

THE RECEPTION OF FOLK SONGS BY CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SLOVENIA

TJAŠA JAKOP

The aim of this paper is to ascertain the extent to which folk songs are part of the lives of children and young people, from primary school through secondary school and on to university. The research was carried out with the help of written surveys. The article concludes that young people are still fairly well acquainted with this part of folk heritage, although their awareness is often due to modern interpretations and arrangements by Slovenian musicians.

Keywords: folk song, children and young people, survey.

Namen prispevka je ugotoviti, v kakšni meri je ljudska pesem prisotna v življenju otrok in mladostnikov od osnovne prek srednje šole do fakultete. Raziskavo sem opravila s pomočjo pisne ankete na terenu in ugotovila, da mladi še vedno precej dobro poznajo tovrstno ljudsko blago, pa četudi v novi preobleki, tj. kot sodobne interpretacije in priredbe slovenskih glasbenikov.

Ključne besede: ljudska pesem, otroci in mladostniki, anketa

Folk songs play an important role in the preservation of a nation's identity. As globalization and European integration take hold, many nations are once again turning to folk songs, folk music, and folk dance in search of their roots. Slovenians are no exception in this regard. As Rajko Muršič says:

The rich musical and song tradition of the regions of Slovenia cannot remain merely a dull resource for understanding the life of our ancestors. This is cultural capital bequeathed to us by anonymous musicians and singers – and we squander it at our peril. [Muršič 2004]

The latest revival of folk singing and performance in Slovenia has arisen in order to prevent folk song from disappearing into oblivion.

FAMILIARITY WITH FOLK SONGS ON THE PART OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE: RESEARCH BASED ON SURVEY RESULTS

In view of the fact that folk songs are enjoying renewed popularity, I decided to carry out research among young people because the survival of the heritage of our ancestors and its transmission to future generations depends on them. The research carried out with the help of schoolchildren and university students was an attempt to show the extent to which folk songs are part of their everyday lives and their leisure time.

A written survey containing 12 questions was used to ascertain young people's familiarity with folk songs and their attitudes towards them. The survey was completed by 62 pupils from a primary school in Žalec (19 from year 5, 20 from year 7, and 23 from year 8);¹ a 14-year-old ethnic Slovenian living in Achomitz/Zahomec (Gailtal/Zilja), a Slovenian village in Austria; 27 second-year pupils from the Jože Plečnik Upper Secondary School in Ljubljana; and 57 third-year students from the Faculty of Education in Maribor. The survey was administered in January and February 2005. Respondents were asked to indicate their sex, age, school, and place of residence.

SURVEY RESULTS²

Question 1: Please give the titles of at least three folk songs.

Of the 19 pupils from year 5 of the Žalec primary school, 3 were unable to name a single folk song, only one of the 20 pupils from year 7 was unable to do so,³ while all 23 respondents from year 8 mentioned at least one folk song. The songs most frequently listed were: "Marko skače" (Marko Leaps, 10), "Lepa Anka" (Beautiful Anka, 8), and "Drežniška" (Drežnica Song, 7) (year 5); "Pegam in Lambergar" (Pegam and Lambergar, 16), "Marko skače" (13), and "Desetnica" (The Tenth Daughter, 10) (year 7); and "En hribček bom kupil" (I Will Buy a Small Hill, 17), "Regiment po cesti gre" (The Regiment Walks along the Road, 13), and "Po Koroškem, po Kranjskem" (Through Carinthia, through Carniola, 10) (year 8).⁴ The 14-year-old ethnic Slovenian from Gailtal/Zilja listed the following three songs: "Al mi na Ojstrnk [Ojstrnik] pridamo" (If We Go to Ojstrnik), "Boug nan dajte" (God Grant Us), and "Nmau čriez jezero" (A Bit across the Lake).

All Ljubljana upper secondary school respondents listed at least three folk songs, most frequently "Čuk se je oženil" (The Screech Owl Married, 13), "En hribček bom kupil" (10) and "Po Koroškem, po Kranjskem" (9). The students from Maribor's Faculty of Education were easily able to list at least three folk songs (only one of the 57 respondents listed only two). The folk songs most frequently mentioned were: "Marko skače" (42), "Zeleni Jurij" (Green George, 32), "Dekle je po vodo šlo" (A Girl Went for Water, 23), "Na planincih" (In the Alps, 14), and "Barčica po morju plava" (A Small Boat Sails the Sea, 13).⁵ Of those

¹ *I. osnovna šola Žalec* (Žalec Primary School No. 1). This school offers a nine-year primary school program.

² The fact that the survey sample is a relatively small one is acknowledged. This paper does not attempt to provide a definitive description of the reception of folk songs by young people at the national level.

³ One of the pupils listed Prešeren's "Zdravljica" (A Toast) as a folk song.

⁴ Four pupils from year 8 mentioned *Po Dolenjskem po Kranjskem*, 'through Lower Carniola, through Carniola'.

⁵ One respondent wrote *Ladjica po morju plava*, 'A small boat sails the sea'. Another wrote *Ob našem potoku je mlin* 'There is a mill on our stream' instead of *Ob bistrem potoku je mlin* 'there is a mill on the clear stream'.

listed, there were several folk songs characteristic of the eastern part of Slovenian ethnic territory: “Vsi so venci veji” (All the Wreathes are Wilted, 4),⁶ “Zrelo je žito” (The Grain is Ripe, 1), “Fse, kaj lazi” (All Living Things, 1), “Prleška” (Prlekija Song, 1), “San se šetau gori doli” (I Walked Up and Down, 1).

A comparison between pupils from years 5, 7, and 8 of the Žalec primary school shows that year 5 pupils were more familiar with lyrical songs (e.g., “Marko skače”) and year 7 pupils with epic songs (e.g., “Pegam in Lambergar”); with year 8 pupils the balance had swung back towards lyrical songs (e.g., “En hribček bom kupil”). 16% of year 5 and 5% of year 7 pupils did not answer the question, whereas all year 8 pupils were able to mention at least one folk song. All upper secondary school pupils answered the question, with all respondents listing at least three. Only one of the university students (2%) listed two.

Question 2: Write down a verse from a folk song.

The verse most commonly quoted by year 7 pupils was the first verse of “Marko skače” (10);⁷ year 8 pupils most commonly quoted “En hribček bom kupil” (11). Five pupils from year 7 and six pupils from year 8 did not provide a verse. The ethnic Slovenian from Gailtal/Zilja wrote down the lyrics to “Boug nan dajte.”⁸ All but one of the upper secondary school pupils wrote down the first verse of a folk song, most commonly “Čuk se je oženil” (4), “En hribček bom kupil” (4) and “Po Koroškem, po Kranjskem” (4). The students from Maribor’s Faculty of Education were without exception able to provide one verse, most commonly “Marko skače” (17).⁹

25% of year 7 pupils, 26% of year 8 pupils, and 4% of upper secondary school pupils did not provide a sample of a folk song lyric; all university students did so.

Question 3: Where and when was your first encounter with a folk song?

Primary school pupils most frequently heard their first folk song from their grandmother(s): 7 pupils from year 5, 11 from year 7, and 10 from year 8 (only one pupil, from year 8, mentioned a grandfather). In second place, year 5 pupils mentioned home (4)

⁶ Of this number, three wrote Vsi so venci bejli ‘All of the wreathes are white’.

⁷ Two respondents wrote the dialect form po zelenoj trati ‘along the green turf’, and one an entirely new variant (Marko skače, Marko skače, si raztrga hlače. Aj, aj, aj, aj, si raztrga hlače ‘Marko leaps, Marko leaps, he tears his pants, Oh, oh, oh, oh, he tears his pants’). This latter respondent confirms one feature of the folk song: that the material changes and is reshaped as it passes from user to user.

⁸ Pupils from year 5 were the first to receive the survey. This first version contained the question *Do you know a verse from any folk songs?*, to which most replied *yes* without giving the verse in question.

⁹ Of this number, 5 provided the old locative form po zelenoj trati ‘along the green turf’, and one used another noun (po zeleni travi ‘along the green grass’).

or their mother (2), whereas year 7 and 8 pupils mentioned preschool (3 from year 7 and 5 from year 8). The ethnic Slovenian from Gailtal/Zilja first encountered folk songs at home (from her mother and sister). Most upper secondary school pupils first heard folk songs at preschool (14), followed by their grandmothers (5). Of the university students surveyed, most first encountered folk songs through their grandmothers (25), at home (from their parents, 20), at preschool (7), and at school (4).

Most children and young people had their first contact with folk songs before they started school, with parents and/or grandmothers being responsible for introducing folk songs in 42% of cases, followed by preschools (21%).

Question 4: What folk songs did you hear at school?

Year 5 pupils generally encountered lyrical songs at school, most commonly “Marko skače” (5) and “Lepa Anka” (5), whereas with year 7 pupils it was mainly epic songs (14 mentioned “Pegam in Lambergar” and 10 mentioned “Desetnica”). The most commonly mentioned song among year 8 pupils was “En hribček bom kupil” (14), followed by “Regiment po cesti gre” (8). The 14-year-old ethnic Slovenian from Carinthia had heard “Čuk se je oženil,” “Mi se imamo radi” (We Like Being Together), and “Pri nas na Koroškem” (At Home in Carinthia) at school.¹⁰ Most upper secondary school pupils remembered “Čuk se je oženil” (12), “Desetnica” (5), “Pegam in Lambergar” (5) and “Zeleni Jurij” (5) from school. Almost all university students were able to list at least two folk songs they had encountered at school (two students were unable to remember a single one, and a further two mentioned only one folk song). “Marko skače” (27) was again in top spot, followed by “Dekle je po vodo šlo” (14), “Zeleni Jurij” (13), “Na planincah” (9), and a number of others.

Pupils usually listed the same songs as under Question 1 – which means that most songs were encountered at school (in Slovenian language and music lessons).¹¹ A number of university students mixed up works of known authorship with folk songs, e.g. “Kekčeva pesem” (Kekec’s Song, 1), “Stoji učilna zidana” (There is a Stone School, 1), and so on.

Question 5: What heroes do you know from folk songs?

Ten pupils from year 5, 5 pupils from year 7, and 7 pupils from year 8 were unable to name a folk song hero. Year 5 pupils most commonly mentioned Pegam (26) and Lambergar (23), followed by Desetnica (3), Kralj Matjaž (King Matthias Corvinus) (3) and

¹⁰ It is interesting to note that she wrote the titles of these songs in literary Slovenian, whereas the titles she provided in answer to the first question were written in dialect form.

¹¹ “En hribček bom kupil” and “Desetnica” are in the Slovenian school reader for year 5 of primary school. “Pegam in Lambergar” is in the year 7 reader and in the year 7 music studies textbook.

several others. Year 7 pupils most frequently mentioned Pegam (14), Lambergar (12), and Desetnica (3). Year 8 pupils most frequently cited Abraham (10), Regiment (4),¹² Trzinka (the girl from Trzin) (3), Pegam (3) and Lambergar (3).

All but four upper secondary school pupils listed at least one hero, most often Pegam and Lambergar (11), (zeleni) Jurij (5), and Trzinka (5). Six mentioned Čuk ‘screech owl’ from “Čuk se je oženil.” All but six of the university students listed at least one hero, although many merely mentioned generic boys and girls, foxes and hunters, and so on. The heroes most commonly mentioned by students were Marko (35), (zeleni) Jurij (34), Katarina (5), Barbara (3), and Izidor (4).

The recognition of folk heroes by primary school and upper secondary school pupils shows that epic heroes have the upper hand over those from lyrical songs. A lack of familiarity with certain obsolete words¹³ such as *regiment* ‘regiment’ can also be seen: primary school pupils were no longer familiar with this word, with many believing that *Regiment* was a folk song hero. University students mentioned heroes from lyrical songs alongside generic, unnamed heroes; one mistakenly mentioned Kekec, a hero from works by Josip Vandot (1884–1944).

Question 6: Do you have any books or recordings of folk songs at home?

Ten pupils from year 5 answered *yes* to this question; the other nine answered *no* (10 pupils from year 7 and 13 from year 8 answered *yes*). Thirteen upper secondary school respondents stated that they had a book or recording of folk songs at home; fourteen said they did not. Fewer university students answered *yes* than answered *no* (25 vs. 32).

Around 50% of young people had a book and/or recording of folk songs at home.

Question 7: Do you recall any dialect words or words from folk songs that you did not understand or that were unfamiliar to you?

One year 5 respondent mentioned the dialect word *išli* ‘went’ (from “Marko skače”). Ten pupils from year 7 did not mention any words they did not understand, 2 mentioned *rebulica* ‘a white wine’, and one mentioned *zadriči* ‘to run away’. Ten pupils from year 8 were unable to recall a single unknown word, 3 mentioned *duri* ‘door’, 3 mentioned *na vereji* ‘on the gatepost’ (from “Čuk se je oženil”), and 2 mentioned *raufnk* ‘chimney’. Of the upper secondary school pupils, 19 were unable to recall any dialect words, 3 mentioned *vejli* ‘wilted’, 2 mentioned *štrk* ‘stork’, and 2 mentioned *baš* ‘just’ and *ka-li* (a tag question). Forty-three

¹² See note 13.

¹³ For example, *regiment* ‘regiment’. Primary school pupils were no longer familiar with this word, with many believing that *Regiment* was a folk song hero.

students from Maribor's Faculty of Education were unable to list a single dialect word, with the remainder listing the following words: *kvartir* 'flat', (*venci*) *vejli* 'wilted', *dere* 'when', *šolmošter* 'teacher', *vibe* 'ears', *zauber* 'beautiful', *židana* 'silk', *žutih* 'yellow', and so on.

It is encouraging to find that primary school pupils (around 50% of pupils from years 7 and 8) recognize foreign-sounding words and are generally also aware of the alternative meanings that are more common to them. The recognition of dialect expressions was somewhat weaker among upper secondary school pupils and students.

Question 8: Give the name of a song from your region or a song that refers to your region (i.e., that mentions a town or region).

Year 5 pupils listed the following songs: "Pojdem na Štajersko" (I am Going to Styria, 5), "Od Celja do Žalca" (From Celje to Žalec, 5), and "Štajerska" (Styria, 1); 8 pupils were unable to do so. Eighteen pupils from year 7 were unable to list any such songs, with two mentioning the song "Savinjska dolina" (Savinja Valley). Four pupils from year 8 were unable to provide an answer, 10 mentioned "Od Celja do Žalca," 7 mentioned "Savinjska dolina," and 2 mentioned "En hribček bom kupil." The ethnic Slovenian from Carinthia mentioned "Nmau čriez jezero," a song particular to her region.

Nineteen upper secondary school pupils were unable to list any folk songs that mentioned their region, 2 made reference to "Po Koroškem, po Kranjskem," whereas others mentioned songs particular to other regions (e.g. "Lepa Anka"). Of the 57 university students, only 20 were able to find a folk song that mentioned their region: e.g., for Brežice ("Pojdem na Štajersko"), Jesenice ("Po jezeru bliz' Triglava" – Along the Lake near Triglav), Mala Polana ("Zrejlo je žito," "Vsi so venci vejli," "Nede mi več rastla" – It Won't Grow for Me Anymore, and "Marko skače"), Ormož ("Prleška"), Spodnja Polskava ("Pohorje zeleno" – The Green Pohorje Massif), and Žalec ("Od Celja do Žalca je ravno polje" – There is a Level Field from Celje to Žalec).

The survey demonstrated that the fewest regional folk songs (familiar to young people) were from the central regions of Slovenia, and the highest number from the peripheral regions (e.g., Prekmurje).

Question 9: When and where do you sing folk songs?

Year 5 pupils sing folk songs at school (9), as part of a choir (4), and at home (4); 3 pupils stated that they never sang folk songs. Year 7 pupils sang them as part of a choir (5), at school (in music lessons) (4), and at home (5),¹⁴ with four pupils stating that they never sang folk songs. Year 8 pupils mostly sang folk songs at school (14), at home (8), and as

¹⁴ One pupil wrote that they sang *when we get together, hull corn, and husk beans*.

part of a choir (7). The ethnic Slovenian from Carinthia wrote that she sang folk songs at home (with her sister, on festive occasions). Over a third of upper secondary school pupils responded that they never sang folk songs (10); others enjoyed singing them with friends (6). University students most commonly sang them as part of a choir (17), with friends (8), and on festive occasions (6). Fifteen university students sang folk songs at school; 11 stated that they did not sing folk songs.

Young people tend to sing folk songs at school: in music lessons (31%) or as part of their leisure-time activities, e.g. as part of a choir (24%). Few pupils and students sang folk songs at home, or only rarely (on festive occasions and birthdays, 18%).

Question 10: Do you know any performers of Slovenian folk songs (e.g., groups)?

Eleven pupils from year 5 answered *no* to this question. Six were able to name performers of Slovenian *Oberkrainer*¹⁵ music, such as Avseniki (4) and Ta Pravi Muzikantje (2); only two mentioned choirs. Fifteen pupils from year 7 were unable to name any performers of folk music; the others mentioned *Oberkrainer* groups (e.g., Modrijani, Avseniki). Seventeen pupils from year 8 were unable to mention any folk music performers; the others mentioned *Oberkrainer* groups (5), and one mentioned a choir. The ethnic Slovenian from Carinthia listed performers of *Oberkrainer* music (not folk music): in addition to Avseniki and Slaki, she also mentioned a number of Austrian groups. Fourteen upper secondary school pupils did not name any folk music performers; others mentioned Katalena (4), (folk) choirs (4), Kreslin (2), and so on. Thirteen university students were unable to name any folk music performers; others mentioned Vlado Kreslin (and Beltinška Banda) (25), Magnifico (18), choir(s) (10), Katice (8), Katalena (5), and various folklore groups (4).

Only 3 primary school pupils (i.e., 5%) answered this question correctly. Many were unable to distinguish between folk (or national) and *Oberkrainer* music and their performers. As examples of performers of *Oberkrainer* music, upper secondary school pupils named Atomik Harmonik (1), Korado (1), Brendi (1), and Boštjan Konečnik (1). Only one university student confused the genres in question, mentioning the *Oberkrainer* group Frajkinclarji as performers of folk music. The survey also showed that primary school pupils were only faintly aware of modern treatments and arrangements of folk songs by Slovenian groups and performers such as Vlado Kreslin, Katalena, Katice, and so on; these were considerably more familiar to upper secondary school pupils, and even more so to the university students surveyed.

¹⁵ A genre of music popular in a number of Alpine countries and more usually known as *narodnozabavna glasba* in Slovenia. It is highly popular and folk-inflected, with contemporary styling, but cannot be classified as folk music.

Question 11: What are the features of folk songs?

In answer to this question, year 5 pupils most commonly mentioned repetition (7) or the fact that folk songs were passed on from generation to generation (6). Year 7 pupils mentioned that they were written in dialect (4), that the authors or composers were unknown (4), that the songs were passed on from generation to generation (3), and that they were boring (3). Year 8 pupils also most commonly mentioned that folk songs were passed on from generation to generation (10), that the authors or composers were unknown (5), and that they were in dialect form (4). Upper secondary school pupils most commonly responded by saying that the authors were unknown (18), that the songs were passed on from generation to generation (10), and that they were in dialect form (3). Most university students mentioned that the songs were passed on from generation to generation (29), that the authors were unknown (18), and that the songs were in dialect form (4).

Young people believe that the most characteristic features of folk songs are that they are passed on from generation to generation (42%) and that their authors are unknown (33%).

Question 12: What are the most common subjects addressed in folk songs?

Year 5 pupils responded that folk songs were most usually about happiness (8), wine (7), and love (5). Year 7 pupils responded that folk songs talked about people's lives (4), life in the past and past times (2), and love (2). Year 8 pupils most commonly responded that folk songs were about nature (10), customs (6), and love (6). The ethnic Slovenian from Carinthia wrote that folk songs were about homeland, region, and nature. Upper secondary school pupils believed that folk songs were largely about rural life (7), alcohol consumption (7), love (5), and work (4). University students wrote that folk songs most commonly addressed the subjects of love (22), (folk) customs and habits (15), nature (11), everyday life (9), (farm) work (9), wine (5), and so on.

In the opinion of the young Slovenians surveyed, folk songs chiefly addressed the subjects of nature and rural life, folk customs, wine, and love.

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LJUDSKA PESEM V OČEH OTROK IN MLADOSTNIKOV

Rezultati ankete, ki so jo januarja in februarja leta 2005 reševali učenci 5., 7. in 8. razreda devetletke I. osnovne šole Žalec, dijaki 2. letnika splošne gimnazije Jožeta Plečnika v Ljubljani in študenti 3. letnika razrednega pouka Pedagoške fakultete v Mariboru, kažejo, da se spoznavanje ljudske pesmi začne že v najrosnejših letih. Za prvi stik z ljudsko pesmijo največkrat poskrbijo starši ali stari starši, pa tudi vzgojiteljice v vrtcu. Kasneje igrajo pomembno vlogo izobraževalne ustanove in interesne dejavnosti, ki z vzpodbujanjem zanimanja mladih za ljudsko pesem pripomorejo k njihovemu preživetju.

Kot narečjeslovko me je zanimalo tudi krajevno oz. regionalno razlikovanje (tj. katere ljudske pesmi so značilne(jše) za določeno pokrajino), zato sem poskušala opozoriti na različnost(i) ljudskega izročila v slovenskem etničnem prostoru. Medtem ko so žalski in ljubljanski učenci navajali predvsem ljudske pesmi iz osrednjega slovenskega prostora (npr. Od Celja do Žalca je ravno polje ali Po Koroškem, po Kranjskem), so mariborski študenti naštevati tudi ljudske pesmi, značilne za vzhodni del slovenskega ozemlja, kot je npr. prekmurska Vsi so venci vejli, zamejska Slovenka iz Ziljske doline pa npr. koroško Nmau čriez jezero.

Mnenje, da se ljudska pesem poje le še med preprostimi kmečkimi ljudmi in da tradicija petja ljudskih pesmi izumira, ker mladi izročila ne ohranjajo več, v celoti ne drži. Večini otrok je ljudska pesem položena že v zibelko, prav vsi pa se z njo srečajo v osnovni šoli. Mnogi jih prepevajo še pri pevskem zboru in na ta način razvijajo pozitiven odnos do ljudske pesmi kot pomembnega dela slovenske kulturne dediščine. Zlasti pomembno vlogo tudi med mladimi ima slovenska ljudska pesem pri zamejskih Slovencih. Poslušnost med slovenskimi dijaki in študenti pa ji večajo sodobne interpretacije raznih slovenskih glasbenikov, ki dajejo ljudski pesmi novo podobo.

dr. Tjaša Jakop

Inštitut za slovenski jezik Frana Ramovša ZRC SAZU
Novi trg 2, 1000 Ljubljana, tjasajakop@hotmail.com