

## **KLAPA SINGING, A TRADITIONAL FOLK PHENOMENON OF DALMATIA**

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The article examines phenomenon of traditional dalmatian singing - the klapa singing. The author identifies two types of the klapas; a traditional folk klapa, an informal group of friends, usually brought together by similar interests, age group or occupations and festival klapa, formally organized group with regular rehearsals and performances. Membership, repertoire and performance occasions of the klapas are categories also examined in this article.

### **Introduction**

For a long time, the dominant obstacle to this article was in selecting the exact approach I might take.<sup>1</sup> The hesitant feeling originated from the fact that klapa singing was, and still is, an integral part of my life. As a culture carrier, I was apprehensive about writing on my own cultural background. To me, the klapa was and still is a symbol of my cultural identity.

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<sup>1</sup> In the broader sense the article is part of the author's master thesis: *Social and Musical Structure of the Klapa Style: Dalmatia and Vancouver*, University of British Columbia, 1994.

In most cases, ethnomusicological research tends to look for data from the neutral observer's or participant's perspective. My position, in this case, is that of a participant rather than an observer. This position has advantages and disadvantages. Being a culture carrier certainly is a great advantage in helping to understand the Dalmatian way of life, social and historical circumstances, language, and customs. On the other hand, being too close to the culture could make evaluation of my data subjective and biased in some respects.<sup>2</sup> Fortunately, there is a current trend in ethnomusicology wherein more and more scholars are exploring their own cultures, though specifically from ethnomusicological perspectives.<sup>3</sup>

My love for singing began in early childhood when I learned to sing through listening and imitating older klapa singers. Having them for my idols, I hoped for a place among them. At the age of fifteen I had a chance to become a member of a klapa ensemble. I was fortunate to become a part of one of the best klapa ensembles, the klapa "Trogir", under the direction of Nikola Buble, the eminent *maestro* ("leader").<sup>4</sup> Western musical education helped me to become more than one of the singers; at the age of twenty, I became a *maestro* of the klapa "Trogir".

During years of work with the klapa I experienced all sorts of different settings; from spontaneous singing on the streets and squares of Trogir and various Dalmatian towns to performance singing on the stages of world metropolis as such as Zagreb, Paris, San Francisco, etc. At the same time I was working at organizing old traditional klapas and new youth klapas.<sup>5</sup>

My attitudes towards klapa singing and the subjects of ethnomusicology were fundamentally altered during my studies in Vancouver, Canada where I was exposed to various North American theories and approaches. Ethnomusicology is known as a dynamic and adaptable matter, one that always looks for the new approaches. A substantial literature speaks of that matter; themes range from definitions to issues involving taxonomy of musical activity and the principal question of value. The main characteristic of the ethnomusicology of the 1980s and 1990s is interest in shifting the focus of the field: from the examination of static forms to the understanding of music as a process rather than simply

<sup>2</sup> See Mark Slobin (1992:329–337).

<sup>3</sup> See Bruno Nettl (1992:375–401).

<sup>4</sup> Nikola Buble, PhD, the prominent Croatian ethnomusicologist, is a great promoter of the klapa singing. Beside his research work, he was klapa leader (*maestro*), publisher and director of the "Festival dalmatinskih klapa" [Dalmatian Klapa Festival] in Omiš.

<sup>5</sup> A recent experience was introducing the klapa to Americans. From '92 on I had regular workshops in Mendocino, Cal. where in a short time (one week) I tried to develop interest for klapa singing among participants of Balkan Music and Dance Workshops. The result was a mixed klapa, an arrangement not quite common in Dalmatia.

as a product. Such processes are change and acculturation, urbanization, the mass media, survivals, revitalization, etc.<sup>6</sup>

In Canada, as well, I had the opportunity to practice klapa singing. Vancouver is home to many Croatians, mostly fishermen from Dalmatia. In 1979 a group of fishermen from Sumartin, a small village on the island of Brač, started the klapa "Zvonimir". For these people klapa was a nostalgic reminiscence of their homeland.<sup>7</sup> The rules and goals of the klapa changed when I became the leader of the klapa "Zvonimir". I took the leadership and proposed certain rules and goals to the members. The new approaches transformed their traditional way of singing into contemporary festival klapa singing. This transformation can be compared to the festival influence on contemporary Dalmatian klapas. Although they liked the change in the sound quality, there was resistance to the new rules. Discipline in singing, which requires regular formal practicing, was a major obstacle. Impressions of the first couple of performances rapidly changed attitudes towards the formal practicing. Members began to enjoy the new singing experience. Performances became an important goal and a way of displaying ethnic and cultural identity.

The terms traditional and festival klapas are going to be used many times so I have to explain them at the beginning. The term traditional klapa represents an informal group of singers who sing occasionally, for the sake of the singing. Oral tradition and simple music-making are main characteristics of this klapa type. The term festival klapa is associated with the beginning of the Omiš Festival of Dalmatian Klapas. The Festival of Dalmatian Klapas in Omiš, established in 1967, is an annual competition and great promoter of klapa singing; a bond between amateur singing and scholastic directing. The festival klapa is a formally organized group of singers with clear aims and intentions. Although the joy of singing binds them, the performance and presentation of the singing are their

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<sup>6</sup> See Bruno Nettl (1992:375–401).

<sup>7</sup> In the North American context the klapa "Zvonimir" would be classified as the immigrant singing society. Irving Babow (Babow 1954) suggest that the immigrant singing societies of North America primarily provide satisfaction for a small number of immigrants, rather than serve as an institution established to meet the needs of the many. Babow divides the immigrant singing societies into four categories: the nostalgic, the ceremonious, the cultural indoctrination and the protest singing society. All four types, according to Babow, require for survival the direction of a musically trained professional leader who is familiar with the folk music and national songs of the particular immigrant group. It is customary for the choruses to hold weekly rehearsals and to perform in concerts several times a year. Furthermore, the klapa "Zvonimir" fits into Babow's category, "the nostalgic singing society" (Babow 1954:292), where the participants are preoccupied with the songs that they brought from their homeland and with the cherished memories of their mother country.

main objective. All of this is realized with the help of a trained leader who selects singers and repertoire, and regularly practice with the klapa.

This paper is a general survey of social, historical and musicological aspects of the klapa and klapa singing, with commentary and a personal view of klapa singing.

### Klapa singing

The word *klapa* originated in the Trieste region of Northern Italy (Buble 1988:68). According to Buble, in this particular dialect of the Trieste region, klapa means a "group", people linked by the group. The link is usually defined as a mutual relationship among members, primarily associated in friendship. According to R. Vidović (1979), the root of the word is the verb "capulata" (to bind, to be fastened), originally related to a group of animals in a herd or flock. This description gave the word klapa a negative connotation, similar to the word "gang". In my experience, neither musical nor social meanings of the word klapa ever had negative connotations. Older informants talk about the klapa as a leisure time category, separating klapa from any political or religious connotations. Over time, negative connotations of the word klapa vanished. Today the term is synonymous with a specific folk singing phenomenon of Dalmatia.<sup>8</sup>

In Dalmatia, the word klapa appeared in the mid-19th century (Buble 1988:69), when trade between Dalmatia and Trieste was quite frequent. About the same time, group singing appeared - as a folk phenomenon - in coastal-urban and suburban areas and on the islands of Dalmatia. The mid-19th century was a turbulent period in the history of many European nations. Dalmatians, as well as all Croats, started to become aware of their national identity through the language and culture. This movement was known as the Illyrian Revival in Northern Croatia and the National Revival in Dalmatia (in the late 1860s). This national revival manifested itself through a variety of cultural events. Choirs, tamburitza orchestras, mandolin orchestras and accordion orchestras were sprouting like "mushrooms after rain" (Buble 1980:7). They were important influences on the origins of klapa singing.

I collected various songs from the Illyrian Revival period from my informant Josip Cvitanović, from Sumartin (he is now in Vancouver). He

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<sup>8</sup> Bratoljub Klaić (1966:629) considers the word *klapa* a jargon word which has the following four meanings: *družba*, *družina*, *skupina*, *klika* ("company", "group", "chorus", "clique"). The word *družina* ("group") is probably the most preferable to describe the idea of klapa singing.

sang to me various songs that he recognized as klapa songs. Some of these songs were popular marching songs and arousal songs from the Illyrian period. Therefore, through time some of these songs had been adopted by the klapa singers as a part of their regular repertoire. The klapa was never an insulated phenomenon. The character, musical content and style of the klapa were dynamically modified, over time, freely adopting new changes.<sup>9</sup> That is one of the reasons for the present day popularity of the klapa, especially among the younger generation, and a certain sign of the long-lasting future of the klapa.

The term "Dalmatian klapa song" was introduced by the Croatian ethnomusicologist Jerko Bezić (1979:16). Before the work of Bezić, klapa songs were recognized by various descriptive titles. At the end of the last century, the Croatian musicologist, Franjo Kuhač (1892:164–165 and 217), classified klapa songs as *gradske melodije* ("town melodies"). At the same time, the Czech painter and musicologist Ljudevit Kuba (1898:176) described those songs as *napjevi koje narod pjeva u gradskim zborovima* ("tunes that people sang in town choirs"). Božidar Širola (1942:155) named those tunes *lagašne i priproste pjesmice* ("simple and indigenous short songs") and categorized this song style as *dalmatinske popievke u duru* ("Dalmatian songs in a major key") (1955:131). Antun Dobronić (1947:115) described the same repertoire as *melodije varoške* ("urban melodies") or *melodije koje se odvijaju u paralelnim tercama... gdje gdje dublji glasovi zastaju uz toniku i dominantu* ("melodies in parallel thirds... where deeper voices follow the tonic and dominant"). Vinko Žganec (1962:62) and Jerko Bezić (1962:35) recorded the term *napjevi u ternom duru* ("songs in major scale thirds"). Finally, Silvije Bombardelli (1970:14), termed all coastal and island Dalmatian folk songs *dalmatinska folklorna urbana pjesma* ("Dalmatian urban folk songs"). The present term, *dalmatinska klapaska pjesma* ("Dalmatian klapa song") incorporates both the musical and the social aspects of this folk musical phenomenon, accenting the association between klapa singing and the particular songs sung exclusively by the klapa group.

Bezić was the first one to perceive notable differences between Dalmatian klapa songs and Dalmatian urban songs. The latter type embodies an extensive and more diverse repertoire than Dalmatian klapa songs. Dalmatian urban songs could be performed by a variety of organized, as well as spontaneous, singing groups and individuals with or without instrumental accompaniment. Today most of the Dalmatian urban songs are based on pop festival songs and old popular hits. This type of song is very selective; just a small amount of the songs survive more than

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<sup>9</sup> See Maja Povrzanović (1989:159–170).

one season. Klapa songs, on the other hand, are performed almost exclusively without instrumental accompaniment. Although klapa groups have mainly klapa songs in their repertoires, they occasionally venture into different styles of folk and classical vocal music. When a klapa attempts to sing in a different singing style, other than the klapa singing style, it is not recognized as klapa singing.

What is my experience with introduction of the new styles for klapa ensembles? It emerged from the various trips to the other countries where klapa singers were exposed to the a cappella singing of other cultures. It was a sort of challenge for me as a leader and for the singers to explore different styles. They wanted to perceive and understand different cultures through the music. The klapa's "Trogir" "Tragurium" LP is the result of that reasoning. There is an old map of the world on the cover of the LP, which symbolizes their intention: meet the world through a cappella, four-part singing. Some of the klapas are going a little further, changing the name klapa into vocal octet (a classical music term).

The influences on klapa singing style were, for a long time, the topic of discussion among Croatian scholars.<sup>10</sup> The Omiš festival, a mainstream force in klapa singing (over the last three decades) organized a group of prominent scholars and klapa leaders who transcribed and systematized all the songs sung at the first ten Omiš festivals.<sup>11</sup> The classification was published in *Zbornik dalmatinskih klapskih pjesama* (Vol. 1, 1979:19):

1. Dalmatian (traditional) klapa song
2. The Gregorian chant
3. Italian, broader Mediterranean melody
4. Marching and arousing song melodies
5. Composed Dalmatian klapa song
6. Songs from interior regions of Croatia
7. Songs from the older stratum of North Dalmatian folk tradition

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<sup>10</sup> S. Bombardelli and L. Županović were two of the scholars who started classifying the influences on klapa singing. The elements from their lists could be found in the Omiš Festival's list. S. Bombardelli (1970:14–21) identified six influences on *Dalmatian urban folk songs* :

- 1) the Gregorian chant
- 2) song books of the Illyrian Movement in the mid-19th century
- 3) Italian and Mediterranean melodies
- 4) singing of the Dalmatian hinterland (the mountains)
- 5) mass songs, working class songs and revolutionary songs
- 6) Croatian popular hits of the 1920s–1950s, with characteristics of folk songs

A re-classification was formulated by Lovro Županović (1977:70). He used the first three sources from Bombardelli's categorization, and added a fourth category - the influence of mass media (radio, television).

<sup>11</sup> The group's members: Jerko Bezić, Ljubo Stipišić, Duško Tambača, Josip Veršić and Eduard Tudor.

8. Ceremonial, narrative, or other songs which are performed by klapa, and sung like klapa songs

9. The songs taken from old and contemporary pop hits

My comments follow on almost twenty years later. In meantime, some of the categories have progressed in quantity and popularity while some of the influences have digressed.

Categorization starts with "Dalmatian (traditional) klapa song", without any given explanation about its origins or sources. *Zbornik dalmatinskih klapskih pjesama* (Vol. 1, 1979) contains 217 different songs, performed at the ten festivals in Omiš (1967–1976). More than half of the songs (122) are included in the first category. The only apparent collective characteristic is found in the texts that deal exclusively with love. Musically, the *nota finalis* ("last note of the melody") in all the songs is the major third of the diatonic major scale. I postulate that a thorough musical analysis of these songs, specifically analysis of the metro rhythmic structure, melody contours and weighted scales would reveal many common characteristics.<sup>12</sup> The simple melodies of these tunes made them recognizable. Therefore, many klapas, especially beginners, like to start singing some of these songs.

The second category, subject to the oldest supposed influence, the Gregorian chant, has been given particular attention by many scholars. According to Bombardelli (1980:614–617), klapa songs influenced by the Gregorian chant started in the local chapters of sacred societies called *bratimi* ("brotherhoods"). The singers of these societies "... listened and learned in the church, then went out to sing." The first significant change was in the modification of the song text. The sacred text was changed to a secular text while the melodic line remained in original form. The second change occurred with the addition of a parallel melodic line over the first voice melody. As a result, the bass melodic line (when added) assumed a harmonic function, which changed the original modes in the tune (of the Gregorian chant) into diatonic major mode.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Weighted scale is a analytical method used, especially in contemporary ethnomusicology, to show similarities and differences between songs based on the range of the melody and importance of individual pitches within the melody, for more, see Thrasher (1988).

<sup>13</sup> Evidence for this statement can be found in *Glazbena kultura stanovnika trogirске općine* by Nikola Buble (1988:71). In the chapter about klapa singing in Trogir, Buble compares the melody of the klapa song, *Lipa li si Mare moja* ("Mary, You are Beautiful"), with the melodic line of Kyrie I (Mathias 1936:96), a Gregorian chant from the 10th century. The resemblance between the melodic lines is noticeable. Buble also compares the second part of the same klapa song (in four-part singing) with the liturgical song *Rodil se* ("He Was Born"). The melody of the klapa song is a consistent third over the melody of the liturgical song.

The third category is influence of foreign, mainly neighboring countries. It is quite common to find similar tunes in different parts of Europe, as well as in Dalmatia.<sup>14</sup> Many tunes similar to klapa tunes can be found in other European folk traditions. Bruno Nettl (1990:48) among others, named these song correspondences as "wandering melodies". According to Nettl, the existence of these melodies, or melody types, is proof of the close relationship among art music, church music and folk music. He found the verification for this phenomenon in the homogenous musical characteristics of European folk songs.

Nikola Buble (1992:690) explains the appearance of these songs in Dalmatia as the willingness of the Dalmatian people to be open to, and employ, new European influences.

Category four is interesting because it was the first time that anyone had mentioned the influences of marching bands. Marching bands were introduced in Napoleonic times (Buble 1980:7). This tradition has continued to this day. Each town or small community has its own marching band. Arrangements for the marching bands are in four-part harmony, as are klapa arrangements. The fact is that a few klapa singers were or still are members of the local marching bands. I postulate that an active listening ear could be an explanation for the ability to sing baritone line melody spontaneously.

Category five, composed Dalmatian klapa songs, is a newer tradition that stems from the beginning of the Omiš Festival. By the second year of the Omiš Festival, 1968, there was a special evening devoted to composed Dalmatian klapa songs. In the last twenty-five years there have been more than 217 songs composed for this occasion. Some of these songs are only performed once but others become part of klapa repertoires, e.g., *Dalmatino povišću pritrujena* ("Oh, Dalmatia, fatigued by [your] history").<sup>15</sup>

Categories six to eight can be found in klapa repertoires but are rarely performed and therefore are not as significant as the first five categories. Their influence is minimal.

<sup>14</sup> Nikola Buble (1992:690) noted that the popular klapa song *Ja san majko, cura fina* (Zbornik dalmatinskih pjesama, No. 126, 304, "Mother, I Am a Nice Girl") is a close variant of the Italian folk song *Dove Sei Stato, Mio Bell' Alpino* (Malatesta 1972:106), while a klapa song from Trogir *Ako si jubo posla spat* (Buble 1986:173) ("If You Went to Sleep, My Darling") is a variant of the Eastern Austrian song *Morgen Muss Ich Fort Von Hier* (*Goldens Melodieenbuch* 89:61). All of these songs have been adopted and arranged in the klapa style; however, the original melody is almost unchanged.

<sup>15</sup> Vedrana Milin-Ćurin (1990:231) noted three types of composed klapa songs: the songs inspired by pop music festivals, newly composed songs in simple klapa style, and compositions based on the melodic elements of the Gregorian chant.



Finally, category nine, old and popular hits is an important part of klapa repertoires. Simplicity, melodiousness, and easily remembered texts about love are reasons for many of these songs now being recognized as folk songs. Festival klapas sing current Croatian popular hits, especially those from the Split Festival of Popular Hits. In the last two decades klapas have occasionally performed as backup singers at this festival.<sup>16</sup>

### Performing styles

Klapa ensembles perform klapa songs in three- or four-part singing. The harmonization of the voices is typical of klapa singing. The melodic line of the first tenor, in traditional klapa song arrangements, is regularly followed by a parallel melodic line in thirds below. Thirds singing is a typical characteristic of klapa singing. The baritone line defines the third note of the chord. In traditional arrangements, the baritone cadence regularly progresses from the leading-tone degree to the dominant degree (VII - V). Contemporary arrangements of the baritone lines have more embellishments and passing notes. The melodic line of the bass features the harmonic functions of the tonic, dominant and subdominant, typically in root position.

There are differences between the singing styles of traditional and Festival klapas. Traditionally, klapas sing their songs in a homophonic style. On the other hand, Festival klapas sing a wide variety of homophonic and polyphonic songs, both pop hits and folk songs from different cultures, occasionally with musical accompaniment of guitars, mandolins and even electrical instruments.

Topics of all songs usually deal with love, familiar life situations, *šatar* ("gossiping") and the environment in which they live. Love, though, is the predominant theme.

Technically, klapa singers express their mood by means of open guttural, nasal, serenadlike *sotto voce* and *falsetto* singing, and usually in high-pitched tessitura. It is not always possible to draw a clear dividing line between the specific styles of singing mentioned above. A klapa ensemble can sing using a combination of singing styles depending upon their mood. The main aim of the singers is to achieve the best possible blend of chords. This is of primary importance to the prestige of klapas, in their competition to win audience support.

Historically, the aspiration to delight in homophony, with harmonious ringing chords, has a long tradition in Dalmatia. An important

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<sup>16</sup> See Milin-Ćurin (1995:223–225).

feature of true folk klapa is the ability to sing freely, without help from noted tunes and their harmonisation. This style of singing is known as *pjevanje na uho* ("singing by ear"). Only the leading voice, *prvi tenor* (first tenor, the leader of the group), leads the melody and lyrics of the song. He initiates the singing. The second voice, *šekondo* (second tenor.), immediately joins in at a third below. The third voice *bariton, daje ulja pismi* ("gives oil to the song" - [synonym for the soul]), completes the triad. The fourth voice, *bas* or *basso profondo* (bass), defines the harmonic functions of tonic, dominant and subdominant. He challenges himself in low and strong singing (*profondo*). The song unfolds with the harmonious ringing of chords, as if all the singers were well-acquainted with the melody and lyrics of the song.<sup>17</sup>

Performance style of klapa songs has much in common with the general characteristics of European folk music, specifically with that from the Southern part of Europe, the European Mediterranean.<sup>18</sup> The most characteristic feature of European folk songs, strophic form, which is a specific way of expressing folk poetry, is also a feature in klapa songs. Other European folk song characteristics, such as use of diatonic intervals, church modes and concepts of meter, are also found in klapa songs. The best way to prove it is through the theories and works of the eminent ethnomusicologists.

Béla Bartók's work, about the area once known as Yugoslavia (1951:1–93), suggests general characteristics of the songs of the Southern Slavs that can be related to klapa singing. Bartók points out that the folk songs of the Southern Slavs (including Croatians) are usually two part songs (A B), heterometric, with melody-stanza structure. Bartók mentions three great centers of part singing in Europe: the German southeastern regions; the great Russian region; the Slovenian and Croatian regions.

In general, he divides European folk singing into two main styles, *parlando-rubato* (free rhythm or with irregular rhythmic patterns) and *tempo giusto* (quicker tempo with more regular metric pulse). Klapa songs are primarily in the relaxed *parlando-rubato* style, though there are also some examples in *tempo giusto*. A combination of the two singing styles can also be found - the first part of a klapa song could be in a slow and

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<sup>17</sup> See Milin-Ćurin (1994:217–222).

<sup>18</sup> Information about Mediterranean group singing is given by Tullia Magrini (1989:53–56). The group singing in three Northern Calabrian villages is an example that Magrini focused on. The group singing has preference for lyrical songs connected with public courtship of girls and private entertainment. It is explained as "one of the main forms of symbolic communication which has an important function within social life."

soft, *parlando-rubato* style, and the second part (the refrain) in *tempo giusto*.<sup>19</sup>

Alan Lomax (1959:927–954) identifies three singing styles of European folk music: "Eurasian", "Old European" and "Modern European". The Eurasian style is represented in Europe in parts of the British Isles, and France, in southern Italy and in the Mohammedan parts of the Balkans. The Old European style is found in the Hebrides, northern England, the Pyrenees, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Croatia, Slovenia, northern Italy, Germany and parts of the Balkans, the Ukraine and Caucasus, while the Modern European style is found mostly in England, France, Hungary, central Italy and colonial America. Certainly, *klapa* singing should be considered a part of the Old European singing style. According to Lomax, this style of singing is done with the throat relaxed (*sotto voce* of *klapa* ensemble singing). The expressions of the singers are lively and animated. He states that the most important characteristic of this style is group singing in harmony. In Lomax's theory, cooperation in music is related to social cooperation. Indeed, *klapa* singers are groups of friends, commonly related by the same or similar vocation or social status. Another social aspect mentioned by Lomax is the position of women in society. Their position in "Old European" areas, according to Lomax, have been one of equality with men. It may be difficult to believe that this statement could apply to Dalmatia, where the men have an unmistakable "macho" image.<sup>20</sup> All the household items are under women's authority. There is an old saying that the woman holds three corners of the house while man holds only one. Many informants mentioned *ofirta* (pocket money) given to the men by their wives for the wine and goods in the *konoba* on Sunday afternoons. However, the women were, and still are, the dominant members of the household in Dalmatia, which fits with Lomax's theory. Outside the household, the social activity of Dalmatian women was minimal. The limited social activity is a possible reason that these women preferred to sing the same tunes on a more individual basis.<sup>21</sup>

All the above characterizes *klapa* singing as a European, and more specifically South European, folk singing style.

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<sup>19</sup> A typical example for this combination is the song "Da si od srebra, da si od zlata..." , Jugoton, Zagreb, LPY-V-739.

<sup>20</sup> Definitions of identities of *klapa* singers are systematically explained by M. Povrzanović (1991:105–120).

<sup>21</sup> At present, female *klapas* are becoming more and more popular. Because of their growing popularity, the Omiš festival dedicated one festival night exclusively to female *klapas* where they compete according the same rules as the male *klapas*.

## Membership

Traditionally, the individuals who sing in the klapas are men. Historically, the collectors of folk songs in Dalmatia (Kuba 1892) documented that this type of singing was exclusively sung by the male groups. Female singers also sang the same tunes but on a more individual basis. In the last two decades, there has been an accelerating popularity of klapa singing among women.<sup>22</sup>

Today, the number of singers in a klapa is not limited by any particular rule. However, in practice, there are usually five to ten singers. The ages of the singers also vary; there are increasing numbers of klapas where younger people sing "shoulder to shoulder" with the older singers. Unlike the traditional association, fathers and sons, or other family relationships, are quite common these days in klapas.

For the classification of the klapa types I will select one given by the Omiš festival group of scholars and klapa leaders (see Bezić 1979:24), which differentiates the following socio-geographic types:

- 1) traditional klapa before the formation of the Omiš Festival.
- 2) newly-formed klapas in the places where klapa singing was a popular tradition in the recent past.
- 3) klapas formed in the smaller villages where klapa singing was not very cultivated or was even unknown before the Omiš Festival.
- 4) klapas formed outside of Dalmatia on the Northern Adriatic coast as well as in some places along the broad belt of the Dalmatian hinterland.

This classification could, undoubtedly, be expanded by a few new categories. Klapa singing is becoming increasingly popular in continental Croatia, especially in the capital, Zagreb. Klapas in Zagreb<sup>23</sup> started as a nostalgic gathering of Dalmatian students. In the last decade, klapas from Zagreb are among the best at the Omiš Festival. At the time, the Omiš Festival group was not informed about the existence of klapas among the Croatian emigrants in North America and Australia,<sup>24</sup> as well as the existence of non-Croatian klapas.<sup>25</sup>

Types 2, 3 and 4 are attributed to the beginning of the Omiš Festival. The traditional klapa ensemble (type 1) gradually decreased,

<sup>22</sup> For more information about women klapa singing see M. Stermšek (1994:197–217).

<sup>23</sup> The klapas "Nostalgija", "Dalmati", "Mareta" and the female klapa "Cesarice" are the best known klapas from Zagreb, and also the winners of the Omiš Festival.

<sup>24</sup> The klapa "Zvonimir" from Vancouver, Canada, the klapa "Dalmacija" from Perth, Australia, the klapa "Chorus Croaticus" from Bern, Switzerland.

<sup>25</sup> The klapa "Sokoli" from Seattle, USA, has performed at the Omiš Festival. Beside them, there is a growing popularity of klapa singing among Americans.

while Festival klapa types rapidly expanded. The expansion of the festival klapa is presented in *Zbornik Dalmatinskih Klapskih Pjesama* (Vol. 3:740–745). In the period from 1967 to 1991, 176 klapas from 75 different places performed at the Omiš Festivals. Split, the capital of Dalmatia, was represented by 33 different klapa ensembles illustrating the high popularity of klapa singing in that region. Other important centers were Šibenik (8 klapas), Zadar (9) and Trogir (8). Beside Dalmatian urban and rural centers, klapa ensembles also came from various places outside Dalmatia (e.g., Zagreb, 5 klapas).

The relationship among singers can be examined on two separate levels: first, the relationship among singers before and after singing; second, the relationship among singers during singing. This classification is the result of my experience as a singer and as the leader of the klapas.

Before and after singing, the singers are friends who respect each other without regard for age or status. Each member of the group takes on a particular role to become an accepted part of the group. There is always a person who entertains and initiates a jovial atmosphere (*lero*), and a person who loves to eat (*ždrobulo*).<sup>26</sup> *Lero* likes to be the center of attention. He knows all the *šataras*' ("town gossips") and other local jokes. Sometimes he is capable of imitating his *žrtva* ("victim") through nasal singing. On the other hand, *ždrobulo*, quieter than *lero*, is the first to look for and eat the food. Consummation of food and wine is typically associated with klapa activities. After rehearsals or performances, klapa can be found in a *konoba* ("wine cellar"). *Pršut* ("smoked, salted and pressed ham"), *ovčji sir* ("sheep's cheese"), *gavuni* ("smelts") and *slane srdale* ("salted sardines") are typical dishes of Dalmatia. It is not usual for klapa members to order individual meals - they like to share their food. Strong red wine makes klapa members more happy than drunk. Aggressive behavior is not a characteristic of the klapa members.

The relationship among singers during the singing is quite different. The central figure, the leader or "spirit of the group," is the *prvi tenor* ("first tenor"). The *prvi tenor* typically sings the lead melody, commands the tempo and, most importantly, creates the mood of the songs. Some contemporary klapas are known by the timbre or by the appearance of their first tenors. Before becoming a well-known Croatian pop star Vinko Čačić, was representative of the klapa "Trogir", as is Joško Prijić for the klapa "DC-Vranjic". Tonći Milatić, of the klapa "Ošjak", was certainly one of the most energetic first tenors. All three present different styles and timbres.

<sup>26</sup> The terms *lero* i *ždrobulo* are not used in standard communication. They are local dialect terms that rather depict the function and the role of these particular singers.

Coce is best known for his *sotto voce* singing, while Prijić is best known for his *falsetto* singing so-called *na ditić* ("singing like a young boy"). Milatić's style of singing is open guttural, strong and harsh, typical of the Dalmatian islands. This extremely powerful way of singing quickly ruins the singer's glottis. This is the reason many first tenors stop singing prematurely.

Another noticeable relationship in the *klapa* is the one between the first and second tenors. The dynamic gestures of the first and second tenors resemble their singing. They usually stand close to each other. *Šekondo* sings *u uho* ("in ear") to the first tenor. Many people still remember the couple, Nikola Bilić-Panto, first tenor and Špire Piteša, second tenor, who introduced the song *Okrug selo* ("Okrug Village") in the early 1970s. Stylistically, the melody lines of the first and second tenors move in parallel thirds. The rest of the *klapa* singers respond, through their gestures, enthusiastically, to the gestures of the first and second tenors, which creates an extremely dynamic visual representation. These active gestures help to capture the audience's attention.

Although the singers are most frequently brought together by similar interests or jobs, there are many instances where, for example, a teacher and a peasant, or a physician and a fisherman, sing together. However, the joy of singing is the basic condition of their association.

### Performance occasions

Nikola Buble (1980:15) cites one of his older informants from Trogir:

"Sunday mornings, after the long and hard work week, peasants changed their shirts, and clothes and went to Church... After lunch, they asked their wives for *ofirta* ("pocket money") and went to the *tovirna* (wine cellar in function of the market for goods and homemade wine) where friends were gathering. Somebody would bring *slane srdede* ("salted fish"), or *lovine* ("clams") or cheese. Customarily, some women would prepare *čičer* ("broad beans") and offer them from *tovirna* to *tovirna*. Drop by drop, glass by glass of wine and the song began... the singing continued through the streets, under the street lanterns, serenading under the window of a beloved girl or wife..."

The traditional *klapa* ensemble (type 1) usually had a good reason for singing. If there was no obvious reason, they would find a reason for a song. They could be found on street corners, serenading under windows, or in a *konoba* ("wine cellar"). Singers were usually spontaneously motivated by the present moment. They sang for the sake of the singing, for the sheer joy of singing. They did not sing for money but primarily for their own and their listeners' pleasure.

The Festival klapa emulates the same qualities, while accepting the new influences. The strongest influences were mass media and tourism. The mass media enables the klapa simple access to recording and television productions. At the same time, the growth of tourism encouraged some of the klapa ensembles (e.g., the klapa "Šibenik", "Bonaca") to commercialize their singing.

Although most klapa ensembles sing for their own pleasure, they also spend a great deal of time practicing. Their goal is to improve the quality of their singing and to compete at the annual Omiš Festival of Klapas. In the period after World War II until the 1960s, traditional klapas suffered a decline in popularity and interest that was due, in part, to the political climate of this period. A group of people, supporters of klapa singing, who did not wish to be mere witnesses of its possible demise, founded the Festival of Dalmatian Klapas in Omiš in 1967, under the auspices of the government Ministry of Cultural Affairs. This initiative was wholeheartedly received by amateur musicians and enthusiasts in Dalmatia, and as a result, dozens of klapas were formed. However, it was very difficult to place klapa ensembles on stage in front of the microphones and stage lights and expect them to sing with as much originality as in informal performance occasions. It took a long time for the klapa to adopt and to overcome the fear of the microphones.

There are just a few general rules of the Omiš Festival. The number of the singers is limited to 8 singers. Some of the klapas have more than 8 singers. For the performance, they rotate the members. The songs performed at the festivals have to be klapa songs or compositions previously performed at Omiš festivals.<sup>27</sup>

To receive the votes of the judges and the audience at the Festival, klapas must constantly improve their singing style. Their singing is judged by the jury of prominent ethnomusicologists, musicians and producers. The procedure of judging is public; it consists of marking the klapa performances (1–10) without giving a specific explanation for the marks. On the other hand, audiences vote for their favorite klapa. There were a few instances where jury and audience had opposite results. The final event is usually broadcast by the national TV station. That speaks of broader, nationwide interest in klapa singing. Although success at the Omiš Festival has a great influence on the klapas, the singers are not quite comfortable with its competitive character. During the summer, there are several local festivals where klapas perform, not to compete but to present their singing to the audience. As a result of the festivals, klapa ensembles

<sup>27</sup> Every Omiš festival has an event dedicated to the newly composed klapa songs. It also has competitive character.

have become representatives of the Dalmatian musical style and synonymous with Dalmatian singing for the broader audience. For ethnomusicologists, this observation is imminent and simplified.

Klapa leaders also originate with the start of the Omiš Festival. Today, most of them are musicians well-trained in Western classical music, while in the past they learned mostly from their own experience together with klapas. Under the direction of their leaders and the lack of spontaneity in singing, the klapas gradually increased their repertoires from the folk music of their home towns to different art and folk singing styles. During the last thirty years, since the start of the Festival, there have been many changes in most Dalmatian klapas, notably the traditional klapa has given way to the Festival klapa.

### Conclusion

All the facts mentioned above characterize the klapa as a folk phenomenon which surveyed through time, accepted changes. Socially and musically, klapa singing has always been accepted, which is surely the reason this folk tradition has remained successful for a long time. In most of the cases, traditional klapa gave away to the principles of the festival klapa. Stage performance, microphones, discographic production, mass media exposure, contemporary elements of the present klapa folk phenomenon, became an important goal and a way of displaying ethnic and cultural identity. They form the only possible way for the klapa to remain vital and to gain in popularity. I feel that with the continued support of trained klapa leaders, and the continuation of the Festival of Dalmatian Klapas in Omiš, this style of singing will continue to flourish, particularly in Dalmatia, as well as in other parts of the world where people enjoy group singing.

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## KLAPSKO PJEVANJE, TRADICIJSKI FOLKLORNI FENOMEN U DALMACIJI

### SAŽETAK

Autor razmatra veoma živ i zanimljiv fenomen klapskog pjevanja u Dalmaciji. U uvodnom dijelu komentira vlastitu poziciju istraživača aktivno uključenoga u predmet svoga istraživanja. U prvom dijelu teksta donosi pregled pristupa i rezultate dosadašnjih etnomuzikoloških istraživanja klapskog pjevanja. Kategorije koje autor razmatra su porijeklo, osnovne značajke i razvoj termina klapa i klapskog pjevanja, razlika između klapske pjesme i dalmatinske urbane pjesme, te izvorišta, utjecaji i posljedne vrste klapskih pjesama.

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