

Echoes of Italian Music in the Culture of the Croatian Coastal Area in the Sixteenth Century

The Classical concept of “music” encompassed not only the sounds produced by singers and instrumentalists but also the applications of proportions which govern the theory of musical harmony and the order of the universe. In addition, music-making, especially singing, was considered as embodying a moral value. Humanists, such as Marsilio Ficino, contributed to the resurgence of these beliefs in 16th-century Italy and the impact of their teaching was felt in those parts of Croatia which were exposed to the Italian cultural influence. *Fishing and Fishermen’s Conversations*, Petar Hektorović’s piscatorial eclogue published in 1568, reveals interesting examples of the way in which humanist beliefs in the significance and power of music shaped the poet’s literary style and its substance. Textual analysis of the eclogue, written in Croatian, as well as of Hektorović’s Italian prose, show his familiarity with the literary descriptions of the story of Orpheus in Virgil, Horace and Castiglione. Dinko Ranjina’s mid-16th-century translation of a *strambotto* by Marc Antonio Magno and the early 17th-century translations of Rinuccini’s dramatic poems by Paskoje Primović and Ivan Gundulić are discussed as illustrations of the problems which arise when a literary work originally conceived to perform a specific function in one context, is adapted to a different one. Although they may not have been intended for musical performances of the type envisaged for them in Italy, the adaptations show the desire of Croatian poets to keep abreast of new trends in Italian literature of the time. As a conclusion, a conjectural reconstruction of the ways in which Italian models may have reached Croatian translators throws more light on the individuals who acted as intermediaries between the two cultures.

Key words: Dalmatia, Croatian literature, humanism, Italian literature, music, singing, Renaissance