
Josef Maria Brožek

**Interaction with Slovenia and Slovenian Culture and Science:
Folk Music and Other Loves**

Autor, po rodu Čeh, po stroki psiholog, se v prispevku spominja srečanj s slovensko ljudsko pesmijo in stikov s slovenskimi strokovnimi kolegi ter s sodelavci Glasbeno-narodopisnega inštituta.

The author, psychologist by profession and of Czech origin, reminisces about his encounters with Slovene folk songs and with colleagues from Slovenia, among them also the employees of the Institute of Ethnomusicology.

The Beginnings

My personal contacts with Slovenian culture go further back than my memory can reach. I still can sing

Naprej zastava slave,
na boj junaška kri,
za blagor očetnjave
naj puška govori.

This is true, even though for a long time I have not been fully clear of the meaning of all the words. I must have learned the song from my mother, at an early age, spent in the years 1915-1920 as a «refugee» in the far-away Siberia.

I remember, clearly, my Czech mother's singing – to skillful zither accompaniment – other Slavic songs. Her favorite were Slovak folk songs. She used to say: «If there are angels and if they sing, they must sing in Slovak».

The zither was her most precious possession. We took it along when, late in 1915, we were leaving Warsaw (where I lived since 1913) in order to escape the German bombardment of the city. All that we could take along was only what mother was able to carry in her arms. Zither was among our few possessions. We were leaving for the Altai region, North of Mongolia, in the upper reaches of the river Ob where my father, as a possessor

of an Austro-Hungarian passport, was held in an internment camp. In 1917 we were able to move to Central Ural mountains where my father found employment first, in 1916, in a sawmill which supplied materials for a paper mill in the community of Belyj Ključ, on the river Byelaya, and then in a factory manufacturing goods cars, in Ust'katav, in the district (-gubernia-) of Ufa. I remember her singing, vividly.

Fleeting Contact with Slovenia

Our long journey began late in April of 1920 in Vladivostok, ended early in June in the harbor of Trst. The reception was not a friendly one: The stedores refused to unload the ship, arguing that it carried a part of an anti-Communist army.

Finally, matters were settled and we boarded a train for Prague. Our journey led through Ljubljana but it may have been during the night: I have no recall of the passage through Slovenia.

Post-World War II Personal Contacts

I do not recall how, in 1950, I obtained the address of France Marolt, director of Ljubljana's Glasbenonarodopisni Institut.

To my regret, my letter arrived when Marolt was no longer living.

In the history of my interaction with Slovenia critically important was the year 1952, when Božo Škerlj, professor of anthropology and his Czech wife, Ruženka, spent some two months as our guests in St. Paul, Minnesota, in North America's Midwest.

I shared with Božo two interests in which we interacted: professionally, interest in physical anthropology, culturally, interest in Slovenian folk songs. In addition, I admired his skill as a painter and greatly enjoyed two of his pastels: One of them, a Slovenian winter scene, cooled me during warm Minnesota summers; the other one, a picture of the sun-drenched Piran, seen from the Adriatic, kept me warm during Minnesota's long and severe winters.

Božo was a skilfull piano accompanist. In the evenings, after returning from the day's work in the Laboratory of Physiological Hygiene, we rarely missed the opportunity to do some singing of Slovenian folk songs before the supper.

In the summer of 1953, together with my family I was pleased to spend a few days in the company of the Škerlj's on the banks of Bohinjsko jezero (the lake of Bohinj). On the evening of my birthday, I had a unique musical experience: The Škerlj's arranged for a group of neighbors to gather in front of the house in which we stayed and to sing, in traditional Slovenian group fashion, Slovenian folk songs. It was the nicest thing the Škerlj's did for me: Here I heard not songs presented by a professional group and recorded but Slovenian folk songs as sung by the people!

Next day, in company of Ruženka Škerlj and her friend, a young lady, we made an unforgettable journey to the top of the Triglav mountain and stayed over night in a tourist facility. Mrs. Brožek regretted that she had to take care of the children and could not take part in the Triglav adventure.

There are three contributions of Mrs. Škerlj that should not be forgotten: In St. Paul, she was my teacher of Slovenian and I greatly appreciated her culinary skills, including an unforgettable "potica"; in Slovenia, a fabulous joint mushroom hunt.

With Božo I wrote a paper on the development of Czech physical anthropology (Brožek & Škerlj, 1952). He shared, importantly, in a research paper (Škerlj, Brožek, &

Hunt, 1953). Together we wrote a monograph on Somatometric Assessment of Body Composition, published by the Slovenian Academy of Science (Škerlj & Brožek, 1963). Unfortunately, he did not live to see it in print (Brožek, 1963).

At the tenth anniversary of Božo's death, commemorative papers appeared both in the United States (Brožek, 1971) and in Yugoslavia (Brožek 1971/1972).

A comprehensive account of my anthropological studies in Yugoslavia was published in a collection of papers commemorating the premature death of a Slovenian anthropologist, Anton Pogačnik (Brožek 1976).

Congresses and Symposia

Scientific gatherings brought me several times to Slovenia and, more precisely, to Bled and Ljubljana.

Bled

In 1954 I participated in a public-health symposium at which I reported on nutritional research carried out in Croatia a year earlier (cf. Brožek, Buzina & Mikič, 1957); one member of the research team (Fedor Mikič) was Slovenian.

In 1971 I took part in the Fourth Congress of Yugoslav Psychologists at which I reported on research carried out on the territory of Yugoslavia (Brožek 1972 a). I was pleased to share the plenary session with Anton Trstenjak, a Slovenian psychologist and personal friend, and Zoran Bujas of Zagreb. In the air one could feel manifest tension between the Serbian and Croatian participants. With sadness I closed my introductory comments by saying that I felt like the "last Y u g o s l a v psychologist".

My report, dedicated to Ljubljana's Mihajlo Rostohar and Beograd' Boris Stevanović, dealt with three topics:

1. Marko Marulić's work on "Psihologia", written around 1510 and subsequently lost in a plague in Split; the topic was discussed, in English, in papers published in the USA (Brožek, 1973 a) and in Italy (Brožek, 1973 b).
2. Mihajlo Rostohar, with focus on the puzzling fact that he did not receive professorship at the newly established university of Ljubljana.

Ljubljana

It was a pleasure to participate in the 15th Congress of the International Association of Applied Psychology, held in Ljubljana on 2–8 August 1964. It was on this occasion that I met, in person, Mihajlo Rostohar as well as some of the younger Slovenian psychologists, including Prof. Ivan Toličič whose hospitality at the Adriatic we were later privileged to enjoy.

At this point it may be noted that a systematic account of Yugoslav work on history of psychology was presented in a report on Contemporary Historiography of East European Historiography of Psychology (Brožek, 1977).

In 1996 I was invited by the Psychology Department of the University of Ljubljana to participate in a symposium dedicated to the memory of Mihajlo Rostohar. On the second day I presided at the morning and the afternoon session and presented two papers, coauthored with Prof. Jiří Hoskovec of Prague who could not take part in the symposium (Hoskovec & Brožek, in press, and Brožek & Hoskovec, in press). My welcome reward was a bottle of a typical Slovenian red wine, originating from what was Rostohar' vinyard.

The symposium was held on Friday and Saturday. I made arrangements to visit Prof. A. Trstenjak at 10:00 AM on Sunday, before leaving for the airport. In the company of Prof. Vid Pečjak, now retired as Professor of Psychology of the University of Ljubljana. To my disbelief, Prof. Trstenjak was no longer living.

Prof. Hoskovec kindly presented our joint paper on "Rostohar in Prague" (Brožek & Hoskovec, in press) at the Rostohar symposium, held in Brno in October 1998. The symposium's title was "Mihajlo Rostohar (1878-1966) in the tradition of Gestalt and experimental psychology".

Encounters with the GNI staff

"GNI" stands for Glasbenonarodopisni inštitut (Institute of Ethnomusicology).

Valens Vodušek

Dr. Valens Vodušek was, for many years, Director of the Institute. Whenever I had the opportunity to do so, I attended the practice sessions of SLOVENSKI OKTET, conducted by Dr. Vodušek. I had little contact with him in the context of the Institute.

Tončka Marolt

I remember, clearly, being puzzled one day when I was accompanying her on her way home. Referring to the next Sunday, she used the words "povabiti na kosilo". I figured out that it was some kind of an invitation but had no idea of what will happen when I shall appear next Sunday at the door of her apartment: A wonderful meal awaited me!

Tončka was instrumental in providing to us a man's and a woman's folk costume from Bela Krajina as a reward for providing to the Institute a new system for recording music that ran on batteries and thus could be used in the parts of the country that were not electrified. The gift was made financially possible by Kris Bird, our young friend whom we met in 1948 as a student of Harvard University during a return journey from Holland to Canada. We shared with him and his twin-brother David the love of folk songs, including Russian folk songs.

Marija Šuštar

Marija was in charge of the folkdancing group of the University of Ljubljana. I loved to join the group whenever it was feasible. My dancing partner was Zdenka Škerlj, daughter of Prof. Božo Škerlj.

Last but not least:

Zmaga Kumer

Zmaga joined the Institute 1949, after terminating her studies of musicology and slavistics. I admired her linguistic skills, which came to include Slovak. She had good professional friends in Bratislava. My correspondence with her was in Croatian, Czech, German, French and English.

I admired also the fact that she worked in the area of Slovenian ethnomusicology with both hands:

1. The hand of a scholar, and
2. The hand of a propagator of Slovenian folk songs.

In both areas her accomplishments were not only outstanding: They were unique.

Closing words

All that begins also ends. My last contribution to Czech-Slovenian interaction will be a review (Brožek & Hoskovec, in press) of a remarkable, wise book, Vid Pečjak's "Psihologija tretjega življenjskega obdobja" (Psychology of the third phase of human life).

It ends with a poem of France Prešeren that begins

Dolgost življenja našega je kratka
Kaj znancev je zasula že lopata!

*Brief is our life.
How many friends a shovel has covered!*

It closes with the reminder "Memento mori" – Remember that none of us is immortal".

It was a long, complex life, significantly enriched, especially in the areas of music, physical anthropology, and history of psychology by interaction with Slovenian colleagues and friends. "Velika hvala! I Tebi, Zmaga..."

Povzetek

Stiki s Slovenijo in Slovenci v kulturi in znanosti: Ljudska glasba

Avtor, po rodu Čeh, po stroki pa psiholog, se je s slovensko pesmijo srečal kot otrok, ko je moral med prvo svetovno vojno s starši živeti v Sibiriji in slišal svojo mater peti ljudske pesmi raznih slovanskih narodov. Ko se je družina leta 1920 vračala domov, je potovala od Trsta z vlakom čez slovensko ozemlje.

Zanimanje za slovensko pesem je bilo vzrok za avtorjevo pismo Francetu Maroltu leta 1951, dospelo tik po smrti. V naslednjih letih so slovensko ljudsko pesem posredovali stiki s prof. Božom Škerljem in njegovo soprogo Čehinjo Ruženko. To prijateljstvo, osebno in strokovno, je bilo deloma posrednik tudi za avtorjevo sodelovanje na različnih kongresih v takratni Jugoslaviji in za sodelovanje z nekaterimi slovenskimi psihologi, npr. s prof. Antonom Terstenjakom in prof. Vidom Pečjakom.

Ko je avtor ob neki priložnosti prišel spet v Ljubljano, je leta 1954 prinesel Glasbeno-narodopisnemu inštitutu v dar terenski baterijski magnetofon, kakršnega si ustanova ni mogla nabaviti. Osebno poznanstvo s takratnimi sodelavci inštituta (dr. Valensom Voduškom, Tončko Maroltovo, Marijo Šuštarjevo in jubilatko) je prineslo trajne stike avtorja z inštitutom in preraslo v prijateljstvo, ohranjeno do danes.