



# The Development of Slovenian Music from the Remoteness to the Contemporary

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Slovenia, Europe.

## Abstract

*The author discusses the whole historical development of Slovenian music from its beginnings in the 6th century (immediately after the settling of the Slovenians) to the current era. He also discusses important historical events connected with the development of music life in Slovenia. Important stylistic development trends are mentioned and for the modern era, the article serves as a checklist for the most important new and upcoming composers.*

**Keywords:** *The Beginnings, Current Era, Historical Events, Modern Era, New and Upcoming Composers*

## FROM THE BEGINNING ...

The origins of Slovene music lie in surviving pagan fragments and the first musical settings of religious texts, beginning in the 6th century. The diary of Paolo Santonini, secretary to the patriarch of Aquileia, Cardinal Marco Barbo, contains references to the music that was heard in monasteries and churches towards the end of the 15th century.<sup>1</sup> The musical endeavours of the religious houses have rise to part song. Works from this period typically showed an Italian influence. Slovene secular music before the 16th century owed a great deal to *minesänger*, wandering minstrels and other travelling musicians who would usually perform independently or together with singers. They would also quite frequently appear in church choirs. The first well-known musical name from these times is that of Jurij Slatkonja (1456-1522) of Ljubljana and Vienna.

Although the Slovene contribution to European Renaissance music was not great, it nevertheless existed. More important perhaps than composers were Slovene performers. Certain leading Slovene musicians such as Jacobus Handl Gallus (1550-1591) left their homes and began to establish the reputation of Slovene musical creativity in other countries. Gallus's vocal music: *madrigals*, *masses* and *motets* cross local borders and became the property of Europe as a whole. Gallus only really began to develop artistically in Vienna. Olomouc and Prague, where he was able to give free rein to his creative powers and become a figure of Europe-wide importance.

The Reformation and a negative influence on the development of music. Renaissance music, with Gallus at its forefront, was almost stamped out. On the other hand the Protestant song-books of the second half of the 16th century did leave of positive legacy. The Counter Reformation brought a new

spirit to music. The closed borders were now thrown wide open. The clearest influence on Slovene creativity at that time was the music of the Italian Renaissance, though a musical Renaissance only really began to flourish in Slovenia at the beginning of the 17th century. During that period music by foreign composers dominated, something which can be seen from the 1620 *In ventarium librorum musicalium Cathedralis Labacensis* by Tomaž Hren (1560-1639) which is preserved in the archive of the St. Nicholas's Cathedral Choir in Ljubljana. The work covers the first decades of the 17th century and is particularly interesting for studies of the stylistic physiognomy of the age. Also worth mentioning are the *passion plays* and *processions* from that period (although these were not primarily to do with music), the performances of the *Ljubljana Jesuit Theatre* in the mid-17th century and the first *opera* performances. It appears that these were predominantly secular in tone.

## ... TO THE MIDDLE

At the time of the transition from Late Renaissance to Early Baroque, important musicians working in Slovenia included Gabriel Plavec, Daniel Lagkhner and Isaac Poš. Notable foreigners included the Italian Gabriello Puliti. The most important music of the Baroque period was music for the theatre stage.

In 1791, the *Academia Philharmonicorum* was founded in Ljubljana. This was to become the most important factor in the popularizing of Baroque music in Slovenia. It influenced the development of interpretation, encouraged composers and determined the stylistic orientation of Slovene folk music and church hymn-books at the beginning of the second half of the 18th century – something which can also be seen from the melodic simplicity of the music of that time. The *Academia Philharmonicorum* was the first institution of its type outside the Roman and Anglo-Saxon worlds. The most

<sup>1</sup> Cvetko (1964).

noteworthy composer of the High and Late Baroque was Janez Krstnik Dolar (1620-1673).

As the Baroque declined and new stylistic tendencies began to appear in church and secular music, an important Slovene composer came to the fore. That was Kamnik's life Jakob Frančišek Zupan (1734-1810), composer of the first Slovene opera *Belin* (1780). It was lost by 2008 when it found Milko Bizjak (b. 1959). He transcribed, copied and (the first) performed it in Ljubljana in 2018. The influential Zois circle also produced the playwright and composer Anton Tomaž Linhart (1756-1795). In 1769 the *Academia Philharmonicorum* closed. The modest output of Slovene composers and performers meant that Slovene music at that time could not really compare with the rest of Europe. The great social and artistic upheavals in Europe were responsible for the emergence of a new artistic style which also had an influence in Slovenia: Classicism. Thanks to the German theatres, Classicism first made itself felt in secular music. By around 1790, however, it had begun to take a leading role in other in musical genres. The greatest achievement of the classical movement was this music for Linhart's comedy *Ta veseli dan ali Matiček se ženi* (*The Happy Day or Matiček Gets Married*) written by Janez Krstnik Novak (1756-1833) and titled *Figaro*. Classical features are evident in the compositions of Franc Benedikt Dusik and in the work of certain of new institutions such as *Filharmoničnadružba / the Philharmonic Society*, founded in 1794. The *Philharmonic Society*, *Deželno geldališče/the Provincial Theatre* (founded in 1892 by Gašpar Mašek) and certain individuals such as Franc Pollini, Jurij Mihevc, Jožef Beneš and Matija Babnik were ultimately responsible for establishing Classicism in Slovenia.

### THE ROMANTIC

The masterpiece of Romantic music that is Beethoven's *Sixth Symphony*, the "*Pastoral*," performed in Ljubljana in 1818, already showed signs of departure from the classical style, as well as certain ideological contrasts. The first expressly Romantic Slovene composer was Alojz Ipavec (1815-1849). The Romantic era, in music as well as in the other arts, saw the beginning of efforts to shape a national form of expression. Musical creativity leant heavily on elements of the folk tradition. Most prominent in this field were Gregor Rihar, Blaž Potočnik and Luka Dolinar. Their work contains clear signs of their attempts to shape a specifically Slovene mode of expression. In latter attempts by Slovenes at consciously national orientation, the social cultural gatherings known as *beséde* (*words*) became the most important factor. These events stimulated the appearance of different forms and led to an increase in the creation and performance of original works. Expressly nationally-orientated composers from that period include Jurij Fleišman, Miroslav Vilhar, Benjamin and Gustav Ipavec, Kamilo Mašek and the composers of the ecclesiastical circle: Leopold Cvek, Leopold Belar and Josip Levičnik. The revolutionary year of 1848, "the year of the awakening of the small European nations," saw the

appearance in Slovenia of "reading societies." This sprang up across the entire territory of Slovenia, but the most active were those in Ljubljana. Notable composers of the *operetta/ opera Gorenjski slavček* (*Gorenjskan Nightingale*) and Fran Gerbič (1840-1917). The period also saw the foundation, in 1872, of *Glasbena matica* (*The Music Society*). Originally founded in Ljubljana, branches of the *Society* later opened in other parts of the country. The reform of the Slovene church music was undertaken primarily by *Cecilijino društvo/the Cecilian Society*, founded in Ljubljana in 1877. The most important composers of the *Cecilian Society* circle were Avgust Armin Leban, Pater Hugolin Sattner, Janez Kokošar, Josip Lavtižar, Janez Laharnar, Ignacij Hladnik, Peter Jereb and Alojzij Mihelčič. Their great achievement was managing, despite their different approaches, to introduce Slovene national characteristics into church music. Among the leading composers of secular music during the Romantic era were Anton Nedvéd, Davorin Jenko, Andrej Vavken, Vojteh Valenta, Danilo Fajgelj, Anton Hajdrih, Jakob Aljaž, Josip Kocijančič and Hrabroslav Volarič. Other composers of the period included Viktor Parma, Oskar Dev, Anton Schwab, Josip Pavčič, Zorko Prelovec, Peter Jereb, Vinko Vodopivec, Fran Korun Koželjski, Fran Ferjančič, Emerik Beran and Fran Serafin Vilhar. Although to begin with, Slovene Romantic music could not compare with the more developed music in other parts of Europe. It was nevertheless important: it laid the foundations for an original Slovene musical culture and helped it to find its place in European framework. The *Ljubljana Musical Society* its director Matej Hubad (1866-1937) were largely responsible for this.

In 1908 *Slovenska filharmonija / the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra* was founded. Between 1892 and 1913 the *Slovene national Opera* staged almost all of the *operas* then being performed in the opera houses of Europe. Slovene music publications included *Cerkveni glasbenik* (*Church Musician*), *Glasbena zora* (*Musical Dawn*), *Novi akordi* (*New Chords*) and *Sveta Cecilija* (*Saint Cecilia*), featuring writers such as Gojmir Krek, Stanko Premrl, Franc Kimovec, Emil Adamič and Anton Lajovic. Essay-writing and journalism, criticism and musicology began at this time to develop as separate fields of study. The work of the neo-Romantic and Impressionist generation was even more important. The exponents of these styles included Risto Savin (Friderik Širca), Josip Ipavec, Gojmir Krek, Anton Lajovic, Emil Adamič and Janko Ravnik. The end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th saw Slovene music flowing once again with the musical currents of Europe. Other prominent musicians and composers of the period included Anton Jobst, Heribert Svetel, Matija Tomc and others.

### MODERNISMS

Modern musical directions in the 20th century are also typified by a high level of development in composition and interpretation. Among composers such as Vasilij Mirk, Zdravko Švikaršič, Mihael Rožanc, Srečko Kumar, Makso Ungar, Ivan Grbec, Ciril Pregelj, Saša Šantel and Breda Šček,

the seeds of the modern movement were sown by Marij Kogoj (1892-1956) and his work for mixed choir, *Trenotek* (*A Moment*), set to a text by Josip Murn Aleksandrov. The work appeared in 1914, in the final volume of *New Chords*. Expressionism in Slovene music began with Kogoj. His opera *Črne maske* (*The Black Masks*), the most important expressionist work in Slovene music, was of a quality that even surpassed the musical achievements of contemporary composers elsewhere in Europe. The next composer to rise to prominence after Kogoj was Matija Bravničar (1897-1977). He was followed by Lucijan Marija Škerjanc (1900-1973) and Slavko Osterc (1895-1941), who boasted their own "schools of composition."<sup>2</sup> Next came Srečko Koporc, Blaž Arnič, Danilo Švara, Joško Jakončič, Franjo Luževič, Marjan Kozina, Mirko Polič, Ferdo Juvanc, Anton Lavrin, Bogo Leskovic and Emil Ulaga. The composers of the second modern generation, with their post-Romantic creative leanings included composer, pianist and teacher Pavel Šivic, Josip Kaplan, pianist, composer and teacher Marijan Lipovšek, Franc Šturm, Karol Pahor, Peter Lipar, Demetrij Žebre, Maks Pirnik, Stanko Jericijo, Viktor Mihelčič and Radoslav Hrovatin. They were followed immediately before the Second World War, by choral director and composer Janez Kuhar, American Slovene Paul John Sifler, Canadian Slovene composer and conductor Klaro Marija Mizerit, composer, guitarist and teacher Stanko Prek, Karel Hladky, composer and academician Primož Ramovš, Ubald Vrabec, Jurij Gregorc and Slavko Mihelčič.

The post-Romantic period continued with the composer, choral director and teacher Radovan Gobec, Bogo Leskovic, Rado Simoniti, Janko Gregorc, composer and conductor Bojan Adamič, Uroš Prevorsek and Samo Hubad. Following the Second World War music was enriched by the new currents represented by the work of the members of the third modern generation: conductor, journalist, composer and the teacher Ciril Cvetko, composer and teacher Aleksander Lajovic, Marijan Vodopivec, composer, conductor and teacher Zvonimir Ciglič, Canadian Slovene Jože Osana, Božidar Kantušer, between Ljubljana and Paris, Argentinian Slovene Ciril Kren, composer and academician Uroš Krek, film music composer Franc Lampret, composer and teacher Albin Weingerl, teacher, composer and journalist Janez Bitenc, Ivan Šček, Janez Komar, Vladimir Lovec, Vilko Ukmar, composer, teacher and essayist Pavle Kalan and Marko Žigon.

The composers of the fourth generation, i.e. those working after 1950, embraced the most modern musical thinking. They included Ljubljana- and Paris-based, pianist and academician Janez Matičič, Trieste-based Pavle Merkù, composer and teacher Jakob Jež, Milan Stibilj, Kruno Cipci, Pomurje-based teacher Ladislav Vörös, composer, singer, choral director and teacher Samo Vremšak, Primorskan composer, choral director and teacher Štefan Mauri, composer Ivo Petrič, Bogdan Habbe, composer and teacher Alojz Srebotnjak, composer and teacher Dane Škerl, composer and teacher Igor Štuhec, composer, pianist and teacher Igor Dekleva, the

greatest Slovene in Europe (or European in Slovenia) the academician Vinko Globokar, the serious/popular composer Janez Gregorc, Australian Slovene the academician and teacher Božidar Kos, composer, teacher and academician Lojze Lebič, composer and teacher Mira Voglar, composer and teacher Egi (-dij) Gašperšič, composer, pianist and teacher Milan Potočnik, composer, pianist and teacher Ljubo Rančigaj, composer and ethnomusicologist/folklorist Julijan Strajnar, composer and teacher Franc Jelinčič, Breda Oblak, composer, music critic and teacher Pavel Mihelčič, composer Alojz Ajdič, Anton Klar, Ivan Mignozzi and Branko Rajšter.

The problems of individuality, nationality and universality are topical and significant features of the new orientations of the Slovene composers who full within the framework of the postmodern stylistic trends of industrial society at the end of the 20th and at the start of the 21st centuries. This is so-called fifth generation of composers to leave its mark on Slovene music: composer and teacher Marijan Gabrijelčič, Darko Kaplan, Bogomir Kokol, Anton Natek, Borivoj Savicki, priest, musician, conductor and composer Jože Trošt, Vienna-based priest, composer and conductor Avgust Ipavec, Franc Turnšek, Kosovo-born and-based Zeqirja Ballata, composer and teacher Janez Osredkar, Uroš Lajovic, composer and teacher Janko Jezovšek, currently living and working in Germany, Anton Gorjanc, Franc Šojat, Marin Tušek, Anton Žuraj, the Slovenian-based Croat Vladimir Hrovat, composer, teacher and conductor Tomaž Habe, composer, conductor and musical director Stane Jurgec, composer and teacher Aleš Strajnar, Vienna-based pianist, composer and teacher Blaženka Arnič Lemež, composer and teacher Ivo Kopecky, composer and teacher Maksimilijan Feguš, composer and teacher Jani Golob, composer, harpsichordist, organist and teacher Maksimiljan Strmčnik and composer, pianist and teacher Peter Kopač.

The young postmodernist middle generation of today's Slovene composers, those in their sixties and seventies includes composers of the sixth generation: Marijan Šijanec, Igor Majcen, Franc Ban, Aldo Kumar, composer and academician Uroš Rojko, freelance composer Bor Turel, composer, conductor and teacher Tomaž Svete, composer and teacher Brina Jež Brezavšček, composer and teacher Marko Mihevc, organist and composer Milko Bizjak and composer and teacher Pavel Merljak. These are joined by other even younger composers born after 1960: Kosova-based Baki Jashari, composer, choral director and teacher Andrej Misson, composer, pianist, essayist and teacher Mitja Reichenberg, composer and teacher Peter Šavli, Chilean "Slovene" Aljoša Solovera Roje, Nenad Firšt, composer and singer Boris Vremšak, composer, music editor, writer and teacher Igor Krivokapič, composer, choir director and teacher Blaž Rojko, composer, teacher and American-based Jerica Oblak Parker, composer, choral director and teacher Damijan Močnik, composer and teacher Larisa Vrhunc and composer and teacher Urška Pompe.

<sup>2</sup> Rijavec (1979), p. 198.

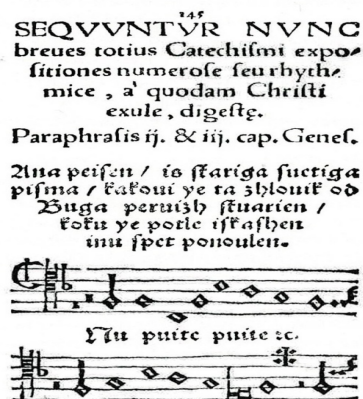


Examples of even more recent Slovene musical creativity would have to include the most recent graduates of the Ljubljana *Academy of Music* and the most promising of its current students: composer and teacher Vitja Avsec, composer and teacher Dušan Bavdek, composer, choral director and teacher Ambrož Čopi, composer, pianist and music producer Žiga Stanič, composer and teacher Rok Golob, in Berlin (Germany)-based Tomaž Bajželj, Vladimir Batista, Nejc Bečan, David Beović, Tomaž Burkat, Srečko Devjak, Pavel Dolenc, Iva Florjanc, Nana Forte, Bojan Glavina, Neville Hall (from New Zealand), Robert Kamplet, Andrej Makor, Tina Mauko, Marjan Mlakar, Diana Novak, Urška Orešič, Mihael Paš, Gregor Pirš, Žarko Prinčič, Blaž and Jaka Pucihar, Katarina Pustinek Rakar, Črt Sojar Voglar, Bojana Šaljić-Podešva, Nina Šenk, Jan Triler, Helena Vidic, Tadeja Vulc, Brina Zupančič, Vito Žuraj i.e.

### CONCLUSION

Credit for furthering the development of Slovene music in the 20th century must also be shared by the *RTV Slovenia Big Band*, the *Brothers Avsenik Ensemble* (now is its “new age” *Ensemble of Sašo Avsenik*), the two *National Opera and Ballet Companies* (in Ljubljana and Maribor), the *RTV Slovenia Symphony Orchestra*, the *Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra*, the bands of the *Slovene Police Force* and the *Slovene Army*, the *Choir of Slovenian Philharmonic*, the *Society of Slovene Composers*, the *Slovene Music Information Center Society* and others.

Among contemporary Slovene musicians in the 20th and the 21st centuries we can find in European and World arena the clarinetist Mate Bekavac, the soprano Sabina Cvilak, the flutist Irena Grafenauer, the trombonist Branimir Slokar, the *Slovenian Octet*, the pianists Dubravka Tomšič Srebotnjak (b. 1940) Alexander Gadjevič (b. 1994) and so on.



ILL.-1. Primož Trubar (1508–1586) and his *Cathecismus*, 1550 by the first Slovenian printed *Song*



ILL.-2. Jacobus Handl Gallus (1550-1591) and Primož Trubar (1508-1586)



ILL.-3. Gallus 's *Opus musicum numquator, quinque, sex, octo et numpluriumvorum ...*

(Prague/Czech, 1586), the part of tenor voice; the 1st page)



ILL.-4. Piper-organ in Crngrob, Slovenia (J. F. Janeček, 1743)

### Na Golici

glasba: V. in S. Avsenik



ILL.-5. V. & S. Avsenik, *Na Golici* (polka; the beginning)





ILL.-6a. The pianist Dubravka Tomšič Srebotnjak, Slovenia (2020)



ILL.-6b. The pianist Alexander Gadjiev (2021)

These would scarcely be complete if it failed to mention the most interesting exponents of popular folk music and jazz in Slovenia. Notable names the world of popular music are Mario Rijavec, Urban Koder, Ati Soss, Mojmir Sepe, Borut Lesjak, Jure Robežnik, Jože Privšek, Silvester Stingl, Dečo Žgur, Tone Janša, Beerti Engelbert Rodošek, Milan Mihelič, Andy Arnol, Lado Jakša, Jerko Novak, Slavko Avsenik, Jr, Gregor Strniša, Emil Spruk, Alojz Krajncan, Milko Lazar, Mitja Vrhovnik Smrekar, Dominik Krajncan, i.e. The wealth of musicians working in the field of popular folk music, an important of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries musical genre in Slovenia, include legends such as Slavko Avsenik and his brother Vilko Ovsenik, Boris Kovačič, Hanzi Artač, Patrik Greblo, Lenart Krečič, Hugo Šekoranja etc.

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**Citation:** Franc Križnar, "The Development of Slovenian Music from the Remoteness to the Contemporary", Universal Library of Innovative Research and Studies, 2024; 1(1): 52-56. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70315/uloap.ulirs.2024.0101007>.

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