



Similarities and differences: comparison of the Ljubljana Glasbena matica and music societies in Zagreb (Croatia): *Hrvatski glazbeni zavod* [the Croatian Music Institute] and *Hrvatsko pjevačko društvo* “*Kolo*” [the Croatian Singing Society “Kolo”]

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The comparison of the three music societies from two cities and (today) two different countries – Slovenia and Croatia – gives us the opportunity to find basic common segments of their activities and learn something about the musical life in Ljubljana and Zagreb in general. All three societies fit into the trends of their historical periods respectively, above all regarding activities of similar music societies, distinction being in the incomparably greater development and importance. Although the main topic of the 36th *Slovenski glazbeni dnevi* symposium was *Musical societies in the long 19th century*, this research also covers two later periods in history: the years following the Second World War and the situation today. This paper is an outline for the comparison of the Glasbena matica, the Croatian Music Institute and the Croatian Singing Society “Kolo”, main topics being: the basic information, the foundation, the name, the activities, the members, the patrons, and the buildings.

Basic information

Croatian Music Institute (CMI) (*Hrvatski glazbeni zavod*) – Founded in Zagreb in 1827 as a society of friends of music, Croatian Music Institute is today the oldest cultural institution in Croatia. It has laid the foundation for several basic segments of the musical life of Zagreb – concert organization, music education and music publishing. In addition, it owns one of the

oldest and most important music libraries in Croatia.¹ The Croatian Music Institute managed to survive as independent citizens' association during three wars and eight states.² The biggest danger for its existence was in 1945, when the socialist government of the new state of Yugoslavia banned activities of many bourgeois societies, especially if those societies were in possession of valuable properties, i. e. buildings. After only a few months of uncertainty, in autumn of 1945, the Croatian Music Institute got the permission to continue with its activities. Most recently, another big challenge appeared: the consequences of the earthquake that hit Zagreb on March 22, 2020, which made great damage to the Institute's building. Since 2021, the Croatian Music Institute ceased with almost any activity, and the building is put under reconstruction, thanks to the funds of the European Union.

Croatian Singing Society "Kolo" (Hrvatsko pjevačko društvo "Kolo") – The most important and the most famous Croatian singing society was "Kolo", founded in Zagreb in 1862. It was among the first singing societies in Croatia³ and had been active for more than 80 years. It became one of the basic factors of the musical life in Zagreb. Besides the concert activities of the "Kolo" choir in Croatia and abroad, the Society published music and built its home in Zagreb. After the Second World War "Kolo" had the same existential problems like the Croatian Music Institute, and in 1948 lost everything: the government completely stopped its activity and nationalized the property, not only the building, but also its valuable library and documentation.⁴

Glasbena matica Ljubljana (GM) – Founded in Ljubljana in 1872, the Glasbena matica achieved great merits for the music and culture in Slovenia, especially because of its choir, the conservatory, the Folklore Institute

1 On the history of the Croatian Music Institute see: Ladislav Šaban, *150 godina Hrvatskog glazbenog zavoda* (Zagreb: Hrvatski glazbeni zavod, 1982), with a summary in German; Marcel Bačić, ed., *Hrvatski glazbeni zavod: 1827–2002* (Zagreb: Hrvatski glazbeni zavod, 2003).

2 The three wars: WWI, WWII and the Croatian Homeland War (1991–1995); the eight states: the Habsburg Monarchy, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs; the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes; the Kingdom of Yugoslavia; the Independent State of Croatia, the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Croatia.

3 The most important among the first singing societies was "Zora", founded in Karlovac in 1858.

4 On the history of the "Kolo" see: Nada Bezić, "Singing as a way of life," *Cantus*, English issue (April 2003): 64–7; Ivana Klajzner, "'Rasuta baščina': slučaj Hrvatskog pjevačkog društva 'Kolo,'" *Arti musices* 51, no. 1 (2020): 83–94, <https://hrcak.srce.hr/241696>.

and the published editions of Slovenian music. After 1945, the destiny of the Glasbena matica was different from the two previously mentioned music societies: in 1946 the Yugoslav government nationalized the property of the Glasbena matica, but allowed a part of its former activity, namely, the choir. After the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1991, the Glasbena matica was revived after 1998. The Society managed to take advantage of the benefits arising in the new political circumstances in the Republic of Slovenia: the Glasbena matica has reacquired its buildings, as a financial basis for the future of the Society.

Foundation

In the nineteenth century, both Zagreb and Ljubljana were small provincial towns of the Habsburg Monarchy. In 1827 Zagreb had some 10.000 inhabitants; it was a town which had neither music school nor an opera house – to mention some basic elements of the musical life. By the time Croatian Singing Society “Kolo” was founded (1862), Zagreb almost doubled its population (18,000 inhabitants), and there was a music school. The Zagreb Opera House was soon to be founded (1870). Ten years later, at the time the Glasbena matica was founded (1872), Ljubljana had 23,000 inhabitants and there was a music school of the Philharmonic Society (established in 1820).

CMI – The appearance of the Croatian Music Institute in 1827 was a segment of an overall trend of music societies’ foundation in this part of Europe. The first one, the *Philharmonische Gesellschaft* (the Philharmonic Society), had already been founded in Ljubljana at the end of the 18th century (in 1794), well before the emergence of similar societies in Vienna (1812) and Graz (1815). As for music societies in Croatia, they started up in the first half of the nineteenth century in the continental part of Croatia. The oldest one was the *Musikverein* in Križevci (a little town situated north-east from Zagreb), founded in 1813, fourteen years earlier than the one in Zagreb. In that time, the following was the political situation: within the Habsburg Monarchy, Croatia and Slovenia, in the sense we know them today, did not exist as sovereign states. They were just parts of the Habsburg Monarchy. The Croatian lands were fragmented, and were named Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia. The unification of Croatia will not become a political topic until the national revival of the 1840s.

It is interesting that the first rules of the Croatian Music Institute in 1827 were written by an honorary member of the Philharmonic Society, Georg Kar Wisner von Morgenstern (1783–1855), a German, who was at that

time the leading musician in Zagreb. He was also a good lawyer and was familiar with the statute of the Philharmonic Society.⁵

“Kolo” – The Croatian Singing Society “Kolo” was founded in 1862, 35 years after the Croatian Music Institute, in other political circumstances. Even today, some historians claim that the main reason for the foundation of the “Kolo” was a reaction to the policy of the *Musikverein* (the Croatian Music Institute), where German language was in use in the music school, and German music was dominant. Those were the times of intensive Germanisation in Croatia. The decade 1850–1860 in Croatia was marked by the administration of Alexander Bach, who was then the Austrian Minister of internal affairs (so-called “neo-absolutism”, in the Croatian history referred to as “Bach’s absolutism”). After the year 1860, the political and cultural life in Croatia was revived, and many singing societies were founded. The majority of singing societies from different parts of Croatia would in 1875 unite into the Croatian Singing Association (*Hrvatski pjevački savez*).

GM – In 1867, Austria and Hungary divided the empire. Since then, Zagreb, like other places in continental Croatia, belonged to the Hungarian part, while Ljubljana as a town in Slovenia, belonged to the Austrian part, together with, interestingly, the Croatian coastal province Dalmatia. Slovenia was in similar position as Croatia regarding Germanisation. The Philharmonic Society in Ljubljana was German-oriented and didn’t nurture Slovenian music, so the Glasbena matica took the opposite side, fighting for the national Slovenian culture. It was the role similar to the one of the “Kolo” in Croatia, but with an important difference: the other music society in Zagreb, the Croatian Music Institute, was not German-oriented, although it was often accused of it.

Name

CMI – The second criterion of comparison is the name of the society, from which we can draw some interesting conclusions. In 1827, when the stand-

5 I have done research on the history of the Croatian Music Institute compared to the Philharmonic Society: Nada Bezić, “Hrvaški glasbeni zavod v Zagrebu in Filharmonična družba v Ljubljani – primerjava in kontakti,” in *Ob 300. obletnici ustanovitve Academiae philharmonicorum labacensium in 100. obletnici rojstva skladatelja Blaža Arniča (Slovenski glasbeni dnevi)*, ed. Primož Kuret (Ljubljana: Festival, 2001), 75–82; and research on Glasbena matica and Croatian Music Institute conservatories: Nada Bezić, “Konservatorij Hrvaškega glasbenega zavoda v Zagrebu in konservatorij Glasbene matice v Ljubljani – primerjava,” in *Konservatoriji: profesionalizacija in specializacija glasbenega dela*, ed. Jernej Weiss (Koper, Ljubljana: Založba Univerze na Primorskem, Festival, 2020), 355–68.

ard Croatian literary language did not yet exist, the official name of the Croatian Music Institute in the documents was in Latin: *Societas filharmonica zagradiensis*. But in everyday communication, as well as on the seal, there was, of course, a German name: *Musikverein in Agram* (the Music Society in Zagreb). After the national revival movement, the Croatian language became official, and in 1847 the Music Society changed its name to Zagreb Harmony Society (*Skladnoglasja društvo zagrebačko*), soon to be renamed to Society of Friends of Music in Zagreb (*Društvo prijateljah muzike u Zagrebu*). When the state finally approved some regular amount of financial support to the Society (that is, to give payment for the music school), it insisted on changing the name of the Society to the institute (*Narodni zemaljski glasbeni zavod*). This has started a confusion, which lasts to the present day, since the word institute (in Croatian: *zavod*) always refers to an institution of the city or the state. But, in fact, the Croatian Music Institute has remained a society until today.

Latin has been included in the combination of languages in yet another way. In 1876, when the building with a concert hall was erected, the Directorship of the Croatian Music Institute decided to dedicate the building “to the art of music,” which is written in Latin on the facade: *Arti musices*. There was a discussion in the press about that, and many people complained that the Croatian Music Institute made this decision being a non-national institution. But the inscription in Latin has nevertheless remained to the present day. In 1895, there was a great change regarding the name – the new leadership of the Institute and the music school officially changed the name in which the word “Croatian” (*hrvatski*) was used for the first time (*Hrvatski zemaljski glasbeni zavod*). Basically, the reason was that students from all over Croatia came to study in the music school, as well as from neighbouring countries, such as Slovenia, and even others in the region, all the way to Bulgaria.

All of these changes in the Croatian Music Institute took place during most of the nineteenth century. The other two music societies were founded in different times, regarding language issue. The Croatian language finally became the official language in Croatia in 1847, and two years later Slovenian language was declared official in Slovenia. This, of course, was reflected in the names of the societies in question.

“*Kolo*” – At the time when the “*Kolo*” was founded (1862), singing societies mostly had the adjective “Croatian” at the beginning of their names. There were other societies named “*Kolo*”, for example the Singing Socie-

ty “Kolo” (*Pjevačko društvo ‘Kolo’*) in Šibenik, a city on the Croatian coast. After the Second World War, the folklore ensemble in Belgrade, which still operates today, was named “Kolo” (*Ansambl pesama i narodnih igara Srbije ‘Kolo’*). The word *kolo* means wheel, and in a broader sense a circle-shaped object that rotates around an axis. It is more important, however, that *kolo* is one of the basic dances, not only among Croats, but also in general, a group dance in a circle, which here symbolizes unity. Due to the use of this word associated with folk music, it was a particularly apt name for a singing society that openly advocated for national Croatian interests.

GM –The society *Glasbena matica* has no English translation. In the first statute, the second word was written with a capital letter (*Matica*), analogous to the rules of the German language. Let us dwell briefly on the word *matica*, which means the same in Slovenian and Croatian: cultural society or organization. The root of the word is mother (*mati*). In the national revival, in 1842, a cultural society *Matica hrvatska* was founded in Zagreb.⁶ Some twenty years later (in 1864), the *Slovenska matica* was founded in Ljubljana. It still exists today, and is engaged primarily in publishing books.

There are other meanings of *matica* in both languages, i. e. in mechanical engineering it means a hollow roller with internal threads (nut); in zoology of social insects (bees, wasps, ants) it is a female that lays eggs from which young insects lay. However, the following meanings are more important for this topic: the main, the central, the strongest current in a water flow or a river; a book in which certain data are systematically entered, a registry book; a thing that is central, around which other segments gather or from what they originate. Or, as we read in the *Croatian Encyclopedia*:

*in the age of national revival movements of the Slavic peoples in the 19th century, the name for cultural institutions, i. e. societies that promoted the national and cultural identity of their nation by publishing books and magazines.*⁷

The *Glasbena matica* has thus taken over the already common word for a cultural society. The geographical indication “Ljubljana” was a usual addition to the society’s location, and was later useful to distinguish it from the *Matica*’s branches in other towns.

6 Official English translation is actually in Latin: *Matrix Croatica* (matrix = female parent, queen bee).

7 Anon., “matica,” *Hrvatska enciklopedija*, online edition (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2021), <http://www.enciklopedija.hr/Natuknica.aspx?ID=39429>.

To conclude: the name itself doesn't tell us everything: the Croatian Music Institute is not an institute but a society. On the other hand, the Glasbena matica Ljubljana, although not "Slovenian" in its name, has had its branches in other parts of Slovenia, and has been, from the time of its foundation to this very day, a society of national importance, its full name being: Cultural Society Glasbena matica Ljubljana (*Kulturno društvo Glasbena matica Ljubljana*).

Activities

Main activities are organization of concerts (at home and abroad), ensembles (choir or / and orchestra), music education – schools / conservatories, music libraries, music publishing, the building (with a concert hall), and taking care for the heritage (memorials).

The Croatian Music Institute has had, through its history, almost all segments of activities of all the three music societies in question – it started with a public concert by the amateur society orchestra, and for a short period the Institute had also a choir. The orchestra had a need for a library, then came the music school for education of young musicians and the audience, and publication of Croatian composers' works, and, finally, the building of its own. It was similar with the "Kolo", only the basis ensemble was a choir. As a true national-oriented society, it has founded a tamburitza (Croatian folk instrument *tamburica*) orchestra. Unlike the Zagreb societies, the Glasbena matica started its activity with the publication of sheet music. The first editions contained Slovenian authors' compositions. Ten years later, in 1882, the Glasbena matica founded a music school. A choir was not founded until 1891.

The CMI and the Glasbena matica were exposed to the same circumstances after the First World War, when the state administration took over management of their conservatories. The CMI started a concert establishment already in 1917, and after the year 1920 organized a series of concerts promoting domestic and contemporary compositions. The Glasbena matica founded a concert establishment in 1922. As for concerts of the ensembles, The Glasbena matica and the "Kolo" had similar history: they both had very successful performances and tours abroad (i. e. beyond the borders of the then current state).

There is a big difference between the CMI and the other societies, regarding memorials. Of course, it is connected with their mission of taking care for the national culture and heritage. The "Kolo" was the first one in

Zagreb to erect a memorial to a musician – it was a memorial-plaque to the composer Vatroslav Lisinski, erected in 1919. Other memorials followed, as well as tombstones at Zagreb Mirogoj cemetery. The Glasbena matica did the same in Slovenia, but with one exceptional memorial: it erected the monument named the “Illirian Column”, in honour to Napoleon.

Finally, it has to be stressed that only the Glasbena matica had an institute within its organisation – the Folklore Institute, founded in 1934, with the aim of collecting and studying folk music heritage.

Members

The members of all the three societies were both amateurs and professionals, important people of cultural life, patriots and music lovers from all over the country. It should be emphasized that the Zagreb societies, both the “Kolo” and the Croatian Music Institute, became one of the first external members of Glasbena matica Ljubljana in the first decade of its existence. Of course, all the three societies did not have many members at the beginning of their activity. Interestingly, Glasbena matica today has about 130 members, almost as many as it had 150 years ago. The situation in the Croatian Music Institute since 2020 has been critical, and as of September 2022, it has only 245 members, twice as much as in 1827. In the time of the global crisis for the majority of members it is hard to pay their membership fee; and when the CMI building is closed and there is almost no activity at all, the only reason for a member to continue supporting the CMI is the appreciation of the heritage and tradition ... But it was different in the past: for example, in 1898 the Matica had more than 800 members, but only some 300 of them were from Ljubljana. We could compare numbers in another way: the “Kolo” had 623 members in 1883, that was about 1.5 % of the population of Zagreb. Transferred to today’s proportions, a music society in Zagreb would have more than 12,000 members or in Ljubljana around 4,200 members.

Patrons

The members of bourgeois class who gathered in Zagreb to make music were still without their rightful place on the political scene, marked by feudalism in Croatia (until 1848). The young music society in Zagreb needed patrons at its beginning, and they chose them wisely – a combination of influential people from political, military, church, aristocratic and ma-

sonic circles. The first two patrons were Ignjat Gyulay (1763–1831) and Maksimilijan Vrhovac (1752–1827). Gyulay was a member of the Hungarian nobility and a military leader. At the time of the establishment of the Croatian Music Institute, he was the *ban* of Croatia (royal governor). Vrhovac, the bishop of Zagreb, was one of the most prominent persons in Croatia at the beginning of the nineteenth century. He was also the *ban*'s deputy and a benefactor, and a member of a masonic lodge as well.

In the second half of the century, the middle-class societies were already so strong that patrons were not so necessary, so in the history of the Croatian Music Institute they ceased around 1890. The patron of the Croatian Singing Society “Kolo” at the beginning of its activities was also a Croatian *ban*, Josip Šokčević. The Glazbena matica Ljubljana didn't have patrons.

Buildings

The Croatian Music Institute building was finished in 1876 by well-known Zagreb architects Janko Grahor and Franjo Klein. In it the first concert hall in Zagreb was situated. It was also home of the Institute's music school, later the Academy of Music, until 2015, when the Academy moved to its own, brand-new building. The building of the Croatian Singing Society “Kolo” was finished in 1885. It is more modest than the CMI building, and was constructed by less known Croatian architect Matija Antolec. It had a concert hall for the concerts organised by the “Kolo”. After the abolition of the “Kolo” in 1948, in 1952 the government gave the “Kolo” building to the Academy of Dramatic Art. The names of the nineteenth century composers were written on the facade of the building, probably in 1920ies. They show us how strong the connections between Croatian and Slovenian music societies and culture in general have been, at that time in the same state. The name of Vatroslav Lisinski (1819–1854), the composer of the first Croatian opera, and the name of Ivan Zajc (1832–1914), the most important Croatian composer at the end of the 19th century, hold a central position. There are also names of Slovenian composers Davorin Jenko (1835–1914), Benjamin Ipavec (1829–1908) and Franjo Serafin Vilhar Kalski (1852–1928). The name of the latter composer is mistakenly written as Vilhah. The Glasbena matica bought a building in 1893. Two years later a big earthquake damaged the building, and the Croatian Music Institute also contributed to its renovation. It was repaired in the next year, but an important renovation was made later by the famous Slovenian architect Jože Plečnik. He was also ac-

tive in Zagreb, where his most famous work was the Parish Church of Our Lady of Lourdes (*Župna crkva Majke Božje Lurdske*) (1934–1943). There is not a big concert hall in the Glasbena matica building, like the one of the Croatian Music Institute in Zagreb, but it is nevertheless a house full of music, also because the Academy of Music is subtenant of the Matica.

All the three buildings are today in the very centre of Zagreb and Ljubljana, respectively. The “Kolo” building was built on a spacious square, The Republic of Croatia Square 5 (*Trg Republike Hrvatske*) (today considered as one of the most beautiful squares in Zagreb). The facade of the Glasbena matica building looks on two streets: Vegova and Gosposka. The Vegova street is very attractive because of the busts of the composers along it, and the reliefs of musicians on the facade of the Matica building. Unlike the “Kolo” and the Matica building, the Croatian Music Institute building is situated in a series of houses, at Gundulićeva street 6, and there is not enough space around it, hence its impression on passers-by is not so strong.

There were different ways how music societies used their buildings to financially support their work: renting for dances (the CMI), keeping a music store (the Glasbena matica) or even a restaurant (the “Kolo”). And what do these buildings look like today? The Croatian Music Institute building is under reconstruction, thanks to the financial support of the European Union. The “Kolo” building has been the Academy of Dramatic Arts for the last 70 years, and the names of the composers on its facade are the only witnesses that it was built to be a home of music. And the building of Glasbena matica is in its full beauty and vitality.

Conclusion

All the three societies played a major role not only in the musical life of their milieu, but also in the general culture and urban areas of Zagreb and Ljubljana. In reciprocal collaboration among themselves and in cooperation with other music societies, especially on the field of organizing concerts in both cities, they made a net not only in the common state (until the end of Yugoslavia in 1991), but also in the broader cultural region. In some way, they all donated buildings to their respective cities.

Every one of these societies suffered strong blows of fate: the “Kolo” was brutally abolished and never revived, the Glasbena matica patiently waited and now shines in its full splendour, and the Croatian Music Institute is on the verge of its existence because of the earthquake in 2020, but hopefully it will recover by the big 200th jubilee in 2027. Finally, it should be

emphasized that all their activities were strongly marked not only by amateurism of music lovers, but by their enthusiasm, courage and persistence as well.

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