

## DALMATIAN POP SONGS IN THE FOLKLORE PRACTICE OF THE INHABITANTS OF THE ISLAND OF MURTER

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This paper is part of broader research which I conducted with the objective of analysing the theme *Spontaneous Singing on the Island of Murter - Continuity and Changes*.<sup>1</sup> During the period between 1975 and 1989, I observed and took part in various occasions of performance of music, so as to get to know the musical world of the island of Murter<sup>2</sup> through varied repertoire. The research was directed to situations of spontaneous music practice i.e. direct musical communication within small groups of people, and commenced from the assumption that such situations provide the fullest opportunities for perceiving the dynamic musical world of the people, their interests, musical experiences and needs. The repertoire performed at the free choice of the singers demonstrates both their relation towards the musical tradition of their own environment, and towards music adopted from other folklore regions and also from the field of popular music.

During research I recorded a total of 846 musical examples, 504 of them being of different songs. Four basic groups can be differentiated, as regards musical style characteristics, in the musical repertoire: 1. traditional local songs; 2. songs from other folklore regions; 3. Dalmatian *klapa* songs; and, 4. Dalmatian pop songs. Although I shall be concentrating in this paper primarily on the adoption of Dalmatian pop songs, and paying attention to the differences in the style of their performance in the original (composed) and

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<sup>1</sup> My master's thesis defended in 1991 at the Academy of Music in Sarajevo bears the same title. The manuscript is kept in the documentation of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research in Zagreb (sign. 1369).

<sup>2</sup> The island of Murter is located in northern Dalmatia in the north-western part of the Šibenik archipelago. It is divided from the mainland by a very narrow marine passage which made it possible for the island to be joined to the mainland by a bascule bridge. There are four settlements on the island: Tisno, Jezera, Betina and Murter. According to the 1981 census, 6 140 people live on the island. They engage in agriculture and fishing, while tourism which the main branch of the economy of the island has been developing since the Seventies. Because of its geographical position, links with the mainland and developed tourist industry, the island of Murter is open to a very varied cultural activities.

folklore version, for easier understanding of the paper itself, I will present a brief review at the outset of the main style characteristics of the other three groups of songs, some of which are relevant for consideration of the matter of adoption of popular music repertoire and its performance in folklore practice.

(1) *Traditional local songs* on the Island of Murter are short, most frequently with four decasyllabic verses which are based on diatonic rows:  $f^1 g^1 a^1 b^1 c^2 (d^2)$ ;  $f^1 g^1 a^1 b^1 c^2 (d^2)$ ; or  $f^1 /as^1/ a^1 b^1 c^2 (d^2)$ . The two-part singing is in thirds, and the voices at the end of the individual melody sections and tunes as a whole finish in unison on the second degree of the tone row ( $g^1$ ). It is characteristic to the older tradition that the lower part at the end of the songs descends from unison by a second and forms the two-part ending  $g^1 - f^1$ . In more recent times, endings in unison and endings in fifths ( $g^1 - c^1$ ) are more common. Endings in fifths are the result of adoptions of elements from the newer style of so-called *na bas* (on the bass) singing, which spread through many regions in Croatia during the first half of the 20th century.<sup>3</sup> Local traditional songs on the Island of Murter are similar to one another, both in melody line and in their four-part form (ABBB, in which the B section has a number of elements in common with the A section).<sup>4</sup>

Of all the material recorded on the Island of Murter, the songs in this group are the most numerous (551 examples, 318 different songs).<sup>5</sup> In some of the traditional situations in which music is spontaneously performed, such as group singing at weddings,<sup>6</sup> local tunes dominate over other types of songs in the musical repertoire. They are sung by the older and middle generation, while the young do not show any particular interest in them.<sup>7</sup>

(2) *Songs from other folklore regions* came to the Island of Murter during the Twenties and Thirties from other regions of Croatia, and from all over former Yugoslavia. They were introduced by men who were employed

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<sup>3</sup> For more on this point: Milin-Ćurin (1983; 1986).

<sup>4</sup> One finds similar musical characteristics on the neighbouring islands of the Zadar region (Bezić 1969), on the island of Zlarin (Bezić 1981) and in the Šibenik island group (Furčić 1980).

<sup>5</sup> The large number of these songs in the recorded material does not mean that they in fact dominate in the overall musical practice on the Island of Murter today. They are performed primarily as part of certain traditional customs, mostly at wedding festivities which last much longer than other situations in which singing occurs, and thus allow the performance of a greater number of songs. In addition, the comparatively large number of these songs also rests on their shortness which conditions the practice of their performance in a series. It is customary to sing a number of songs in order to the same tune, followed by a series of songs to another local tune. Consequently the number mentioned does not mean, at the same time, the same number of different tunes.

<sup>6</sup> During my research on the Island of Murter I recorded musical repertoire at five weddings (1975, 1981, 1982, 1985 and 1989).

<sup>7</sup> As regards membership in generation groups, I differentiate three age groups: the younger generation (up to 25), the middle (up to 50), and the older generation (from 50 onwards).

in the cities or elsewhere away from the island, those doing their military training, and those who travelled. Some of these songs, with time, became part of the traditional musical repertoire on the Island of Murter and the people regard them as "their own old songs". During my research, I recorded 76 examples of such songs (46 different songs in all). Some of the songs have tonal traits near to old Murter tradition i.e. they are based on diatonic rows with endings on the second degree of the tone row. Other songs have elements of the major mode. By accepting songs from other folklore regions, the inhabitants of Murter broadened their own musical experience. Some adopted the style of *na bas* singing and applied it to in the performance of local tunes. Songs from other folklore regions helped the major mode to become adopted in Murter, too.

(3) *Dalmatian klapa* songs represent a relatively more recent tradition on the Island of Murter. In their original form, they were performed by *male groups* - called a *klapa* in Dalmatia - made up of between four to eight singers. They are characterised by the major mode and a cappella multi-part singing. The *klapa* songs are performed in three or four parts, as a rule with one 1st tenor who leads off the song as a solo and performs the basic melody. He is joined by one or more 2nd tenors who accompany him in parallel thirds. The baritone(s) have the role of complementing the harmony, and the bass(es) primarily mark the basic harmonic functions. The harmonic structure is based on three main degrees - tonic, dominant and sub-dominant with extension to the second and sixth degrees. The progression of chords from the fifth to the sixth degree resulting in parallel octaves and fifths is characteristic. Gradual descent from the seventh degree to the third degree is characteristic for the melody line of the lead voice. The rhythm is either free (*rubato*) or strict (*giusto*). The two-part (AB) or four-part (ABAB, ABCD) forms prevail.<sup>8</sup>

At its beginnings in the middle of the 19th century, the *klapa* singing style was linked to the Dalmatian cities, whence it was introduced into village environments during the period between the two world wars. Similarly to songs from other folklore regions, *klapa* songs were brought to the Island of Murter by its men who were employed in the Dalmatian cities. Consequently, singing of *klapa* songs was the privilege of men for a long time, while women remained connected longer to the local musical tradition.

Although *klapa* songs have been present in the musical practice of the Island of Murter, as in other Dalmatian environments, since the period between the two world wars, the real expansion of this multi-part style of singing came later, being linked primarily with the activities of the *Festival dalmatinskih klapa* [Dalmatian Klapa Festival] in Omiš, which was established in 1967. The holding of the Festival was prompted by the desire to

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<sup>8</sup> For more detail on Dalmatian *klapa* songs, see: Bezić (1977; 1979); Buble (1983; 1988; 1991); Povržanović (1989; 1991).

enrich what was being offered to tourists in Dalmatia with authentic cultural content, and efforts to revitalise the tradition of *klapa* singing, which had already died out to a certain extent at that time. The Festival set in motion the founding of a large number of amateur *klapas*<sup>9</sup> which performed adaptations of traditional *klapa* songs, as well as new compositions inspired by the *klapa* singing style; these were included in the programme of this Festival, and performed on a separate evening. Women's groups started to perform at the Festival, presenting mainly the same repertoire as the men.<sup>10</sup> Apart from the quality of the songs, an important criterion proclaimed by the Festival related to the quality and beauty of the four-part a cappella singing. The Omiš Festival became a reputed and, above all, popular manifestation, and the model for organisation of similar presentations of *klapa singing* in other places in Dalmatia. All of this considerably raised the standard of and promoted interest in amateur musical activities in Dalmatia.<sup>11</sup> In addition, many songs performed at the Omiš Festival - both those which were traditional and the newly-composed ones - were accepted in spontaneous folklore practice, while the style of multi-part *klapa* singing simply inundated the entire coast of Dalmatia, its islands and the Dalmatian hinterland.

The dissemination and acceptance of *klapa* songs was given a strong boost by the mass media - radio and the recording industry. The *klapa* songs were often the sole style by which Dalmatia folk music was represented in radio programmes. Consequently, for some time now, the concept of the "Dalmatian song" in the minds of both Dalmatians and people from the other Croatian regions is identified precisely with *klapa* singing, which has become the "key symbol of identity" of the entire Dalmatian region.<sup>12</sup>

*Klapa* singing has a distinct place in musical life on the Island of Murter today, and that not solely as part of organised musical practice, but also prevailing in the repertoire of spontaneous singing groups: of men of all generations, but also women who belong to the young and middle generations. During my research I recorded 110 *klapa* song performances (72 different songs). It is interesting to note how singers from Murter (re)shape the *klapa* singing style in spontaneous performances. Listening to tapes or gramophone records of songs performed by well-known *klapas*, people

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<sup>9</sup> A number of amateur *klapa* groups were founded on the Island of Murter during the Seventies, and some of them are still active today. Apart from in Dalmatia, the founding of *klapa* groups has been noted throughout Croatia: in the Kvarner Bay area, in Istria, Slavonia, and there are a number of them in Zagreb. The members of these groups are of Dalmatian origin in most cases. Apart from origins, members are attracted to the groups by their love of the specific multi-part singing style of the Dalmatian *klapa* songs.

<sup>10</sup> An interesting fact is that it was female singing groups which dominated among the *klapa* groups on the Island of Murter during the Seventies.

<sup>11</sup> See Marošević (1988:85–87).

<sup>12</sup> See Povrzanović (1991:117).

commit them to ear and then perform them in their own manner, quite often simplifying the multi-part harmony structure. In this, the 1st and 2nd tenor parts remain fairly clear, but the baritone and bass parts show less certainty - in some cases these voices sing less clearly in seeking the correct tone or omit some of the more difficult harmony solutions which are unclear to them. Sometimes they are less audible, and sometimes they pause or are completely absent as individual parts, duplicating only one of the upper parts. All this results in variation of the two-part, three-part and four-part singing. In spontaneous performances women's groups often sing in only two parts, while the male groups sing in three. In the event that some of the singers have had experience in this style of singing in organised amateur *klapa* groups, they sing in four parts.

(4) *Dalmatian pop songs* take an important part in the overall musical practice on the Island of Murter. As on many other islands and tourist resorts, public cultural manifestations and entertainment programmes are organised during the summer. Well-known singers of popular music and vocal-instrumental groups appear as guest artists at attractive locations.<sup>13</sup> Various local "fešta", "fishermen's evenings" and similar happenings are organised. On these occasions, the atmosphere is created and maintained mainly by vocal-instrumental groups whose repertoire is almost exclusively pop songs.

The presence of popular music can also be seen outside of the festivities mentioned above. It is the most ubiquitous forms of expression on almost all radio stations, particularly the local ones. In the local cafés popular music is listened to almost exclusively. The most popular songs are those from festivals of popular music held in the main centres of Dalmatia - in Split since 1960, and in Zadar for the last two years. On the whole, this makes up the repertoire of Dalmatian pop-singers, and composers from Dalmatia compose for them. In this respect, it is interesting to note that *klapa* groups nurture a particular style of composed *klapa* song of the pop-song type,<sup>14</sup> regularly with an instrumental accompaniment on the guitar and mandolin, which is a departure from the classic a cappella *klapa* style, and an addition which points it in the direction of popular music. It is also indicative that the first tape made by any musical group from the Island of Murter (*Dalmatino*, 1988), contains mainly adaptations of well-known pop songs, along with popular Dalmatian *klapa* songs.

When asked what sort of music they preferred to listen to and sing, the older people emphasised the traditional songs of the Island of Murter, and folk music in general. The middle generation particularly likes to sing pop

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<sup>13</sup> The same counts for popular Dalmatian *klapa* groups and sometimes for folklore ensembles from other regions.

<sup>14</sup> Six annotations of *klapa* songs in spontaneous renditions are provided in Milin-Ćurin (1994).

songs which were written and were popular during their youth, along with folk songs (local ones and those adopted from other regions) and Dalmatian *klapa* songs. The younger generation was almost fully concentrated on new musical content and preferred to listen to rock and pop music. The habitual practice is that the repertoire spontaneously performed by some young group of singers does not contain even one local traditional tune, and their repertoire is based exclusively on Dalmatian *klapa* and pop songs.

During fieldwork on the Island of Murter I recorded 109 spontaneous performances of pop songs, including 68 different songs. These songs are of strophic form with a refrain, the texts are often of sentimental content. In their original form, they are written for soloists with an instrumental accompaniment. The refrain is always performed to the accompaniment of one more voice or a group of singers, in which up to four-part homophonic singing develops. *Klapa* groups sometimes take part in performance of the refrain in recordings from the repertoire of Dalmatian pop songs.

Pop songs are close to contemporary mentality, and easily memorised because of their simplicity. The reasons for their acceptance on the Island of Murter, and throughout the broad Dalmatian region, lies in the exceptional melodiousness of these songs, the simplicity of form, and in the text content with which people in this part of the world can identify. Nonetheless, what I consider to be most essential in their acceptance in spontaneous musical practice is the fact that pop songs which are composed in Dalmatia are in a complementary relationship with the Dalmatian *klapa* songs<sup>15</sup>. They are usually in the major mode, have a simple harmonic structure similar to that of the *klapa* songs, and make possible, particularly in the refrain, the shaping of a multi-part homophonic vocal structure which people like and are familiar with from the field of Dalmatian *klapa* songs, and, in this way, are also easily applicable in the performance of pop songs.

The similarity with the Dalmatian *klapa* songs and the possibility of their being sung in the group style of *klapa* singing makes the pop songs particularly acceptable to this region. In the folklore practice on the Island of Murter, but also in the broad Dalmatian region, singers perform pop songs in groups, always in the *klapa* manner i.e. in parts. Thus, among pop songs they select and accept just those which remind them most of the Dalmatian *klapa* song by their inner structure and the poetic content of the texts. They often adopt and reproduce only parts of the songs, usually the refrain, because, besides being easier to remember, it is the refrain which is most suitable for adaptation and can be best performed in the style of *klapa* singing.<sup>16</sup> Multi-part singing - accepted and adopted through the Dalmatian *klapa* song - is thus transferred to popular music. As such, accepted by free choice and

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<sup>15</sup> Buble (1980:617).

<sup>16</sup> Buble (1991:11).

realised in a new manner, the pop song becomes a significant part of the folklore music practice of the inhabitants of the Island of Murter.

From year to year, the repertoire of pop songs changes, new songs appear, new hits replace the old, but the continuity is uninterrupted in the presence of common musical elements, both among the pop songs themselves, and in the links with the musical elements of the *klapa* song. Apart from that, I registered ten or so songs during my research which were present in musical repertoire over a prolonged period. They were performed in various situations by various performers. Thus, for example, I recorded five performances in 1988 and 1989 of the song "Žuto lišće ljubavi" [Yellow Leaves of Love] which was a hit in 1987. I recorded "Musica di notte" [Night Music] in 1974, 1975, 1988 and 1989. And I registered some other songs e.g. "O, Marijana" [Oh, Mariana], "Večeras je naša fešta"<sup>17</sup> [It's Our Celebration Tonight], and "Puste su kale"<sup>18</sup> [The Alleys Are Empty] with an interval of over ten years. It is obvious that these songs are examples of a well developed pattern and represent an ideal model, in a certain sense, of what people like, readily accept and often perform, by which such songs also become part of the newer folk musical tradition. It would seem that what is crucial for their acceptance is the musical rather than the textual component. With the exception of some songs with texts about Dalmatia and its way of life, most of them are love songs, sometimes lacking particularly high quality or impressive content.

I have selected three examples from the group of pop songs which clearly show the manner of interpretation of this type of songs in the folklore practice of the Island of Murter. These are interesting examples of multi-part singing in which the similarity with the manner of performance of Dalmatian *klapa* songs is evident.

### **1. O, Marijana [Oh, Mariana]**

The composer of this song, Vlaho Paljetak (1893–1944; co-author S. Šišić) was one of the most successful composers of popular music in Croatia in the period between the two world wars. Many of his songs became very popular and were recorded on gramophone records at that early date. This particular song, "O, Marijana" became known world-wide at the time it was written, and was revived during the Sixties by the vocal- instrumental ensemble, the *Dubrovački trubaduri* [Dubrovnik Troubadours]. It is a song which is often sung spontaneously at social gatherings. It is also performed at the request of foreign tourists who regard it as a typical Dalmatian song.

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<sup>17</sup> The same song noted down at Trogir in a traditional rendition (Buble 1988:101).

<sup>18</sup> This song was also noted down on the Island of Zlarin (Bezić 1981:110).

A spontaneously gathered group of eight singers performed it in parts in 1988. The harmony in this case is a very simple one: two upper voices in parallel thirds are joined by a third voice which from time to time duplicates the second voice in the lower octave or shapes the three-part singing, confirming the tonic and dominant function. Special mention should be made of the three-part ending in the form of a tonic six-four chord at the end of the repeated refrain.



**1st Stanza:**

Ponoć, ponoć davno već je prošla, Marijana nije došla na prvi randevu.	Midnight, Midnight now is far behind us, But no sign of Mariana At our first rendezvous.
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**2nd Stanza:**

Još će, još će mnoge noći proći, Marijana neće doći na prvi randevu.	Still more, Still more nights will come and go, love, But there'll be no Mariana At our first rendezvous.
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**Refrain:**

O, Marijana, slatka, mala Marijana, tebe ću čekat' ja dok svane dan.	Oh, Mariana, Sweet and lovely Mariana, I'll stay and wait for you Till daybreak dawns.
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**2. Puste su kale [The alleys are empty]**

The text and melody of this song were written by Dušan Šarac (1942), a modern composer of pop songs and newly-composed klapa songs. Šarac published the song in the booklet *Favorit 4 - Note popularnih melodija* (Zagreb 1975:22–23), and it was recorded (by Suzy, SP 1106) in a performance by the well-known "Šibenik" *klapa* group.<sup>19</sup> In its formal structure, this is a typical popular song with a refrain. In the first part the first, fourth and fifth degree harmonies alternate, while the sub-dominant function is stressed in the refrain, this being a frequent manner of developing harmony in pop songs. This song belongs to the group found frequently in Dalmatia, with metrorhythmical formation in 6/8.

I recorded the song on the Island of Murter in 1989 in a multi-part rendition by a group made up of nine men (six from Murter, and three from Betina), to a discreet guitar accompaniment which confirms the basic harmonic functions. Complete chords (most frequently at the dominant function) and incomplete ones alternate in the structure of the multi-part singing, with parallelism in the movement of the parts. In the 6th measure of the refrain (in both the first and second appearance) there is an unexpected

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<sup>19</sup> Bezić (1981:54).

dissonance due to a misunderstanding in performance between the first voice and the remaining ones.

**1st Stanza:**

Ponoć bije, ja nemam sna,	Midnight tolling, no sleep for me,
tija bi dragoj poći,	I'd like to go to my love,
serenadu zapivat njoj,	To sing her a serenade,
u zoru doma doći.	And come home at dawn.

**2nd Stanza:**

Ponoć bije, ja nemam	Midnight tolling, no sleep for me,
tija bi dragoj poći,	I'd like to go to my love,
al' je ljubav kratka k'o san,	But love is briefer than any dream,
brzo će ona proći.	It all will soon be over.

**Refrain:**

Puste su kale,	The alleys are empty,
svi gredu rano spat,	Early to bed they go,
ni'ko vrimena nima,	How can they not have the time
ni pismu zapivat.	Even to sing a song.

**3. "Žuto lišće ljubavi" [The yellow leaves of love]**

This song was written by Zdenko Runjić (1942), a well-known composer of popular music whose songs regularly become hits. For many years, Runjić was the music editor of Croatian Radio in Split, and he is now the art director of the Split festival "Melodies of the Croatian Adriatic". He composed this song in 1987 to the text by Nenad Ninčević, and it has been issued on record and tape (Jugoton, LSY 62236; CAY 2001) sung by Oliver Dragojević (1947), one of the best-known Dalmatian singers of popular music in Croatia.

In its folklore performance by a group of male singers on Murter, the song is also sung in parts. Three-part and four-part chords alternate depending on the skill of the performers. Baritone and bass either duplicate some of the upper voices or endeavour to form a chord. Nonetheless, the lower parts show a less typical role through pedal and functional tones, and are more inclined to follow the rhythmic structure of the text like the upper parts. Each stanza consists of two parts, the second having the function of a refrain.

**1st Part:**

I ja ću noćas leptir postati	And I'll become a butterfly tonight,
a ti za mnom nećeš sv'jeću paliti.	But you'll light no candle to draw me to your light.
Gdje mi duša spava	Where my spirit slumbers,
nikad nećeš saznati,	Far from your sweet sight,
pokrit će me, draga,	I'll be covered, dear one,
žuto lišće ljubavi.	By the yellow leaves of love.

**2nd Part:**

I ja ću noćas k nebu letjeti	And I'll take wing heavenward tonight,
a ti za mnom nećeš sv'jeću paliti.	But you'll light no candle to draw me to your light.
Gdje mi duša spava	Where my spirit slumbers,
nikad nećeš saznati,	Far from your sweet sight,
pokrit će me, draga,	I'll be covered, dear one,
žuto lišće ljubavi.	By the yellow leaves of love.

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My intention in this paper has been to emphasise the significant representation of songs from the world of popular music, and their role in maintaining the continuity of folklore musical expression of the inhabitants of the Island of Murter. Because of closeness to the Dalmatian *klapa* song, these songs in folklore practice are sung in the multi-part manner similarly to *klapa* singing, which has become the dominant musical mode of expression over the last few decades, not only on the Island of Murter but throughout the whole of Dalmatia.

Although *klapa* singing is a newer style for the Island of Murter and differs considerably from the older local style of traditional music, because of its marked presence over some time in musical practice, today it can be considered as the adopted, albeit later, but already traditional style of this Adriatic island. For the middle - and particularly - the young generation, *klapa* singing is, in fact, nothing new. They are familiar with it, they grew up with it and adopted it as their mode of musical expression, and we can say, because of its free performance, that it represents the folk music of these islanders.

The repertoire which characterises the musical life on the Island of Murter and in Dalmatia is a peculiar merger of Dalmatian *klapa* and pop songs. In folklore performance, the pop songs are formed in a new manner and acquire the style characteristics of *klapa* singing, which is more demanding to perform than the manner of performance of pop songs in their original versions. This practice derives from the active stance of the performers towards music and enables them to broaden on the one hand, and

to confirm on the other, their own musical knowledge and possibilities. At the same time, the popular song influences *klapa* singing with new contents and, in this way, has its effect on the continuity of the folk music practice of the inhabitants of Murter.

*(Translated by Nina H. Antoljak)*

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