Arnold Cambj [Kambj], Dalia Dadić, Eta Maroli, O. Hajek, C. Machiedo, Z. Markovina, J. Šoljan and G. Treche). For the time being, it is not possible to explain the considerable preponderance of women *tambura*

Apart from *tambura* ensembles, I also came across a small number of other organized urban amateur instrumental ensembles in which women played between the two world wars. For example, the first cast of the Croatian Symphony Accordion Orchestra *Akordeon*, founded in 1934, consisted of 10 men accordionists, 3 women accordionists, a pianist and a woman player of a set of drums; 15 boys and 10 girls played in the accordion orchestra *Hrvatsko dječje carstvo*;<sup>15</sup> while a women's mandolin ensemble was active as part of the Italian community in Mali Lošinj during the 1920s (photograph shown at the *Folk Instruments of National Minorities in Croatia* exhibition, Zagreb 2000).

Their positions as members of a family and as participants in national-integrating and modernizing processes during the second half of 19th and the first half of 20th century made it possible for women players' musicianship to prevail over women players' gender. These were also the positions which women players shared with men players: for both, their immediate families or their imagined national family could be a source of support in their activities and in favourable reception of these activities. The remaining women's positions were based precisely on certain stereotypes on women (from the woman player as a member of the so-called fairer sex, to the woman player as a shameless woman, and the reverse of the stereotype in the woman player as a mannish woman) or on the (self)negation of serious musicianship (the woman player as a substitute for an absent man player, and the woman player of handy and substitute instruments).<sup>16</sup>

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players in Split over the men players. It is possible that the sources upon which Škunca based her list of Split amateur musicians emphasized the women as a curiosity, with no mention of the standard (so that only the women names have survived until today). Still, it is also possible that the women of Split really did play the *tambura* more than men did, which could possibly be confirmed and explained only by new research into the same sources.

<sup>15</sup> The *Akordeon* nurtured "serious" and "cheerful" music, that is, arrangements of popular works from the field of art music and foreign popular music, particularly the modern dances from the west (e.g. the foxtrot, slow-fox, tango), jazz-schlagers, film music, marches and potpourris of folk tunes. It tried to "acquaint our public with the undreamed-of technical and musical possibilities of one of the most modern instruments of the present: the piano accordion", and to "offer accomplished accordion-players a chance to make music together, while giving other lovers of the accordion a possibility to enjoy the sound of that lovely instrument" (an extract from the program of a concert held in Zagreb in 1940, at which the accordion orchestra of *Hrvatsko dječje carstvo* also performed as one of the guests; kept in the *Hrvatski državni arhiv* [Croatian State Archive], HDA No. 639/2; see also the program of the concert held in Zagreb in 1938; kept in the *Hrvatski glazbeni zavod* [Croatian Music Institute], HGZ Program No. 1938/30).

<sup>16</sup> These positions are somewhat similar to those discussed by Ellen Koskoff in her cross-cultural survey of literature on women playing musical instruments. She stresses that "instruments, their sounds, and performance contexts, associated with women tend to be devalued in many societies, that is, seen as associated with children or 'amateur' and/or linked to women's marginal social and sexual status" (Koskoff 1995:122). The author differentiates four basic socio-musical contexts of women's instrumental performances:

Women's attractiveness and drawing power were linked largely with the so-called *Damenkapelle*, travelling women instrumental entertainment ensembles which were hired in the first decades of the 20th century by various types of catering and hospitality establishments: from prestigious hotels in the Croatian tourist resorts to provincial taverns. So the elite Split café *Na Novoj Obali* prior to World War I offered "discrete music-making by the increasingly popular small salon ensembles, including the Poldi Wratil *Damenkapelle* which, already because of its (female) members, has retained its attractiveness for the longest time" (Škunca 1991:232); in Rijeka in 1929 a *Damenkapelle* performed in what was then the most popular hotel and café *Kontinental* (Ruck [in print]); a Czech *Damenkapelle* entertained tourists in Kupari near Dubrovnik in 1936; while in Slavonski Brod the *Bosnian Tambura Damen-Kapelle*, known for its "good playing and singing of *sevdalinka* [love songs] and classical pieces" performed at the *Vila Velebita* tavern during the Christmas holidays in 1930 (from the tavern-keeper's advertisement in *Narodni glasnik*, December 1930). It was precisely the foreign *Damenkapelle* and the relatively good reputation they enjoyed what probably initiated, or at least helped, the formation of domestic women entertainment instrumental ensembles (e.g. the all-women jazz-orchestra whose foundation was announced in Chudoba 1941; a photograph of the largely women's *American jazz-band* from the Slavonia region in the early 1930s, exhibited at the *Tambura — Traditional Instrument* exhibition, Vinkovci 1996). However, such ensembles did not always operate and/or were they regarded only as ensembles made up of (attractive) ladies who made music, but also some of them as ensembles of ostensible musicians who in fact lived from their appearance or even literally engaged in prostitution.<sup>17</sup>

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the context of the court in which "historically, most musicians (both male and female)... suffered somewhat from a low social status, yet only performances by women are described as linked to their social-sexual roles, primarily as courtesans" (ibid.:116); the context for courtship which "provided... women of the upper and middle classes (those with 'unblemished reputations') the opportunity to "display idealized notions of proper female behavior and 'feminine accomplishments'", particularly in a "semi-private, protected environment" (ibid.:117-118); ritual contexts, "especially those of healing, initiation, burial, or those involving role-reversals, where inter-gender relations are protested or mediated" (ibid.:115-16); the context of everyday life, "involving musical performances accompanying food preparation, child care, or perhaps self-entertainment" (ibid.:117).

<sup>17</sup> For example, at the end of the 1930s in Našice a certain *Damenkapelle* (consisting of a violinist, two *bugarija*-players and a bass-player) caused concern to the wives of respectable Našice craftsmen, since, because of the women players, "they often stayed on longer than normally [in the tavern owned] by Florian, so that the craftsmen's wives jealously guarded their lawful spouses from straying, God forbid, from their nuptial nests into unfaithfulness with the *tambura*-players" (Majer 2000:77). An even more outstanding example is that of certain Zagreb taverns, which the police department proclaimed in 1937 as having "hired women musicians and singers only to serve as so-called *animir-dame* [B-girls], and they engage in the most vulgar prostitution and exploit the guests in the most blatant fashion", that is, "conduct an immoral life and engage in prostitution", and on numerous occasions "they have robbed our citizens and

Such a position of women players was in keeping with folk concepts as mediated by early ethnographic writings. According to Kuhač, "the people think that it is not fitting for girls and women to play reed-pipes" (1877/41:12), while Ivanišević supplemented him by the comment that they "are ashamed to do that in front of people, in front of men" (Ivanišević 1987 [1906]:507). Thus, even if they know how to play (which was often doubted — see, for example, Jurić in Lovretić 1990:637), it was shameful to do so. Because of this frequent idea of shame, Ankica Petrović assumes "that musical instruments are in some way associated with sexuality or that the instruments may actually be seen as sex symbols" (Petrović 1990:73).<sup>18</sup> Concordantly, this ignominy in ethnographic descriptions of folk music relates largely to "shameless" women players of aerophones, while women players of chordophones — particularly *gusle*-players — are usually described as mannish women. During his research into folk epics at the beginning of the 1930s, Matija Murko met or at least heard of women who sang to their own accompaniment on the *gusle* in Sandžak, Montenegro and Bosnia, and he met a blind woman *gusle*-player in Croatia (at Drniš in the Dalmatian hinterland). Of these women, one "lived with the highwaymen [*hajduks*], smoked a pipe and did men's work" (Murko 1951:190, 202); another "behaved like a man" (ibid.:190); a third carried out "a lot of men's work" (ibid.:202); a fourth sang without the *gusle* but "like a man" (ibid.:195); while he described in more detail the fifth woman, Darinka Radunović (b. 1913) from Kraljska Bara in Montenegro. Murko wrote: "She had completed four grades of elementary school. As she had nothing to do during the summer holidays, she started to sing from her 13th year, first for the members of her household, later in response to requests from guests [her mother owned an inn, note N. C.]. She did not listen to the songs but learnt them from books... She holds the *gusle* in her left hand, and fiddles and sings very energetically like a man, sometimes unclearly in a hoarse voice... People say of her that 'she deports herself like a man'. She says her mother: 'I shall get married' ['I shall take a wife']" (ibid.:194).<sup>19</sup> Ankica Petrović connects such *gusle*-players with *virginas*, female persons who took over male gender roles, either because

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foreigners in the bars where they play". Therefore, the police issued an order which, among other, prohibited "women members of the orchestras and the women singers to sit at the tables with guests or the enter... the separate premises (the private booths) where the female staff, and particularly the various women singers and *tambura*-players then conduct immorality" (Police Report to the Royal Banate Admin. in Zagreb on July 28, 1937; kept in the HDA, SBUO Folio II 905/6873/1938, ZP 3011).

<sup>18</sup> Kurt Sachs put forward a similar thesis as early as in 1940. In his view, "the player's sex and the form of his or her instrument, or at least its interpretation, depend on one another. As the magic task of more or less all primitive instruments is life, procreation, fertility, it is evident that the life-giving roles of either sex are seen or reproduced in their shape or playing motion. A man's instrument assumes the form of a man's organ, a woman's of a woman's organ. And in the latter case the addition of a fertilizing object is not far off" (1940:51).

<sup>19</sup> The phrase she used, "ja ću se oženiti", is the active male form for "I shall get married".

of "pronounced hormone disorders which cannot be hidden from the public" or because of "a lack of male children in the family", which was "compensated by assigning one of the daughters a male gender role, including the rights, duties, social communication and artistic expression characteristic of male" (Petrović 1990:74).<sup>20</sup> In his article about women in Serbian vocal tradition Dimitrije Golemović describes the woman *gusle*-player as one who has, through a combination of circumstances, become "head of the household", and has adapted her behaviour "which is marked by a whole series of typically male acts (that, for example, she smokes, drinks, and the like)", including singing to the *gusle*, which would "in ordinary circumstances be regarded as a type of sacrilege" (Golemović 1998:54).<sup>21</sup> There is less information about women *gusle*-players on the territory of Croatia. An informant born in 1894 in Vinišće near Trogir spoke to Ivančan of three sisters (Jako, Dore and Ivka Pažanin) who, in his young years, played and sang to the *gusle* on the terrace of their house, and two of them dressed like men (Ivančan 1999b:14; see also Pažanin 1986:169). Unlike the Pažanin sisters, there is no mention of any signs of masculinization in the two Lika women *gusle*-players Ivančan wrote about: "Dragica Aleksić, who came to work in a factory in Lički Osijek, was told by the foreman: — It's alright, Dragica, you don't have to do any work, just take the *gusle* and play for us", while "it was said of Đuka Jokić from Prljevo that she played the *gusle* better than any man" (Ivančan 1971:82).

The last social foothold which simultaneously provided opportunities and restricted women players sprang from the (self)negation of serious women's musicianship. The woman player was often a one-off jocular substitute for an absent man player or one who was reluctant to play, who did not feel like playing, or had to be talked into performing. The un-seriousness of her position could also be read off in her playing on children's, handy or substitute instruments. Either former or latter, this was in both cases a temporary state, only a short-lived excursion outside the established order, which made it clear how things really stood. A good example of the first aspect is given by Milinović in his description of entertainment evenings in Lovreć in the Dalmatian hinterland: "As soon as darkness falls, the young men gather in places where there are lots of girls, and the fun begins. As soon as the house is full, the *gusle*-player is immediately handed his instrument, he feigns reluctance and then one of the girls seizes the *gusle* a number of times, and... starts to decry reluctance and sing a heroic song accompanied by the *gusle*". She sings, for example, these verses: "My *gusle*, shall we sing one, / Sing the song of a hero / I cannot, my thin *gusle* [my *gusle* are thin], / Strong *gusle*, and weak hands — / Those two cannot be squared" (quoted according to Kuhač

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<sup>20</sup> We could add that the *virginas* (particularly their "pronounced hormone disorders") could conceal a place for homosexuality in the context of marked heterosexuality and/or as yet unrecognized homosexuality.

<sup>21</sup> Golemović does not give any historical framework nor does he mention the source; somewhat earlier in the text he only refers to his "twenty-years-long field experience".

1877/38:8). In a position of jocular substitute were usually girls who, as in the above example, emphasized in some way (or of whom it was emphasized) that they were not real players of the instrument. A quite exceptional example is that of the old lady Nina who in the 1870s was the last to play the *lijerica* [lyre] on the island of Lošinj. She can be regarded as a real player because she (most likely) played for a set fee in socially legitimated situations of music-making (on Sundays, at Carnival time, at weddings), as a substitute because of the disappearing tradition in which she participated, and as a joke because of the jocular, and even mocking verses about her which circulated in the local community (see Širola 1931:158-159; Gavazzi 1930:4).

The most prominent musical instrument of the second aspect of substitution was the mouth-organ, a small, portable, cheap and relatively loud instrument which served mainly as a substitute instrument for dance accompaniment in the context of a smaller, unrepresentative dance events (e.g. bees). That is perhaps the reason why today's informants mention relatively often that mount-organs were played by women in the past. The second group is made up of reed-pipe instruments which served as toys for children, but which were often "played on nicely" by girls looking after younger children — for example, on the island of Rab straw *sviralica* whose sound, according to Širola, was "very gentle, as on the very softest oboe" (Širola 1931:140), thus probably making *sviralica* appropriate for girls and children. Ivančan gives several examples of the use of handy musical instruments in his ethnochoreological monographs, particularly in the three volumes dedicated to the folk dance customs of Podravina. One such group was described to Ivančan by a woman collocutor from Hlebine: "When we [females] gathered together, we would become bored, so we would play. One played on a *češalj* [comb], so, she placed paper over the comb and played. Another banged on the *rohla* so that it was like a bass. (And what is that?) It is a stove, an oven. It is of iron. It used to resound like that. (I had never heard of it before.) And then the others would sing, and dance to it" (Ivančan 1999a:144). Similarly, in Grabrovnica females would "play on a comb, and danced when there were merry get-togethers... There was no music, so we played ourselves. We ourselves made the music. So when wedding parties were coming to an end, when the *mužikaši* [instrumental group consisting basically of two violins and bass, note N. C.] or the *tambura* ensemble went home, then we [females] made our own music. One would play on a comb, another on a *rifljača* (scrubbing board, note I.I.) and that wide *litrača* (bottle used in taverns, note I.I.)" (Ivančan 1989:208-209; also comp. *ibid.*:215-216).

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In the *Postludium* of her article about European ladies' orchestras between 1870 and 1950, Margaret Myers stressed several issues which she

encountered in her research: "the relative invisibility of ladies' orchestras in modern music history as well as in contemporary source materials", "the contradictory nature of the sightings reported and thus the lack of a useful definition of the object", and the fact that "the material was not cataloged or collated under relevant rubrics, for example, '*Damenkapellen*'" (Myers 2000:210-211). All these problems also emerge in research into women players of folk music instruments in Croatia. Moreover, the sources (which I have managed to find to date) are so small in number that, for example, the "contradictory nature of the sightings reported" can barely be seen, while the invisibility of the women players in professional and scholarly texts could be called "almost complete" rather than relative. The basic stimulus for this research was the widely disseminated conviction that women do not play folk music instruments, and particularly that they did not play them in the past. It turned out that both components of this thesis are faulty and that the in/visibility of the women players depends on (ethno)musicological and social canons. Just as musicological research has shown that the focus on the history of the music works, style epochs, development and great composers excludes women (see, for example, Solie 1992), the ethnomusicological limitation to *folk* (peasant, old, local and nationally specific) music, its products and its most prominent representatives excludes them in a similar way. However, (ethno)-musicological canons are part of social canons, so what is in question is not simply their rejection. There is no doubt that "changes in social structure and gender ideology are also reflected in changes for women performers" (Koskoff 1995:125), so that over recent years in Croatia a relatively large number of women players have taken part at diverse public occasions. However, at the same time, the old patterns continue to persist as regards their activities and the reception of such activities. In other words, women players today — although they may emphasize the fluidity, changeability and performativity of gender identities in their comprehension of their own music and gender pathways — also have to negotiate with or relate to persistent, both supporting and restricting canons inherited from the past.

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## IZMEĐU ETNOMUZIKOLOŠKIH I DRUŠTVENIH KANONA: POVIJESNI IZVORI O SVIRAČICAMA NARODNIH GLAZBALA U HRVATSKOJ

### SAŽETAK

Osnovni je poticaj za ovo istraživanje bilo široko rasprostranjeno uvjerenje da žene ne sviraju narodna glazbala, a pogotovo da ih nisu svirale u prošlosti. Pokazalo se da obje sastavnice ove teze ne stoje te da ne/vidljivost sviračica ovisi o (etno)muzikološkim i društvenim kanonima. U okviru etnomuzikologije, njihova je nevidljivost uvjetovana etnomuzikološkim ograničavanjem na *narodnu* glazbu, njezine produkte i njezine najreprezentativnije predstavnike. No, (etno)muzikološki su kanoni dio društvenih kanona, pa se stoga ne radi o tome da ih se jednostavno odbaci. I današnje sviračice — iako u shvaćanju vlastita glazbenog i rodnog puta mogu naglašavati fluidnost, promjenljivost i performativnost rodnih identiteta — na neki način moraju pregovarati s istodobno podupirućim i ograničavajućim kanonima baštinjenima iz prošlosti.

Položaj članice obitelji i položaj sudionice u nacionalnointegracijskim i modernizacijskim procesima temeljne su pozicije koje su u drugoj polovici 19. i prvoj polovici 20. stoljeća u Hrvatskoj omogućavale ženama da njihovo glazbeništvo pretegne nad njihovim rodom. To su ujedno iste pozicije koje sviračice dijele sa sviračima. Preostale su se ženske pozicije temeljile upravo na nekima od stereotipa o ženskom rodu (od sviračice kao pripadnice tzv. ljepšega spola do sviračice kao bestidnice te naličje stereotipne žene u sviračici kao muškarači) ili se pak radilo o pozicijama (samo)negiranja ozbiljnog glazbeništva (sviračica kao zamjena za odsutnog svirača i sviračica priručnih i zamjenskih glazbala).

Ključne riječi: narodna glazba, glazbenice, povijest, Hrvatska