DOI: https://doi.org/10.2298/GEI1702289U
UDC 398.8:316.7(437.61)
Original scientific paper

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Revitalising and Innovating Tradition: The Individual Motivations behind New Songs in the Slovácko Region

This study focuses on new songs based upon the folklore tradition. It evaluates field research in the Slovácko region carried out over several years. The study analyses the role played by the individual as a creative figure, who builds upon the region's song tradition and folklore studies in the latter half of the 20th century. Three specific cases are used to demonstrate individuals' varying motivation, their personal creative input, and the various 'compositional' approaches. Further, the article discusses the difference between maintaining the cultural heritage and innovating tradition. The author highlights conflicts between the urge to preserve the cultural heritage and to innovate traditional forms. The presentation of folklore in the mass media over time, for instance, has resulted in a large cross-section of the public preferring well-established, familiar versions of some songs—the so-called 'correct' versions. Songs codified in recognized songbook additions are also taken to be correct. By contrast, innovation of tradition, including new songs, is rejected. The effort to preserve folklore, as a result, has erected a barrier that stands in the way of further development of the tradition.

Key words: folklore and creativity, song composition, innovation and revitalization of tradition, cultural heritage, folk revival movement.

Ревитализација и иновација традиције: личне мотивације иза нових песама у регији Моравска Словачка

Ова студија се фокусира на нове песме засноване на фолклорној традицији. Тумачи се теренско истраживање у регији Моравска Словачка, рађено пре неколико година. Студија анализира улогу појединца као стваралачке личности, која гради на темељима регионалне музичке традиције и истраживањима фолклора из друге половине 20. века. Наведена су три конкретна случаја као илустрација различитих мотивација појединаца, њихових личних инспирација и различитих „композиторских" приступа. Затим, у раду се разматра разлика између очувања културног наслеђа и иновирања традиције. Аутор наглашава сукоб између настојања да се очува културно наслеђе и иновирања традиционалних форми. На пример, представљање фолклора у масовним медијима временом је резултирало тиме да велики део јавности преферира установљене, познате верзије неких песама – тзв. „исправне" верзије. Песме које су кодиране као додаци познатој песмарици се такође сматрају исправним. Са друге стране, иновирање традиције, укључујући и нове песме, се одбацује. Као резултат

тога, напор на очувању фолклора подигао је баријеру која стоји на путу даљег развоја традиције.

Кључне речи: фолклор и креативност, компоновање песама, иновација и ревитализација традиције, културно наслеђе, покрет за обнову фоклора.

Contemporary Czech ethnology has attempted to expand its field of knowledge by continuously including new topics that arise from naturally occurring societal development, as well as by the continuous study of traditions which, although significantly changed, nevertheless remains very much alive.[1] It is important to return to these so-called 'old' themes, to study them in the context of contemporary society and thereby examine them from a modern point of view. This provides the opportunity to expand on or correct current opinions, as appropriate, and to redefine terminology. This paper focuses on new songs in south-eastern Moravia, specifically in the Slovácko region, which are based upon the folklore tradition. The basic methodology consists in evaluating material from the author's field research, spanning several years, into the folk revival movement in the region. The aim is to analyse the role played by the individual as a creative figure who builds upon the song tradition of the region, as well as upon the development of folklorism in the latter half of the twentieth century. A number of specific cases will be given to present the varied motivations of individuals, the varying intensity of their creative input, and the various compositional approaches or methods taken.

Another question this paper attempts to answer concerns the difference between the simple maintenance of the cultural heritage and its revitalisation—particularly as regards handwritten, print, and audio sources, and the so-called 'correct' version of a song—versus the innovation of tradition. In the Czech environment, that tradition stretches back through more than a hundred years of mass culture.

New songs as a subject of study for Czech ethnomusicology

The individual's role in maintaining and transmitting this folklore tradition of more than a century has been studied for nearly as long. Initial work on the folksong tradition accented the material itself in the form of song and dance. The individual bearers of the tradition were largely overlooked, something justified by the group character of creative folklore output, but since the end of the nineteenth century, there has been an increasing tendency to take both folkloric phenomena and the bearers of that phenomena as the simultaneous object of study. The notion that folklore is a purely anonymous creation that is the collective property of the community, and that the individual is but a passive bearer (Vetterl – Sirovátka 1975, 80) fell away with the rise of systematic collecting and particularly with iterative research into so-called model public figures. Monograph-based research into the indi-

[1] This study was written with institutional support from the Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, v. v. i., RVO: 68378076.

vidual repertoires of outstanding singers revealed that the production of folklore may be a collective enterprise, but its maintenance, formation, and evolution are 'directly dependent upon talented and aware individuals within that mass of people' (Vetterl – Sirovátka 1975, 80). Such model figures had already begun to attract the attention of folksong collectors active in the nationalist movement of the nineteenth century, who drew attention to outstanding singers with a large folksong repertoire. At the same time, though, they noted that personal input was not perceived as important by the communities the singers were a part of, nor was the authorship of songs declared or thought special by the creators themselves or those in their social environment. For this reason, the older definition of folklore speaks of **anonymity**, **community**, **oral dissemination,** and **variability** as characteristic features and pays little attention to the individual manner of interpretation, which is also key in folklore studies. Within the folk song tradition, however, creating individual interpretations may be the first step taken along the road to composing entirely new songs (Toncrová 2013).

Since the early 20th century, personal input has been observed particularly in studies of variation in folkloric song. In the course of time, key aspects of the singer's personality became highlighted: memory, taste, mentality, interests, life experience and opinions, as well as the singer's creative potential. But this potential is not a necessary condition. The folk tradition gave rise to two types of model singers—those who maintain the song repertoire precisely with only minimal change (the so-called *conservative*) and those who modify songs or create entirely new songs (so-called *production* or *progressive* singers) (Gelnar – Sirovátka 1967, 184–185; Toncrová 2013, 31–32).

Among Czech academics, individual bearers of the song tradition were taken as the subject of study by Vladimír Úlehla, a biologist and folklorist who made them the focus of his monograph *Živá Píseň* (1949). He studied folksong in the small town of Strážnice in the rural Slovácko region, along with the lives of the individual singers. He examined the interpretation of individual songs and opportunities for singing, as well as the function of songs, their transmission within families, and external influences and the gradual disappearance of folksong. He also explored organized efforts made by local students to revive or maintain the tradition, along with similar efforts by intellectuals active in the folk revival movement slowly arising in the interwar period.[2]

The era of Communist totalitarianism in 1948 brought with it expectations of a new historical epoch and a new worldview, one whose rise was to be facilitated, among other ways, by a retooling of culture. The ideologists of the period saw folk culture as an ideal platform: as the artistic expression of the 'suppressed',

[2] Úlehla consistently differentiated autochthonous (original) songs—both those brought in and newly composed songs; and the value of the latter was seen to lie in their 'rawness' before the group had changed them (Úlehla 1949, 100). For him, new songs were ideal material with which to study the process of folklorisation, whereby songs gradually become the property of the community and are shaped into the form in which they are passed on by various means.

stripped of any exclusivity or individualism—'*art created by people for people*' (Machov 1948, 122). Folklore was misused more than other areas because of its appeal as a propaganda tool. 'New folk art' in the spirit of socialist realism demanded new songs that would reline traditional forms with contemporary content, oftentimes with political or propaganda undertones. Songs of love and the joys of working in collective fields, of the wonders of the tractor and the harvester, may seem comical today, but they are a sad memento of the time. As is clear in contemporaneous research, these propaganda 'folksongs' were composed primarily by members of politically active folk ensembles. Despite this, these were creative individuals closely tied to the live tradition, and their composition took place within that framework (cf. Havlíček 1952; Hrabalová 1954).

Political propaganda songs proved to be a dead end for both the live folk tradition and the folk revival movement popular at the time. They were, though, naturally present in the folkloristics research of the period, which continued to focus on ever more rapidly disappearing folk traditions. Úlehla's work served as the basis for Czech research by Oldřich Sirovátka, Jaromír Gelnar, Věra Thořová-Stiborová, Dušan Holý, Marta Toncrová and Jiří Pajer.[3] Their systematic studies of model singers done over many years showed that creativity of the productive type was based upon the singer taking an entirely different approach to the song with different intentions. Key was that the song was not perceived to be a stably defined unit of traditional culture. Its interpretation reflected the singer's mood or a need to modify or complete the song. Studies clearly showed that variations on songs within the folk tradition must be understood as a process that leads to one's own creative work, understood to be the extreme end of the variability cline (Toncrová 2013, 35).

Detailed study of the factors active in the folksong variational process was not undertaken until the second half of the 20th century, by which time what remained of the folksong tradition was rapidly headed for extinction. Within Moravia, the folksong tradition had already begun to be replaced by mass culture starting as early as the second half of the nineteenth century, which from the early 20th century has partially incorporated folklorism, especially in the output of folk groups and bands that interpret various sophisticated arrangements of folksongs. In such a context, a number of factors related to the life of a song tradition have had to be reevaluated in folkloristics: *changes in the variation process* as a result of influences on the singer, for example by radio broadcasts; the *oral tradition* itself, which influenced the publication of folksong editions; and later, recordings disseminated particularly by radio. (Note that many folk singers began to collect records featuring their own repertoire or their own songs.) And finally, there was the importance of *anonymity*, which was now vanishing, in part because of the work of researchers and in part because music and dance folklore were becoming popular as part of the institutionalized mass folk movement and the increasing role played by individuals who were now the driving force in maintaining the cultural heritage. As will be demonstrated further on, some portion of the public still considers anonymity to be

[3] See the bibliography attached to this paper.

essential if a composer's songs are to be heard as within the spirit of the folklore tradition.

New songs created on the way from folklore to folklorism

Key economic, social, and political changes in the 20th century caused the final extinction of Czech folk culture. Some features are still maintained because of their tourism value or as a showcase item, or continue to attract hobbyists and amateur groups. They do therefore still exist, but have meaning only for small groups and sections of the local community.[4] Because of the region's significantly rural character, low industrialization, and high religiosity, folk culture and related traditions in Slovácko have progressed much more slowly down the path of extinction.[5] The prolongation of some elements of folk tradition stems from the activity of local teachers and students, as well as the interest expressed by a number of leading intellectuals and artists. Their interest and admiration have contributed to the awareness of some local inhabitants of the value of their culture, and these people have managed not only to maintain but also to develop them (Pajer 2013, 2015). It is in the Slovácko region that the traditional folk costume was maintained for the longest period, and it was a destination for most Czech ethnographers. Those who went prepared one of the first Czech ethnographic monographs (*Moravské Slovensko* – Volume I., 1918; Volume II., 1922). Most Czechs still associate this region with traditional folk costumes, folksongs and dances, and cimbalom music bands (Jančář 2011, 7).

Since the end of the 19th century, the live song tradition has become intertwined with folklorism as a way of deliberately maintaining folklore beyond its original lifetime and beyond its original context and significance (Pavlicová – Uhlíková 2015). Particular figures whose activity spanned both streams were mostly responsible, but the transformation of tradition gradually affected the entire populace. Rural areas were increasingly influenced by folklorism via the mass media and via the activities of folk groups and folk bands, as well as by the presence of a number of folklore festivals and celebrations. Paradoxically, many folksong and dance interpreters outstanding in their time had no ties whatsoever to the live tradition but instead were direct products of the group folk revival movement. This was true despite the fact that their style and individual mannerisms became interpretive norms both for Czech audiences in general and for the Slovácko region itself. While opportunities for traditional folksong were rapidly becoming extinct, folksongs continued to be created in the region. Under the influence of the folk revival movement, this creative activity gradually became a distinct, deliberate phenomenon no

[4] On the life of folk traditions in the Slovácko region and their inclusion in the ethnocultural traditions as a conscious revival of some manifestations of folk culture cf. Jančář 2011; Pavlicová – Uhlíková 2014; Uhlíková 2016 ad.

[5] The degree of religiosity was also confirmed by the latest census from 2011. Although generally the number of religious people who define themselves as Christians has significantly dropped, the Slovácko region continues to have the highest percentage of religious inhabitants.

longer tied to the traditional variational process described above. As will be shown below, there were several reasons behind this.

Already by the interwar period, the folk revival movement had turned into a suitable platform for the spread of new songs. An effort to seek out and retain records of old folksongs was made by predecessor groups to the folk ensembles,[6] frequently composed of students and people who were not from rural areas, and to this was joined the inclusion of new songs in the repertoire of these groups written by members. In a number of cases, their ability to compose benefited from interconnections with the nationalism and patriotism prevalent in society at that time—a time when folk culture tied to rural areas was disappearing. Despite or perhaps because of this, some of the new songs that had thereby come into being began to enjoy greater public awareness thanks to the folk groups in which the composers took part.[7] The local community was replaced by an ensemble group. The new songs took on a life of their own not dissimilar to that we know from the folk tradition. Their authors were anonymous, or in actual fact, known to only a few. Thanks to the oral tradition, their lyrics and melodies were modified—sculpted into the form best suited to the taste of their subsequent bearers. In this way, the songs gradually became true folksongs.

Composers frequently based their work—both melody and lyrics—on folksong, consciously developing the heritage. But it is noteworthy that since 1950, another source of inspiration has come from brass bands, which have taken on equal importance in forming the compositional aesthetic and guiding its means of expression. In the Czech environment, brass music bands are connected to a specific song genre, the so-called *lidovka*, developed particularly through polkas, waltzes, and marches. The output of these composers, inspired by folksongs but featuring clichéd topics to do with love and nature, was disseminated both in print and on record (Kotek 1997). The influence of this kitsch aesthetic on new songs in the Slovácko region is particularly apparent in villages where brass music overtook the original folk tradition that included stringed instruments, cimbalom and bagpipes. As a genre, however, brass music developed in a different direction than the institutionalized folk movement that presented the cultural heritage. Neither members of folk groups nor the public at large understand this genre as a continuation or conscious maintenance of tradition, despite the fact that in many regions these brass bands are present at what were originally folklore festivals.

[6] The Czech groups who did the initial work to preserve folksongs and dances were called by various names, and the range of their activities was incredibly broad: collecting of folklore, practicing and presenting public performances—not in a unified and uniform way, but adapted to the rules of the stage and the composer's artistic expression as used in folk ensembles in the second half of the 20th century—including the organization of lectures, exhibitions and the first folklore festivals. To simplify the issue, I use the term ‘folk ensemble’ for all of these in this paper.

[7] This may be observed with a number of cases described in journals and specialist writings (e.g., Úlehla 1949; Thořová-Stiborova 1968; Holý 1982; Uher 1992).

A key change in the paradigm was brought by the politically coloured new 'folk' songs from the 1950s mentioned above, which interconnected archaic folk cultures with entirely new motifs that reflected the changes in lifestyle (Uhlíková 2015, 141). After the first wave—supported by institutionally organized competitions for new songs related to the 'socialist village'—subsided, the new songs which had been written were criticized and vanished from the social repertoire. But they did serve as vessels for dozens of people active in the folk revival movement to express themselves. It became clear that attributing authorship to a particular song need not stand in the way of its adoption by the community.

For a long while, though, the attitude of many experts directly contradicted what has been said above. As an example, look at one of the most popular Slovácko authors of new songs composed in the spirit of the original folksongs: Fanoš Mikulecký.[8] (1912–1970). He started composing in 1932 and insisted on the songs remaining anonymous until 1958. He himself noted: „I didn't want to admit to them before people accepted them for as their own'. I didn't force them on anyone. I told myself, if they're good, they'll live by themselves, among people and on the radio. When Mikulecké Pole [a very well know song by Mikulecký – L. U.] ranked as the song of the week in a radio folksong poll, my wife and I were laughing when the radio host was talking about the unknown author who had perceived the beauty of his home in times past and expressed it in the song. […] But times have changed. Today, I'm known so record companies don't want any of the recordings, and my songs are rarely played on the radio. But why, when people continue to sing them? Or does it fricking bother someone that the guy is living and breathing?" (Uher 1992, 4–5)

To this day, Mikulecký may serve as a textbook example of how anonymity is taken as the best measure of creative quality. Until he admitted authorship of his work, even professionals considered them genuine (Uher 1992, 7–8), and they were broadcast on the radio and recorded. But once he admitted authorship, his songs were criticised by the experts, even if their popularity remained unaffected (Kosík 2012, 23). Variants on them are still alive, fixed in the repertoire of folk groups and spontaneously sung by the Czech public.

As folk culture disappeared, the original bearers of song and dance traditions vanished as well. Now, their transmission outside the school and family comes via the organized folk revival movement. Folk ensembles, bands, and choirs have replaced the village community as consumers and create the environment for spreading and maintaining the song tradition. Although its main declared objective is to present and maintain the folklore heritage, the organized folk revival move-

[8] Fanoš Mikulecký (official name František Hřebačka) of Mikulčice, was originally a painter/decorator. He was the founder of a folk ensemble near his home and used it to disseminate songs he composed in the spirit of the folksongs of his region. His songs were considered to be true folksongs until he admitted his authorship in 1952. The songs were published in many folksong books and later directly in publications devoted directly to Mikulecký and his work. They were spread on a mass basis thanks to Czechoslovak Radio, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, which captured interpretation by many well-known folksong interpreters.

ment has from its inception been a space where individual needs, including creative needs, could be fulfilled. This applies both to individuals who wish to compose anonymously and those who take credit for their music. This, in its own way, represents the true continuation of the folk tradition. In keeping with that tradition, there is a tendency to conserve, that is, to maintain certain elements and to introduce others.

New songs as innovating tradition and fulfilling the need for expression

The continuous need to expand the repertoire of ensembles, choirs and groups, the preparation of new performances and new recordings, creates a continuous need for new material. And the resources are not inexhaustible. As with the variational process described above, simple variations on songs originate within individual ensembles and groups. New stanzas are composed for existing folksongs or entirely new songs are composed that reflect, in various ways, their composer's personality. There are two types of new song: some mimic genuine folksongs, while others are the creation of composers who do not wish to mimic but rather to create new values. This latter group of songs approaches folksong by being created in their spirit, using similar wording, attributes, melodic procedures, and rhythmic (Toncrová 2013, 39).

In terms of topic, new songs usually bring nothing new. They are determined by the ideological intention of their composers to follow and extend the folk tradition. Nevertheless, an analysis of the lyrics shows a shift away from breadwinning themes connected with extinct manifestations of traditional folk culture (songs about traditional crafts and craftsmen, home manufacture, work in the fields, etc.) and themes based on social relations (army recruits, highway robbers, corvée, rulers, nobles, the clergy, etc. There are no new ceremonial songs, such as wedding songs. Instead the trend is towards motifs that accord with the contemporary composers' and interpreters' notions of the live folklore tradition: songs about wine, dance, love, the home village and—anachronistically—military life, or about the vanished life of the traditional rural village.

In looking at the objectives of the new songs, it quickly becomes clear that they come into being because of the needs of their composers. Writing songs was always tied to psychological relaxation, to letting go of inner tensions, with the need to handle certain situations (Krekovičová 1987, 2). The situation is similar for songwriters within the folk revival movement. Some compose for themselves, others for the public. There are also composers whose work does not fill a personal need to create, but who write songs in response to social demand: for a particular occasion or the needs of folk ensembles, choirs or groups.

To analyse the creative process, three figures were chosen whose songs either a) have achieved wide popularity and are considered anonymous efforts by the general public, or b) are part of an ensemble repertoire that does not take into account whether the author's identity is known. All three figures are strong musical

characters and drivers of the folk revival movement in their home areas (ensemble, choir, and group leaders). The folk tradition is a hobby for each of them, and they are considered experts by the people in their area. But there are sharp differences between their views of composition, the creative process, and their motivation for composing.

Jaroslav Smutný (*1934) has been the leader of a folk ensemble for many years; he is a multi-instrumentalist and collector of folksongs. He was born in Slovakia into a family where the father was a Czech teacher and the mother a Slovak teacher. In 1940, he moved to Brno. He started to notate songs as a member of a folk ensemble, and he and his wife together notated three thousand folksongs, some of which were published. For Smutný, the impulse to create folksongs is based upon his admiration for them and his desire to express himself. He either creates imitation folksongs or songs that reflect his own life. Working as a construction engineer, he first went to Handlová in Slovakia (1957–1960) and then to Veselí nad Moravou in the Slovácko region. In both towns, he and his wife founded and led folk ensembles. And the need to build the ensembles' repertoire was another impulse for his creativity: he modified folksongs to suit the needs of performance, creatively edited their lyrics, added new stanzas, or composed entirely new songs. Under the influence of 1960s Czech[9] music, he re-evaluated his work: in his own words, he considered it pointless to replicate what he considered museum pieces whose lifetime had ended, and began to write songs about his own life. After some time, it became clear that this viewpoint could not be reconciled with the objectives of the folk revival movement, so he went back to writing in the spirit of the folk tradition. His motivation for doing so is not purely a lack of folklore material. He admits to a desire to create something himself and to feeling joy when no one could tell he had written a song that became popular. „I was too greedy to sign my name to a song. I wanted to know whether I could pull it off, whether anyone would be able to tell." He wrote a total of approximately two hundred songs. In contrast to the so-called folksong writers—the great majority—who wrote both lyrics and music together (Stiborová 1960, 182), Smutný always starts with the lyrics. The melody depends upon his creative impulse. If he writes for his own needs, the melody respects the character of lyrics (*'The words ask by themselves for the melody they need.'*[10]). When he writes commissioned songs, he does so in keeping with the assignment. His creative work is determined not only by his musical talent, but by his knowledge of an incredible number of folksongs, both practical and theoretical. In terms of the music itself, he can compose songs that cannot be distinguished from the genuine item. For years, he inserted his songs in the ensemble repertoire and put out his own printed songbooks. The public thus considers them folksongs.

Jiří Petrů (*1953) comes from Kyjov, from a family closely tied to the folk revival movement in the Slovácko region. His father was a well-known

[9] Work by actors and songwriters Jiří Suchý and Jiří Šlitr, classifiable as jazz-inspired cabaret songs.

[10] Interview with Jaroslav Smutný from 7/1/2017 in Veselí nad Moravou.

'*primáš',* a leading musician in the local folk ensemble, and he and his brother both play in a cimbalom band named after him (CM Jury Petrů). He is a musician, multi-instrumentalist, producer of radio and TV programs with folklore themes, leader of two male voice choirs, and a collector of folksongs. Professionally, he is an optician. He has a strong personal bond with folk culture and spends most of his free time maintaining and spreading folklore traditions. By himself, he has notated approximately 800 folksongs, some of which have been published. Although he places his name under his songs printed in song books, he does not much promote himself as their composer. In his opinion, anonymity is the best way to encourage his songs to spread. '*It's better just to let a song go in the world and see what happens. When you know who wrote it, people start to get judgmental* […]'[11] Petrů has composed many melodies for song lyrics from František Sušil's (1853–1859) collection, and because of a lack of suitable material, has also written several songs for his folk ensemble dancers to perform the '*verbuňk'*, a solo male song: „Some are well-known. They took root here, people sing them, even brass bands play them. But this is partly because I didn't present them as mine […] I said, for instance, these are by our Dad… I simply lied on purpose, and I'm ashamed of that to this day." [12] It was as a result of inner need that Petrů started to write songs inspired by the region he lives in. In such cases, both lyrics and melody usually come to his mind simultaneously, i.e., in the same creative process we know from most of the original folksong writers (Stiborová 1960, 182). Analysis of his songs shows that they are closely tied to the folk tradition in terms of both music and lyrics. Petrů takes conscious inspiration from authentic material. He searches lyrics, motifs, and wording in old collections. With some melodies, he himself cannot distinguish whether or not he composed them. He has at times been convinced he was composing a novel melody only to find out it already existed (Petrů 2015, 46). If a song catches on and gains popularity, he has a feeling of inner satisfaction. But he is as secretive about his work as possible and unwilling to admit how many songs he has written.

Jaroslav Novák (*1954) comes from Dolní Bojanovice, from an environment alive with folklore. Since his wedding, he has lived in Čejkovice. He is a multi-instrumentalist who has played in several brass bands and a good singer, and when he was young used to dance in a folk ensemble. Originally, he worked as an electrician. Since the early 1990s, he has been a music teacher and completed a distance course in education. He leads several youth brass bands and a male-voice choir focusing on the interpretation of folksongs. He himself is a prolific songwriter, and his songs are in the repertoire of a number of male-voice choirs and brass bands in the Slovácko region. Novák's creative process is not stable in any way. Sometimes, he writes the lyrics first, other times the melody. The impulse for his creativity sometimes comes from the commission, other times from an outpouring of emotion. He has a dedicated relationship to the Slovácko region, to Čejkovice, and to his vineyard, where he has composed many songs as he worked. He is also devoted to music and dance folklore, to brass and cimbalom music, and to his

[11] Interview with Jiří Petrů from 18/4/2016 at Kameňák.

[12] Ibid.

Christian faith. He has so far written 130 songs, some commissioned. He writes songs in the spirit of folksongs (both dance and non-dance), songs significantly influenced by '*lidovka'* (polkas, waltzes and, e.g., bues and slowfox). He carefully distinguishes between music for brass bands and male-voice choirs, and is cognizant of the differences between folksongs from various Slovácko subregions and the dialects of individual villages. In contrast to other songwriters writing in the spirit of the folk tradition, he is careful to be original, both in his music and in his lyrics. He does not want to imitate anyone. He presents his new songs to people around him for feedback. If they remind anyone of an existing tune, he reworks the music. He is also opposed to any modifications to his songs. He insists that they remain as written and be interpreted in accordance with his intentions (tempo, phrasing). Songwriting is a vital need for him. He does not write songs only for himself, though. He copyrights his work, registering all his songs in the Union for Authors Rights (*Ochranný svaz autorský*), and collects royalties. He claims the work as his own and helps to disseminate it by every available means: he has published his own songbook, and his songs have been released on several CDs recorded by the brass music bands he leads and on several CDs by the various male and female voice choirs of the Slovácko region. As I have described in my study of male voice choirs and new songs (Uhlíková 2015), for Novák, the individual need for expression and recognition is significantly bound up with the collective need felt by some male voice choirs to identify with and represent a specific location.

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The standard definition of a folksong speaks of the genre's simplicity, its creative spontaneity, a lack of formal musical education on the part of the author—who remains anonymous—the ungrammaticality of the lyrics, and the ease of learning such songs (Vysloužil – Fukač – Toncrová 1997, 503). Let us now look at how well these songwriters and their songs fit these criteria:

- Although with all three of these composers a certain creative spontaneity is present in the sense of flowing emotions, songwriting is above all an activity which must be thought through and aimed at a clear objective. It involves a decision to write a song with a specific intention, frequently commissioned. With all three composers, there is clear evidence of a long-term theoretical and practical interest in folklore, and knowledge of a large number of folksongs, their structure, and their lyrics.
- Save in the exceptional case of some songs by Jiří Petrů, the creative process is different from that of the original tradition bearers, who almost always created the melody and lyrics simultaneously. All three contemporary composers first write either the lyrics for the melody and add the other component afterwards.
- Their perception of the anonymity issue varies: Jaroslav Smutný and Jiří Petrů are shaped by their environment, because many members of folk ensembles and the general public reject new songs, which they see as forgeries or of lesser quality than so-called genuine folksongs. Jaroslav Novák, by contrast, proudly

claims his work as his own and perceives it as a contemporary tradition—as creative work that corresponds to the past but reflects the taste of contemporary society. His work has been significantly influenced by his long-term membership in a brass band.

- All three write in dialect.
- With their leading positions as heads of ensembles, bands, or choirs, they are able to select the group's repertoire and thereby have an opportunity to promote their own music.

Revitalisation versus the innovation of tradition

As stated above, the basic objective of the folk revival movement is to maintain, process, and publicly present folksongs, dances, customs, and other elements of folk culture. From the very beginning, these activities have been allied to an effort to conserve as many of these archaic traditions as possible. In a number of cases, the focus lies on the revitalisation of long extinct expressions by, for example, reconstructing customs, dances, folk costumes, musical instruments, and so on, many times under the supervision of experts. There is, on the one hand, a conscious effort to preserve as much authentic material as possible, especially as overseen by jury members at various shows, competitions, and festivals (and under communism, by what were called 'methodology centres'). On the other hand, there are the personal artistic ambitions of creative figures, adaptation for the stage and media, and society's changing tastes. The folk revival movement has thus given rise to a widely shared notion of what the 'correct interpretation' of folk songs and dances should be, but by virtue of this, has put the brakes on creative folklore as described above. The presentation of folklore in the mass media over time, for instance, has resulted in a large cross-section of the public preferring well-established, familiar versions of some songs—the so-called 'correct' versions based on the interpretations of well-known interpreters. Songs codified in recognized songbook additions are also taken to be correct. Other variants are understood to be 'strange' or faulty. The effort to preserve folklore, as a result, has erected a barrier that stands in the way of folklore as an uninterrupted flow of continuously modified specific versions and transmission via face-to-face communication.

But the folk revival movement has also brought a series of innovations to the tradition. They include modifications to folk dances,[13] changes in the instrumental composition of folk bands, the manner in which songs are played and sung,[14] and changes to the folk costumes used as theatrical costumes on stage. Experts sometimes comment on or partially criticize all of these elements; but new

[13] E.g., changes in the dance tempo and structure, limiting dance steps and elements on the one hand and undoubtedly new dance steps and moves on the other.

[14] E.g., harmonisation, melody ornamentation, polyphony, changed function of individual instruments.

songs are almost always denounced. Although they fulfil all the content and formal requirements and are practically indistinguishable from 'genuine' folksong, the knowledge of their demonstrably contemporary composers prevents them from being accepted by people who consistently distinguish between the 'authentic' folklore tradition and 'imitation'.

How to conclude? It may seem a historical paradox, but during these times of wall-to-wall mass culture and the aggressive levelling of what remains of the folk tradition, songwriting in the Slovácko region is on the rise. The degree to which new songs get a listening is closely tied to their quality and to their ability to resonate socially in terms of aesthetics, taste, and opinion. The 'managerial' skills of song writers and the positions they occupy are also important. If a composer can promote his songs as part of the repertoire of a group or introduce them to the public over the mass media, his work will stand a better chance of acquiring a life of its own. How long this lifetime lasts is a question that will have to be answered by further generations of researchers.

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Примљено / Received: 19. 01. 2017.
Прихваћено / Accepted: 21. 08. 2017.