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## Contemporary choral production in Slovenia

### Abstract

The small size of our country, with an »abounding« historical experience of intimidation by other countries, resulted in an especially powerful attachment to the national language and song. This is why vocal creativity has the strongest tradition in Slovene music life. Although the contemporary choral production in Slovenia was always a bit behind when compared to the peaks of European choral production, the main characteristics of the Slovene choral production are similar to the contemporary development of choral production in Europe.

### Key words

contemporary composers, choral compositions, Slovenia, »Novi akordi« (New chords)

Music was an indispensable companion in the lives of the people who lived in what is now Slovenia, a long time before the arrival of the first Slavs, who installed themselves at the most westerly part of the border between the German and Roman worlds. From the time of the conversion to Christianity sometime in the eighth century onwards, they were defined in culture and civilisation above all by the Catholic tradition of Christianity, even though their borders touched the edges of the Orthodox and Islam worlds, and in spite of the presence of the defiant spirit of the Reformation.<sup>1</sup> The currents of the conversion were characterised by what to this day are still the two most powerful cultural influences: from Aquileia arrived the influence of the Italian-Roman tradition, while the Germanic heritage came from Salzburg.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the small size of our country, with an »abounding« historical experience of

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<sup>1</sup> Reformist ideas caused a great disruption, especially in the larger towns, although the movement hardly reached the provinces. These ideas also brought a series of changes in the music life. At the time of the publishing of the first printed book (1550), we also received the first musical printed publications, later in the form of independent song-books. An especially comprehensive publisher was the idealistic leader of the reformation in Slovenia, Primož Trubar (»Eni psalmi«, 1567). BARBO, MATJAŽ, *Slovenska zborovska stvaritev*, Ed. JEŽ, JAKOB, Zveza kulturnih organizacij Slovenije, Ljubljana 1995, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> Many Slovenes worked abroad. The first Viennese bishop and leader of the court chapel of Maximilian I, Jurij Slatkonja, was particularly famous. He lived at the turn of the 16th century, to be followed as bishop a good half century later by Jacobus Handl (Gallus) Carniolus (1550-1591). He came from the Duchy of Kranjska, indicated by his nickname Carniolus. Moreover, he lived in various parts of Austria, the Czech lands, Moravia and Silesia, finally settling down in Prague. He was a prolific composer and his opus was rounded in an exemplary way. He published a collection of masses entitled »Selectiones quaedam missae« (1580) and four books of motets in a collection known by the name »Opus musicum« (1586-1590). Even during his lifetime, his compositions had a very wide response and for another century remained an obligatory part of the repertoire of various chapels across Europe. In Handl's works we encounter an original intertwining of the Venetian school and Dutch influences – which is unusual considering the country in which he grew up. The relevance of his opus ranks him among the most important representatives of the European Renaissance, immediately alongside Lasso and Palestrina. Ibidem, pp. 139-140.

intimidation by other countries, resulted in an especially powerful attachment to the national language and song.

A significant change in Slovene music occurred in the second half of the 19th century.<sup>3</sup> The increasingly powerful emphasis on nationalism led to the shattering of the previously peaceful co-existence of Slovenes and Germans within the cities. The previously mixed Philharmonic association («Philharmonische Gesellschaft», 1794)<sup>4</sup> and Class («Stanovsko») theatre (from 1862 named »Deželno«) became increasingly Germanic both in program and membership. The Slovenes had to seek new opportunities for themselves in which their national characteristics could be fully expressed. In this respect, however, they were hindered by the shortage of developed institutions and a lack of funds. The only solution offered was an amateur status, especially in the choral field, which with the idealistically clear patriotic signs best suited the awakening national awareness. At this time there emerged a series of choral compositions, songs and piano miniatures, romantic in style and »a reflection of the national soul« in content. Concert life changed with the gatherings in reading halls (from 1861 named »čitalnice«), which together with rallies («tabori«), were the focal points of young national agitation.<sup>5</sup> The Ljubljana reading hall established its choir as early as 1861, the first real organised secular choir in Slovenia. Soon other reading halls started to set up their own choral groups, so that after a few years almost all of them had their own choirs. The numerous choral compositions, which emerged for the needs of the reading rooms, were the creations of great talents from gifted generations of »reading« composers. In the first years of the national awakening, it was the composers above all who were stirred into creating art by the national movement.<sup>6</sup> It was mostly the representatives of the Czech musical immigration

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<sup>3</sup> In Slovene musical culture, the beginnings of a national awakening started to show a century earlier. During the Enlightenment, the emerging interest for the mother tongue permitted the Slovene language's usage in concert halls and on the stage. At first, touring singers performing on the stage of the newly established Stanovsko gledališče – Class Theatre (1765), introduced particularly effective translations of specific arias into their programs. The first Slovene song soon emerged in this area, composed by Anton Tomaž Linhart (1756-1795), also the initiator of Slovene piano music and drama. After the first translations of opera librettos in the beginning of the 1780s, Jakob Frančišek Zupan (1734-1810) wrote the first Slovene opera, *Belin*, which unfortunately is no longer extant. BARBO, MATJAŽ, *Slovenska zborovska stvaritev*, Ed. JEŽ, JAKOB, *Zveza kulturnih organizacij Slovenije*, Ljubljana 1995, p. 141.

<sup>4</sup> Its predecessor – the Academia Philharmonicorum (1701) – was based on the Italian academies of the time, and also happened to be one of the first in Central Europe. However, the academy stopped working in the middle of the century. Ibidem, pp. 140-141.

<sup>5</sup> To realize these intentions, from 1848 reading halls were available, where choirs, songs, piano and orchestral compositions etc. were performed. CVETKO, DRAGOTIN, *Slovenska glasba v evropskem prostoru*, Slovenska matica, Ljubljana 1991, p. 295.

<sup>6</sup> A substantial music was required, melodically attractive, with enthusiastically patriotic texts, something that everyone would be able to enjoy, regardless of social status or educational level. Ibidem, p. 479.

in Slovenia who liked music<sup>7</sup>, but probably would never have composed what they did not perceive as the needs of their people. The results of their endeavours were different, depending on the composing ability of the individual, though as a rule limited to small forms, above all vocal. The amateur approach was the only option and choral singing was the most appropriate form to reflect the collective national passion, especially because it was based on the folk song.

An even more intensely inventive generation of professionally-initiated composers followed, partly in regards to compositional technique. Among the first of this generation was Davorin Jenko<sup>8</sup>. His vigorous technique pushed itself forward with the first choir, Forward («Naprej»), which quickly became famous among the Slavic students in Vienna. His pan-Slavic inclination, a favourite idea of the then intelligentsia, took him to Belgrade, where he was among the architects of Serbian Romanticism.

The reading halls were becoming an all the more narrow base for the cultural development of Slovenes. It was clear that it was necessary to find an organisationally more up-to-date and institutionally developed form of musical life even though there were attempts to organize permanent concert activity, establish orchestras and found a music school and theatre. The first more cogent move was the founding of the Drama Society (1867), which was followed by the setting up of the «Glasbena matica» in 1872, the Cecilian society (1877), the establishing of the Slovene opera (1892), and the birth of the Slovene Philharmonic Society (1908) at the beginning of the new century. A generation of professionally trained musicians appeared with the Drama Society, demonstrating their skills by producing technically demanding types of operatic works. Apart from the Drama Society, the «Glasbena matica» with its rich repertoire of concerts, also focused on youth education and had a mixed choir which was recognised and admired far abroad, representing an important centre of Slovenian music endeavours outside clerical circles.

The magazine «Novi akordi» (New chords) appeared at the beginning of the century – an important milestone in the development of Slovene music. Throughout its existence, it was managed from Vienna by Gojmir Krek<sup>8</sup>. From abroad, Krek followed in detail the situation of

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<sup>7</sup> Weiss, Jernej, The forgotten correspondence between two friends: Leoš Janaček (1854-1928) and Emerik Beran (1868-1940), Ed. Barbo Matjaž, *Muzikološki zbornik XLI (2005) 1*, Oddelek za muzikologijo Filozofske fakultete v Ljubljani, pp. 91-98.

<sup>8</sup> Jenko Davorin (9 November 1835, Dvorje-25 November 1914, Ljubljana), composer. Educated in Ljubljana and Trieste, studied law in Vienna, where he conducted the choir of the Slovene choral society (1849-1862). In 1862 he left for Pančevo to be the conductor of the Serbian Church Choral Society, and in 1865 he accepted the position of conductor of the Belgrade Singing Society, where he remained until 1877. From 1869-1870 he studied composition in Prague. From 1871-1902 he was a composer and conductor in the Belgrade National Theater. His first compositions were inspired by Slovenian nationalism, and at the end of his life he returned to

Slovene music, for which the desire for an authentic musical language was increasingly becoming an impediment to developing a technically high-quality and stylistically cosmopolitan open creativity. The »Novi akordi« played an important role in the development of Slovene music from »reading hall romanticism«.<sup>9</sup> Most Slovene and other Slav composers published in this magazine and among them special mention should go to Emil Adamič<sup>10</sup>, Anton Lajovic<sup>11</sup> and Janko Ravnik<sup>12</sup>. In the last volume of »Novi akordi«, Krek published the choral work »Trenutek« (Moment) by the then young Viennese student Marij Kogoj<sup>13</sup>. The publication of this composition bewildered the old composing generation, who had become infatuated with traditional values. This work clearly predicted the stylistic reversal of Slovene

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Slovenia; however, the majority of his works were written during his stay in Belgrade (then the Kingdom of Serbia), so his greatest contribution is to Serbian music. Bojan Bujić and Roksanda Pejović, "Jenko Davorin", *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, cf. [http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session\\_search\\_id=11153667187&hitnum=1&section=music.14257](http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session_search_id=11153667187&hitnum=1&section=music.14257), 8 October 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Krek Gojmir Gregor (27 December 1875 – 1 September 1942, Ljubljana), composer, music editor and writer on music. He studied music (1898) at the University of Graz, Leipzig (1902-1903) and at the Viennese Academy (1904-1908). At the beginning of the 20th century he founded the magazine »Novi akordi« (1901-1914) which was an important turning point in the development of Slovene music. Klemenčič Ivan, "Krek Gojmir Gregor", Ed. Voglar Dušan, *Enciklopedija Slovenije* 6, Založba Mladinska Knjiga, Ljubljana, 1992, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> A retreat from what had been customary in the time of reading halls (stylistically called »library romanticism«), and a more conscious move towards the new began to be brought about by the music magazine »Novi akordi«.

<sup>11</sup> Adamič, Emil (25 December 1877, Graz – 6 December 1936, Ljubljana), composer, conductor, and writer on music. He studied music at the Trieste Conservatory (1911-12) and later at the Ljubljana Conservatory (1922). He edited the magazine »Nova muzika« (1928-29) which wished to introduce music novelties during both wars in Slovenia. SIVEC, JOŽE, »Adamič, Emil«, Ed. VOGLAR, DUŠAN, *Enciklopedija Slovenije* 1, Založba Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana 1987, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Lajovic, Anton (19 December 1878, Vače – 28 August 1960, Ljubljana), composer. After his studies at the Ljubljana Glasbena Matica music school, he was a composition pupil of Fuchs at the Vienna Conservatory (1897–1902), concurrently completing his training in law at the university. While practising law in Slovenia and Croatia he composed and published articles on music. Influenced by late Romanticism and, particularly after World War I and Impressionism, he became a champion of new developments in Slovenian music. His greatest contribution were his songs and choruses. He was a member of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. IVAN KLEMENČIČ and ANDREJ RIJAVEC, »Lajovic, Anton«, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, See, [http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session\\_search\\_id=384784324&hitnum=1&section=music.15851](http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session_search_id=384784324&hitnum=1&section=music.15851), 8 October 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Ravnik, Janko (7 May 1891, Bohinjska Bistrica – 20 September 1982, Ljubljana), composer and pianist. He studied the piano at Ljubljana Organ School (1903-11) and at the Prague Conservatory with J. Jiránek (1911-15). After World War I he lived mostly in Ljubljana, working as a répétiteur and conductor at the Opera of the Slovenian National Theatre (1918-19) and as an appointed piano teacher at the Ljubljana conservatory. He moved to the Academy of Music in 1939, remaining there until 1968 and acting as rector from 1951 to 1955. RIJAVEC, ANDREJ, »Ravnik, Janko«, Ed. VOGLAR, DUŠAN, *Enciklopedija Slovenije* 10, Založba Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana 1996, p. 102.

<sup>14</sup> Kogoj, Marij (20 September 1892, Trieste – 25 February 1956, Ljubljana), composer. He studied with Franz Schreker at the Vienna Music Academy (1914-17) and with Schoenberg at the Schwarzwald school (1918). Before 1932 he lived mostly in Ljubljana, working as a répétiteur at the Opera of the Slovenian National Theatre (1924-32) and as a music critic. He was a leading member of the Slovenian avant-garde between 1919 and 1922. His career ended prematurely when he fell ill with schizophrenia. The plans he made for a new system of harmony, »chord permutation«, were left unfinished. LOPARNIK, BORUT, »Kogoj, Marij«, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, See [http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session\\_search\\_id=764425281&hitnum=1&section=music.15260](http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session_search_id=764425281&hitnum=1&section=music.15260), 8 October 2006.

music towards modernism, which Kogoj was introduced to in Vienna through direct relations with the leaders of the expressionist avant-garde Schönberg circle. He was equally cogent in the choral sphere – his young choral compositions are true pearls – as well the solo and instrumental works.<sup>14</sup> Kogoj's modernist alter-ego was Slavko Osterc<sup>15</sup>. Even though he stuck to the classic patterns as regards the basic functional relations and the basic formal scheme in music, he was the leading ideologist of new music in Slovenia and thus became a symbol of the avant-garde modern movement. Osterc and Kogoj were the central compositional personalities in the inter-war period. With them, Slovene music rose to the level of contemporary music composition, as it was represented elsewhere in Europe on one hand by the Schönberg circle, on the other hand by the composers of the so-called »new reality«. Starting before Osterc and Kogoj, but even more explicitly including them and the next generation of composers, there arose a generation of composers whose primary self-acknowledged medium was no longer vocal. From then on Slovene music was no longer only a distinct awakener of national sentiments and it no longer sought its motive in the semantic messages of selected words. From then on we meet more and more solely instrumental composers, and on the other hand composers writing mainly for vocal music.

World War II brought about a powerful turn-around in cultural life. At the same time, in Slovenia, this was a period when the communist party achieved a revolutionary monopoly and appropriated the entire political space for itself. A new generation of composers emerged, among whom Osterc's pupils<sup>16</sup> had as especially strong influence. However, with the new circumstances after the war, Slovene music publishing did not reach the same level as at the beginning of the twentieth century. »Cerkveni glasbenik« (Church music magazine), was allowed to be published again only after 1976, and then limited to a musical »subculture«. Apart from this, other publications appearing today are »Naši zbori« – Our Choirs (since

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<sup>15</sup> Kogoj reached his expressive peak with the opera *Črne maske* (The black masks), the best opera works in the inter-war period.

<sup>16</sup> Osterc, Slavko (17 June 1895, Veržej – 23 May 1941, Ljubljana), composer. During 1910 and 1914, he received the basis of a music education with Emerik Beran at the State Male Teacher Training School in Maribor. He studied later with Novák, Jirák and Hába at the Prague Conservatory (1925-27). He then taught at the conservatory in Ljubljana, establishing himself as a leader of Slovenian musical life: founding a school of composer-disciples, campaigning for a progressive attitude among Yugoslav musicians and being particularly active in the ISCM. KATARINA BEDINA and ANDREJ RIJAVEC, »Osterc, Slavko«, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, See [http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session\\_search\\_id=728025047&hitnum=1&section=music.20539](http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session_search_id=728025047&hitnum=1&section=music.20539), 8 October 2006.

<sup>17</sup> Franc Šturm (1912-1943), who also belonged to Osterc's school, was, like Pavel Šivic (1908-1995), Marijan Lipovšek (1910-1995) and Demetrij Žebre (1912-1970) sent to the quartetone composition class of Alois Hába, but died in 1943 on a battlefield of Iški Vintgar.

1946). Matija Tomc<sup>17</sup>, a priest and composer, worked on the fringe of the central musical events. He was marginalized because of his outspoken Catholicism, being ostracized by the authorities after the war. Tomc has a rich creative opus, which ranks him among the leading church secular works in the framework of moderate modernism, in which he also drew on folk sources. Although he also has a series of different instrumental works, the centre of gravity of his composition was vocal. The new government chose only what it wished from the past and what was disregarded left damaging and fatal consequences in Slovenian music awareness. In order for agitation to be efficient, it was necessary to change the aesthetic measures with practical ones. Songs – lyrics and music – were the most appropriate for this. The influx of foreign information – from books, magazines, musical scores – was cut off for almost 15 years after the war.<sup>18</sup> Thus, even though strong creative personalities were present, none of the established compositional techniques or aesthetics prevailed amongst the Slovenian composers.

Even though there is no direct connection between the poetry collection »Pesmi štirih«<sup>19</sup> (Songs of four), believed to be an example of the inclination towards creative

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<sup>18</sup> Tomc, Matija (25 December 1899, Kapljišče – 8 February 1986, Domžale), composer. He graduated from the Theological Faculty in Ljubljana (1924). Later he studied the organ and composition in Vienna (1930). From 1930 he taught music in Ljubljana and in 1932 he was appointed organ teacher at the conservatory. He moved to the Academy of Music in 1939, remaining there until 1947. Afterwards he was forced to retire from his teaching post and became a parish priest in Domžale where he stayed till the end of his life. ŠKULJ, EDO, »Tomc, Matija«, Ed. VOGLAR, DUŠAN, *Enciklopedija Slovenije 13*, Založba Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana 1999, p. 279.

<sup>19</sup> LEBIČ, LOJZE, Glasovi časov (II), O slovenski glasbeni ustvarjalnosti, Ed. JEŽ, JAKOB, *Naši zbori 45 (1994) 5-6*, p. 111.

autonomy and intimacy, as well as music, this event – and its emotional significance – can be compared to the extensive and qualitative collection of choral compositions written by the most prominent Slovene composers for the competition organized by the Union of teaching associations »Svoboda 1954« (Freedom 1954).<sup>20</sup> The abundant collection from this Kosovelian« competition (the poems of the convict Srečko Kosovel<sup>21</sup> were to be set to music) appeared at a time when the editorial board of »Naši zbori« was already greatly concerned that the production and quality of the post-war choral creations was no longer achieving the pre-war level.<sup>22</sup>

Even though the composers tried to objectivise their thoughts and emotions as much as possible, it seems that they were not willing to give up their experience. This was most possibly a consequence of the extremely powerful influence of Lucijan Marija Škerjanc<sup>23</sup>, alongside which none of the influential composers from the expressionist (Kogoj) or neo-classicist (Osterc) circle could establish themselves. At the beginning of the 1960s it seemed that this duality would be best pacified by Eastern European artists, especially the ones from Poland. This is one of the reasons that the Warsaw autumn had such a strong response in Slovenia. However, even the period of the great expanding of the singing expression in the 1960s *a capella* choir (vocal groups) composing, did not give greater results in Slovenia. Thus

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<sup>20</sup> In this book (1953), the poems of four of the greatest post-war Slovene poets were published: Ciril Zlobec (1925), Tone Pavček (1928), Janez Menart (1929-2004) and Kajetan Kovič (1931).

<sup>21</sup> Amongst them Vilko Ukmar: *Dvanajst mešanih zborov*, Alojz Srebotnjak: *Kraška vas* and *Kdo je hodil*, Slavko Mihelčič: *Jesen, Glad*, Marijan Lipovšek: *Dva letska motiva*, as well as Pavel Šivic, Radovan Gobec, etc.

<sup>22</sup> Kosovel, Srečko (18 March 1904, Sežana – 27 May 1926, Tomaj), poet. It seems that Kosovel wrote from an early age. In 1922, Kosovel enrolled in Romance and Slavic Studies at the University of Ljubljana. He produced a solid and profound volume of more than 1000 poems that shows a quality of work beyond his natural age. The poetry of Kosovel is seen to come from three artistic movements, those being, Impressionism, Expressionism and Constructivism. However, Kosovel's poetry also is infused with elements from Dadaism, Surrealism and Futurism. His works show his concern with the occupation of Slovenia and the fate of the Karst region. Kosovel's poetry is known for its wit, irony, depth and tragedy. VREČKO, JANEZ, »Kosovel, Srečko«, Ed. VOGLAR, DUŠAN, *Enciklopedija Slovenije 5*, Založba Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana 1991, pp. 316-318.

<sup>23</sup> Karol Pahor (1896-1974) and Janko Ravnik (1891-1982) saw the reasons for this in the lack of composing schools and the move towards instrumentalism. The discipline and compositional mastery – both of which are necessary for choral compositions – after the war truly started to decline in Slovenia. Composers also moved from this field because they were under constant demands for simplicity and folk music. But it was also ideologically the most exposed. RAVNIK, JANKO, Še nekaj besed o krizi v slovenski zborovski glasbi, Ed. GROEBMING, ADOLF, *Naši zbori VIII (1953) 1-2, 2-3*. See also PAHOR, KAROL, Ed. GROEBMING, ADOLF, *Kriza v naši zborovski glasbi, Naši zbori VII (1952) 3*, pp. 6-8.

<sup>24</sup> Škerjanc, Lucijan Marija (17 December 1900, Graz – 27 February 1973, Ljubljana), composer, conductor, pianist and writer on music. He studied in Ljubljana and at the Vienna Academy (1922-24) with Marx for composition and Trost for the piano. His education was completed at the Schola Cantorum under d'Indy for composition (1924-27) and at the Basle Conservatory under Weingartner for conducting (1930). From 1922 Škerjanc taught music in Ljubljana and in 1926 he was appointed composition teacher at the conservatory. He moved to the Academy of Music in 1940, remaining there until 1970 and acting as rector from 1945 to 1947. IVAN KLEMENČIČ and ANDREJ RIJAVEC, »Škerjanc, Lucijan Marija«, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, See [http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session\\_search\\_id=1115245054&hitnum=1&section=music.25928](http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session_search_id=1115245054&hitnum=1&section=music.25928), 8 October 2006.

it seems that composing for *a capella* choirs in the 60s slowed down a bit, which does not mean that it is undeserving of attention. It is much more important that a new generation entered musical life at the start of the 1960s and tried all the more in the closed circle to surpass the aesthetics of the proletarian culture of socialist realism. The composing group Pro musica viva, established in the 1960s, became the leading supporter of this new trend in Slovene music.<sup>24</sup> Composers of various idealistic opinions assembled in this group, but solely with the conviction that it was necessary to open Slovene music to new, interesting events in contemporary Europe and once more awaken connections with Slovenia's interrupted music tradition, which had come to be symbolised by Kogoj and Osterc. There are also some composers from this group, who reached into the area of traditional choral music only rarely or even not at all (Milan Stibilj<sup>25</sup>, Kruno Cipci<sup>26</sup>, Ivo Petrić<sup>27</sup> and Darijan Božič<sup>28</sup>). Apart from them, there is also a succession of composers producing well founded choral works. Amongst

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<sup>25</sup> Stibilj, Milan (2 November 1929, Ljubljana), composer. He studied psychology at Ljubljana University and composition at the academy of music with K. Pahor. Later he was a composition pupil of Kelemen at the Zagreb Academy of Music (1963-64) and studied electronic techniques in Utrecht (1966-67). In 1967-68 he worked in West Berlin as the guest of the Berliner Künstlerprogramm and lectured in composition at the University of Montreal (1973-74). He was secretary of the Slovenian Jeunesses Musicales (1971-73), and a music consultant to the Cultural Society and Slovenian Ministry of Culture (1976-91). He has also worked as a critic and writer on music. IVAN KLEMENČIČ and ANDREJ RIJAVEC, »Stibilj, Milan«, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, See [http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session\\_search\\_id=177055919&hitnum=1&section=music.26749](http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session_search_id=177055919&hitnum=1&section=music.26749), 8 October 2006.

<sup>26</sup> Cipci, Kruno (1930, Split – 2002, Ljubljana), composer. After graduation (1959-62) he was employed by Radio Zagreb as program director. Later on (1962-68) he was an editor for classical music at Radio Slovenia and (since 1968) director of television music programs at the Slovene Radio and Television. CIPCI, KRUNO, *Skladateljske sledi po letu 1900*, Ed. SOJAR VOGLAR, ČRT, Društvo slovenskih skladateljev, Ljubljana 2003, 45. SIVEC, JOŽE, *Enciklopedija Slovenije 2*, Založba Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana 1998, p. 68.

<sup>27</sup> Petrić, Ivo (16 June 1931, Ljubljana), composer and conductor. He studied composition at the Ljubljana Academy of Music (1950–58) with Škerjanc and conducted with Švara. In 1962 he founded the Slavko Osterc Ensemble, a flexible group of about 20 players. He directed this ensemble in outstanding recordings and performances of audacious contemporary music. The group ceased to work on a regular basis after the early 1980s. Petrić was editor-in-chief of Edicije Društva slovenskih skladateljev, the publishing section of the Association of Slovenian Composers, from 1972 to 1979. From 1979 to 1995 he was the artistic director of the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra. NIALLOUGHLIN, »Petrić, Ivo«, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, See [http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session\\_search\\_id=638784258&hitnum=1&section=music.21468](http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session_search_id=638784258&hitnum=1&section=music.21468), 8 October 2006.

<sup>28</sup> Božič, Darijan (29<sup>th</sup> April 1933, Slavovski brod), composer and conductor. He attended the Ljubljana Academy of Music, studying with Škerjanc (composition) in 1958 and with Švara (conducting) in 1961. He joined the Pro Musica Viva group of composers and in 1962 won the Prešern Award of the Ljubljana Academy. He was assistant conductor of the Slovenian National Theatre Opera Company in Ljubljana (1968-1970) and then artistic director of the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra (1970-74). He was professor of composition at the Universities of Ljubljana and Maribor until 1995, when he was appointed artistic director of the Slovene National Opera. He was a founder of the Slovene Music Days festival (Ljubljana) in 1974 and the University of Maribor Jazz Centre in 1992. NIALLOUGHLIN, »Božič, Darijan«, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, See, [http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session\\_search\\_id=876925898&hitnum=1&section=music.03790](http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session_search_id=876925898&hitnum=1&section=music.03790), 8 October 2006.

them the following deserve a special mention: Jakob Jež, Alojz Srebotnjak, Igor Štuhec and Lojze Lebič.

**Jakob Jež** (1928) was the founding member of the group who wrote the most compositions for choirs, for adult as well as for youth and children's choirs. The characteristic features of Jež's compositions are intermingled in his work – from aleatorics to expressive chromatics, the use of traditional means (two choirs, modality etc.) and theatrical elements.<sup>29</sup> Known are his remakes of Kogoj's youth choirs, which he accompanied by a deeply felt piano.<sup>30</sup> Jež's choir opus is thus an explicit and unique synthesis of classical and avant-garde vocal techniques.

One of the most typical Slovene representatives of the twelve tone technique is **Alojz Srebotnjak** (1931). The vivid sense for vocal and characteristic expressive feeling makes him approach the world of Marij Kogoj and Srečko Kosovel (1904-1926), a poet characterised first by expressionism and later by constructivism, and also one of Slovenia's poets whose work is most frequently set to music. It is especially Srebotnjak's early opus which is strongly marked by his creations for the vocal ensemble, drawing his initiatives for forming the structure from his lyrics, while the expressive emphasis of the song was determined by the selected musical expression, at first inspired solely by expressionist emotions. The search for expressive feelings in the tonal speech thus became Srebotnjak's poetic »program« which he fulfilled by setting chosen lyrics to music.

**Igor Štuhec** (1932) was also a member of the group Pro musica viva. He always avoided a mechanical composition in the framework of consistently received ideas and obstinately composed with his own musical language. In his work, Štuhec often played with combining sections, in which the values for all sound parameters were precisely defined on one side, and hazardous segments in which coincidence plays an important role on the other side. There was an attempt to subdue the reverse tendency, already introduced by the modernistic deviation from romanticism and secured by the Darmstadt art circle, by the 60s generation which included all of the Pro musica viva group members, including Štuhec. From this point on, his compositions were marked by a deviating from the strict rules of serial constructions and moving into an area of inexplicable intuitive decisions. The inner struggle

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<sup>29</sup> Common are also parts in which the singers have to whisper, talk, use Sprachgesang, create tonal clusters, some complicated glissandi, not to mention noises made with the tongue, emphasised pronunciation of consonants and stamping with their feet.

<sup>30</sup> The compositions for children and youth choirs were especially numerous after 1968 when the composer took over as the editor of the magazine for musical education »Grlica« (Turtledove), a magazine in which he also published a lot. Especially popular is his youth choir *Igraj kolce*, written in the 1960s and other youth choirs. In 1988 the adverse political conditions prevented the magazine from further successful venturing.

discussed by the composer himself is the very picture of despair experienced by most composers in the Pro musica viva group, who did not completely dedicate themselves to the compositional-technical constructivism of the serial type – regardless of the otherwise strong response to contemporary compositional streams – or to the radical performance of other compositional styles. The autochthonous poetics of each one of them was based on the selection, transfer and taking over of only certain selected characteristics.<sup>31</sup>

**Lojze Lebič** (1934) was the youngest member of the group Pro musica viva, although today he ranks as one of Slovenia's leading composers. He drew attention to himself as the conductor of the choir of a national radio station. He was especially influenced by the Polish avant-garde movement of the 1960s which developed its own musical language. He is especially remembered as someone who went in different directions, feeling around for musical conviction, directed towards the deepest stratum of human culture from the soundings of the prehistoric period to seeking a harmony between the inner and the transcendental. This composer had a permanent link with the musically archaic and archetypal, i.e. a link with the past musical heritage. His opulent choral opus emerged from a close contact with the choir. For him the expressing of songs was what gave the composer the content and formal image of the composition. However, the composer's concept does not equal the pure mimetic attention of the chosen text, but merely acts as an encouragement for his musical reinterpretation led by pure musical dramaturgy.<sup>32</sup>

The most radical and decisive step for Slovene music into contemporary sonority took place in the group Pro musica viva. The members of the group, with their attempts aimed partly at experimental sonority, used the form of post-modern interlacing of musical means, though there were less expressive choral composers among them. In the 1970s, the Slovene territory experienced a unique duality. While important works emerged from the maturity of the modernistic style, the broader musical public lost its orientation and sense of direction during the fall »into great freedom«, called post-modernism. This gradual waning of modernism manifested itself as a crisis of specifics, as crossing the borders between styles, aesthetics, techniques and types.<sup>33</sup> Most of the compositions written in the 1970s and 80s – regardless of the generation the composer belonged to – show the strokes of style pluralism and poly-stylism: Aldo Kumar, Brina Jež Brezavšček and Peter Šavli.

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<sup>31</sup> BARBO, MATJAŽ, *Pro musica viva*, Prispevek k slovenski moderni po II. svetovni vojni, Znanstveni inštitut Filozofske fakultete, Ljubljana 2001, pp. 162-173.

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem, pp. 189-195.

<sup>33</sup> LEBIČ, LOJZE, Glasovi časov (IV), O slovenski glasbeni ustvarjalnosti, Ed. JEŽ, JAKOB, *Naši zbori 46 (1994) 3-4*, p. 59, 61.

Given the relative extent of his choral opus, **Aldo Kumar** (1954) is probably among the most diverse and interesting personalities of the middle generation of composers. Possessing an ease in experimenting with musical material, form and dramatic concepts, he at the same time included into his work post-modernist elements, as well as characteristically traditional modes, from modal points of departure to quotations.

In the choral opus of **Brina Jež Brezavšček** (1957), compositions for children's choirs dominate. Thus it is easier to understand her statement: »We try to come closer to true spirituality, the divine. And we suffer the consequences, because our creative results that we call works of art, compositions, artistic artefacts, some sort of prismatic objects that reflect us and others so strongly that objectivity disappears, is replaced by insecurity and too much love, a feeling comparable to the love parents feel for their children.«<sup>34</sup>

Even though choral compositions do not dominate in **Peter Šavli's** (1961) compositional opus, they show some of the major characteristics of the composer's poetics. His choral works transpire between harmony and melody, often on tonally organised models. They are a good synthesis of various contrapuntal textures and the new-impressionistic harmonious impetus.

Apart from the mentioned composers, the middle generation of Slovene choral composers also includes **Tomaž Habe** (1947), who is one of its most typical representatives with an exceptional feel for youth choral composition. Because the composer has a sense for the emotions and nature of Slovenes, his traditionalist creativity always includes the lyricism of the Slovene melody in a clear and visible form, regardless of its modern elements and the contrapuntal treatment.

The Slovene middle generation of choral composers with a special affinity to musical theoretical issues also includes Ivan Florjanc, Andrej Misson and the somewhat younger Damijan Močnik, the choral opus of whom is composed mainly of setting church choral songs to music.

**Ivan Florjanc** (1950) pays special attention to the theoretical historical, philosophical and compositional starting points of the emergence and importance of a work of music. Regardless of his special affinity towards hermeneutic approaches, he considers music to be mainly an »articulate reflexive artefact of the human spirit and its personality and only then a

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<sup>34</sup> JEŽ BREZAVŠČEK, BRINA, *Skladateljske sledi po letu 1900*, Ed. SOJAR VOGLAR, ČRT, Društvo slovenskih skladateljev, Ljubljana 2003, pp. 96.

specific stylistic and historic formulation.«<sup>35</sup> On this basis he builds his compositional sentence that is content-wise and structurally well thought out and extremely polyphonically constructed.

**Andrej Misson** (1960) is one of the best representatives of church choral creativity. He wrote the following about his compositional creativity: »I am not and do not wish to be an author who throws around tones so that they disappear through listening, by entering in one of the listener's ears and exiting through the other one, into the void of the forgotten. I hope that these notes that I have written will also stop in the listener. My ideal therefore remains: to be a wholesome and creative musician, not only a practitioner but also a theoretician.«<sup>36</sup>

The group of the more prominent Slovene composers of church choral music is rounded off by **Damijan Močnik** (1967), whose prevailing creation of vocal music is not surprising when one takes into account his long-term experience as a choirmaster.

The 1980s were marked by the departing of Slovene composers into the world. This was a result of very unfavourable cultural and political conditions. But this was not the only reason. Students in Slovenia could not choose between teachers with various compositional-aesthetic and musically philosophical views. Following Lucijan Marija Škerjanc (1900-1973) the musical teaching field of choral creativity in Slovenia was marked mainly by Uroš Krek, Samo Vremšak and Marijan Gabrijelčič.

In the 1950s, **Uroš Krek** (1922) started to build a unified opus from the never resolved but fruitful duality between classical artistic and archetypical motions of folk sounds. Krek is most certainly one of the most well-founded contemporary Slovene composers with a special affinity for writing for strings and vocals. He followed the example of classical principles, without avoiding the constraints of more contemporary research. Thus Krek's choral works always include a polished combination of neo-classicist clarity and emphasised expressivity.

During his studies, **Samo Vremšak** (1930-2004) joined the work of the Composers Club (»Klub komponistov«) from which *Pro musica viva* directly emerged, although he was never a member of it.<sup>37</sup> After graduating, he chose more peaceful features in the neo-romantic and neo-classical directions, which he adapted to his lyrical nature. Throughout his life, Vremšak had been intensively dealing with choral work, hence his large choral opus, which is one of the most comprehensive among contemporary composers.

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<sup>35</sup> FLORJANC, IVAN, *Skladateljske sledi po letu 1900*, Ed. SOJAR VOGLAR, ČRT, Društvo slovenskih skladateljev, Ljubljana 2003, p. 56.

<sup>36</sup> MISSON, ANDREJ, *Skladateljske sledi po letu 1900*, Ed. SOJAR VOGLAR, ČRT, Društvo slovenskih skladateljev, Ljubljana 2003, p. 166.

<sup>37</sup> BARBO, MATJAŽ, *Pro musica viva*, Prispevek k slovenski moderni po II. svetovni vojni, Znanstveni inštitut Filozofske fakultete, Ljubljana 2001, pp. 40-42.

As regards his compositions, **Marijan Gabrijelčič** (1940-1998) developed in a number of directions. His choral compositions in a well worked-out polyphone score that often include dispersed sounds reflect the polytonal approaches and various archaisms. His musical score is demanding but elementary in its expressive rhythmicity.

Differences soon appeared between the composers living abroad and those who remained at home. The ones abroad have obviously got greater compositional diversity and a greater aesthetic base, for in the world this is the first precondition for a composer's survival. It seems that the latter also holds true for **Pavle Merkù** (1927) who spent most of his life as part of the Slovene diaspora, where the national element gained especially distinctive features in circumstances of Italian minority politics. Even though Merkù wrote only a few merely vocal compositions, his vocal parts always work convincingly. Merkù's vocal music shows a gradual advance, with a partial mastering of new techniques. Especially characteristic seems the tendency towards a freer approach to new methods, and yet without a solid realisation of any of them.<sup>38</sup>

It was only in the last decade of the previous century that the Slovenes started paying greater attention to the music of **Vinko Globokar** (1934). Each one of his works written in the times of post-modernist de-centralisation represents a creative reply to the post-modernist dilemmas.<sup>39</sup>

The continuation or the new beginning of any tradition is enabled only by using a large number of techniques which can be successfully reapplied. In music these can only be techniques that can be developed creatively, not only in the sense of replicating faded imitations of old models. This is a possible restriction that can sometimes be found in the works of composers with traditional views. This does not explicitly hold true for the young Slovene composers, for they seek new and interesting routes, so that they could contribute to the leading composers of the middle generation. From the younger generation working in the field of choir creativity, we should mention Larisa Vrhunc, Dušan Bavdek, Ambrož Čopi, Tadeja Vulc and Nana Forte.

**Larisa Vrhunc** (1967) focuses on the differences between the creator's idea and the later aesthetic interpretation, whereupon the question 'why' is always more important than 'how'. Sound diffusion is typical for her otherwise rare choral works.

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<sup>38</sup> O'LOUGHLIN, NIALL, *Novejša glasba v Sloveniji: osebnosti in razvoj*, Slovenska matica, Ljubljana 2000, pp. 165-169, 173-177.

<sup>39</sup> Globokar most possibly went deepest into the relation between the word and music with the works he composed abroad; works that elicited world-wide attention: the extensive *Voi* (Vladimir Majakovski 1966) for three choirs and an orchestra, the choral *Accord* (1966) with the text as acoustic material and the psychological play *Traumdeutung* (Eduardo Sanguinetti 1967) for four choirs.

Even though lacking a vast choral opus, **Dušan Bavdek** (1971) discusses the issues of erasing and preserving values – the choosing and gathering particles into a whole. He does this in a sophisticated way: with a good interplay in which critical measuring of traditionalisms is interwoven with a solemn distance from modernism.

**Ambrož Čopi** (1973) is probably the most expressive representative of the younger generation of Slovene choir composers. His music reveals reminiscences of Slovene music tradition with a well thought out use of contemporary musical means.

Among the most prolific youngest generation of composers, one should mention above all **Tadeja Vulc** (1978), a student of Uroš Rojko<sup>40</sup>, dedicated to modernism. Contrary to the ideas of »re-contextualizing« or »universalizing«, she approaches the world of sound above all through a kind of logic of »moments of feelings«. The composer states that in her works already from the very start she is »groping for the way between intellect and intuition«.<sup>41</sup>

**Nana Forte** (1981) is a representative of the youngest generation of composers, and focuses on choral works. Her choral works are marked by a profound relationship with the text. The composer uses her knowledge of the vocals with great sensitivity for the lyrical text, while delicately building up individual vocal lines.

Today regular biennial performances of Slovene youth choral activity are organized, which alternate with international competitive festivals (Zagorje, Celje). In the same sequence, national and international adult choral manifestations take place with adult choirs performing (both times in Maribor). For two or three decades this has represented the backbone of an incessant revival of this beautiful and noble (if this expression is not already too obsolete) type of amateur activity, which are supervised in the main by »Zveza kulturnih organizacij Slovenije« (The Association of Slovene cultural organisations). The meetings of choirs are also held on municipal levels, as every year at the magnificent open air festival of Slovene choral societies, where as many as 6,000 singers gather together. The magazine

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<sup>40</sup> Rojko, Uroš (9 September 1954, Ljubljana), composer. He studied composition with U. Krek at the Ljubljana Academy of Music (1977-81) and with Klaus Huber at the Freiburg Hochschule für Musik (1983-86); between 1986 and 1989 he attended courses given by Ligeti in Hamburg. He has remained in Germany while holding a lectureship at the Ljubljana Academy. During his studies at the Hochschule Rojko was exposed to a variety of compositional approaches. In the early 1980s he came into close contact with prominent Polish composers, among them Meyer, Schäffer and Kotoński. Since then his ideas have been influenced in courses led by Nono, Lachenmann and others at the Freiburg Experimental Studio and by Ferneyhough's classes in musical analysis at the Darmstadt summer course. STEFANIJA, LEON, »Rojko, Uroš«, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, See [http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session\\_search\\_id=1075770266&hitnum=1&section=music.48062&authstatuscode=200](http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session_search_id=1075770266&hitnum=1&section=music.48062&authstatuscode=200), 8 October 2006.

<sup>41</sup> STEFANIJA, LEON, *On the National in Music: The Sloveneness of Slovenian music and its Rank*, See [http://www2.arnes.si/%7Elstefa/Clanki/On%20the%20National%20in%20Music\\_Slovenia.pdf](http://www2.arnes.si/%7Elstefa/Clanki/On%20the%20National%20in%20Music_Slovenia.pdf), 2 October 2006, pp. 26-27.

»Naši zbori« reviews give traditional support to amateur structures with its musical and textual works.

The currently in work *Anthology of Slovenian choral music* should be presented in greater detail. In this anthology, the Slovene chamber choir – our only professional choir – under the leadership of artistic director Mirko Cuderman, presents over 500 choral works on over 40 CDs, beginning with the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Slovenia to certain contemporary Slovenian composers.

Although we are guided by the supreme principle of quality above nationality, we are at the same time bound to our own roots, our tradition and the present. The awareness of independence has largely been realized for us through gathering into choirs in the past as well as the present day.

Thus, this is why vocal creativity has the strongest tradition in our music lives, as national awareness was raised with it in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the national and artistic desires of our nation have found support in it. In the period of »Novi akordi«, vocal music moved out of the narrowness of reading rooms, thus broadening horizons. However, it seems that this development always lagged somewhat behind compared to the peaks of European choral creativity. Some initiatives came into this space either weakened (dodecaphony, serialism, etc.), or were rejected by the lyrical informal Slovene archetype (parody, grotesque, etc.) or were completely ignored as the cautious Slovene nature did not respond to it (sound installations, etc.). Regardless of this fact, the characteristic tendencies of Slovene choral creativity are mostly similar with the contemporary development of choir creativity in Europe.

Hence, the newly-arriving find themselves in an hitherto unfamiliar situation. Having no reason for a rebellion against political appearances, there was also a loss of encouragement that the generations before them had to instigate in the aim of greater creative responsibility. All music is at their disposal; in the global museum of tones, they are the contemporaries of cultures from all periods and places. The world into which they entered is completely under control as regards sounds, full of entertaining electronics on one side and the glory of concert halls on the other. Is composing which fulfils no expectations the best solution in this vast lack of all possibilities or does one have to step along a lonely path, away from the inviting market?

The circle is complete. It started with pre-modernism when music still served national interests, crossing both modernisms – the pre and post war – when music became unburdened

of any non-musical obligations and shut itself off with post-modernism, in which it is returning to its roots.

### **Summary**

The small size of our country, with an »abounding« historical experience of intimidation by other countries, resulted in an especially powerful attachment to the national word and song. This is why vocal creativity has the strongest tradition in Slovene music life and national consciousness grew with it in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with artistic desires of our nation finding support in it. Thus a significant change in Slovene choral music occurred in the period of the magazine »Novi akordi« (1901-1914). The vocal music has moved into our musical reality from the narrow library tracks and they were brought closer to the broader horizons. However, it seems that a development of choral production was always a bit behind when compared to the peaks of European choral production. Some initiatives came into this space either weakened (dodecaphony, serialism, etc.), were rejected by the lyrical intimate Slovene archetype (parody, grotesque, etc.) or were completely missed out because the cautious Slovenian nature does not respond to it (sound installations, etc.). Regardless of this fact, the moves of the Slovene choral production are similar to the contemporary development of choral production in Europe in their main characteristics.