



Matej Santi

Univerza za glasbo in uprizoritveno umetnost na Dunaju  
University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna

# Choir singing: Performing Identities and Loyalties

## Zborovstvo: performiranje identitete in lojalnosti

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### IZVLEČEK

Članek obravnava prakso zborovskega petja treh najštevilčnejših jezikovnih skupin v Trstu – italijanske, slovenske in nemške – tik pred izbruhom prve svetovne vojne, ko je mesto še pripadalo avstro-ogrski monarhiji. Zborovstvo se je s časopisnimi kritikami v različnih družbenih in jezikovnih kontekstih politiziralo in pripomoglo k vzpostavljanju političnih zavezništov z nacionalnim predznakom.

### ABSTRACT

This paper traces the practice of choral singing of the three major ethnolinguistic groups – Italians, Slovenians, Germans – in pre-war Trieste, while the city was still part of the Habsburg Monarchy. Through widespread reviews in the media, choral singing in different social and linguistic contexts became politicised, with the goal of establishing political and national alliances.

The main aim of this paper is to trace the sociopolitical implications of choral singing in Trieste in the time shortly before the Great War. This case study will serve as a paradigmatic example of the social (and political) meaning of singing in a broader context. Pieces of music are often regarded as autonomous works of art and therefore analysed and taxonomically ordered according to their particular structural and aesthetic properties. The missing link in this process is the performance itself, through which music, as an acoustic and artistic phenomenon, becomes truly tangible. But

there is another performative element that comes up when examining media, like newspaper articles and reviews: At the turn of the century, choral singing was deeply embedded in the everyday life of several cultural societies which used choral singing as a means of socialisation. Singing festivals, the use of choir singing *en masse* (as well as in private life) are examples of music that improves loyalty to a certain social group. The focus is therefore on *performativity*: In which context did a performance take place? How was it presented in the media? What happened during the performance? These are, of course, only a few questions that come up in thinking about choral singing as process, as suggested by the *performative turn* in cultural studies.<sup>1</sup> Although its beginnings can be traced back to the 1940s and 1950s, this paradigm shift unfolded in the social sciences and humanities in the last decades of the 20th century. The fixation on text neither considered nor problematized its representation (a problem which led to the development of performance studies in musicology). The performance itself is an action which produces meaning, and the metaphor of performativity relates human behaviour to a broader context. The origin of this idea is found in John L. Austin's *speech act* theory; he argued that "*in* saying or *by* saying something we are doing something;"<sup>2</sup> language and action together create reality. In contemporary academic discussion, Judith Butler, with her anti-essentialist theoretic explanations, is of the opinion that categories such as gender are the products of acts which are to be understood as performative: categories that identify the self are *doing* rather than *being* and they are "constructed through a ritualized repetition of norms"<sup>3</sup> led by hegemonic discourses. Because of the prominent role of choral singing in the bourgeoisie society of the second half of the 19th and the early 20th century, it will be interesting to see how this cultural practice reflected – or maybe also created – the social environment which finally led to WWI. I will highlight the implications on both the collective as well as on an individual level.

The phenomenon of choral singing seems to be a human universal with a very rich and varied history. The word *choir* itself comes from the ancient Greek term χορός, which in the oldest sources, as well as in Homer, means dance floor or dance group, as well as the singing itself that accompanied the dance. The Romans translated the term with *chorus*, which via Christianity entered the vocabulary of Western music. The semantic meaning – and of course the musical as well – evolved parallel to the transformation of social and political structures on the European continent over the last two thousand years. From a historical point of view, it has often been argued that the Slovene national identity was largely promoted by the *bésede* (conversations) and the foundation of reading rooms – the *čitalnice*. In this context choral singing played, as is well known, a central role. Compositions for choir were sung as a means to ennoble the Slovene language, as noted in a publication by the *Slovensko društvo* in 1849.<sup>4</sup>

1 Doris Bachmann-Medick, "Performative Turn," in *Cultural Turns: Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften*, 5th ed. (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2006), 104–143.

2 John L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words: The William James lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 12.

3 Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York, London: Routledge, 1993), X.

4 Nataša Cigoj Krstulović, "Glasba druge polovice 19. stoletja na Slovenskem: k funkciji in pomenu zborovskega petja v slovenski kulturni zgodovini," *Kronika* 48, no. 3 (2000): 95.

To use choral singing as a way of socialisation (if not education) wasn't a specifically Slovene characteristic: amateur choirs flourished in Germany since the first decades of the 19th century and were intended as spaces of *Bildung* – the term meaning a form of universal education that crossed social borders and that strived to improve the intellectual, cultural and social skills of every individual person; *Singakademien* and *Liedertafeln* were the expressions of these tendencies. *Liedertafel* societies were found in most German cities and a first *Männergesangs-Verein* was founded in Vienna in 1843: since that time music societies took on an educational and a representational function.<sup>5</sup> Choral singing and its compositions were deeply influenced by the culture and mentality of the time as well as by the sociopolitical structure of every society practicing it. Correspondingly, the increasing importance of nationalism during the 19th century, which led to the Italian *Risorgimento* and German unification, had a major effect on the development of the cultural agenda of many societies. On the other hand, in his article about choirs and choral music in *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Friedhelm Brusniak emphasises the contribution of the amateur choir movement to the development of Germany's national culture.<sup>6</sup> The idea of choral singing as tool of cultural (and national) self-perception persisted in Slovene-speaking areas until the Great War, as suggested on the pages of the literary supplement to the *Novi akordi*.<sup>7</sup>

## Choir music in the cosmopolitan Trieste

Trieste was located on the cultural border between Slavic and Latin, more specifically, Italian culture. Its economic growth depended largely on relations with the German-speaking north. From 1382 Trieste had for most of the time been part of the Habsburg monarchy; and although it had become a free port – simultaneously with Rijeka/Fiume – the city experienced major economic growth only at the turn of the 19th century, after the revocation of the free port status in 1891.<sup>8</sup> The quickly growing economy attracted Slovenes from the edge of the city. Hence the Italian-speaking Irredentists did not fear a possible Germanisation but a Slavisation of the urban areas. The *Slavljansko društvo* was opened in the *Tergesteo* in 1848 near the *Piazza Grande*, and after the era of Bach's Absolutism further reading rooms were founded in the surrounding suburbs.<sup>9</sup> In the 1860s, the associations of other linguistic groups also opened their doors: *Schiller-Verein*, *Turn-Verein Eintracht*, *Associazione Ginnastica Triestina*. Because of its strategic position, the city became an object of desire for Italian Irredentists (the Italian national state was newly founded in 1861), for supporters of a future Yugoslavia, and also for members of the Austrian and German leading classes. While other

5 Carl Dahlhaus, *Die Musik des 19. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1980), 133.

6 Friedhelm Brusniak, "Chor und Chormusik, II. Chorwesen seit dem 18. Jahrhundert. 1. Überblick," in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2nd ed., ed. by Ludwig Finscher, Sachteil, vol. 2 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1995), col. 775.

7 Emil Adamič, "Narodna pesem na koncertnem odru," in *Novi akordi: glasbeno-književna priloga* 10, no. 1 (1911): 4–5; Hinko Druzovič, "Glasbeno-pedagoške črtice," in *Novi akordi: glasbeno-književna priloga* 11, no. 5–6 (1912): 46.

8 Elio Apih, *Trieste* (Roma, Bari: Laterza, 1988), 85.

9 Robi Sturman, *Le associazioni e i giornali sloveni a Trieste dal 1848 al 1890* (Trieste: Circolo per gli studi sociali Virgil Šček, 1996), 51.

linguistic groups were living in the city – Greeks, Serbians, Croats, Armenians, and Jews – I'd like to focus on the connection between choral singing and the political agenda of those linguistic groups with national (Italian and Slovene) and politico-economic (Austrian and German) interests in the city. I have based my research on articles from the daily magazines of that time. This means that I will work with media that don't necessarily reflect reality; this is all the more relevant because these articles provide the cultural practices with symbolic – even political – significance.

A year before the outbreak of WWI, the celebration of the hundred-year anniversary of Giuseppe Verdi's birth took place in all major Italian cities. In Trieste, the theatre as well as the square in front of it had already been dedicated to him in the year of his death (1901). Five years later (1906), a monument was erected in the *Piazza San Giovanni*, designed by the sculptor Alessandro Laforet.<sup>10</sup> This monument was damaged by Austrian activists in 1915 when Italy entered the war. The celebration in 1913 showed how Verdi and the performance of his choir *Va pensiero* from *Nabucco* was used to stage Italian cultural identity in the city. As reported by the newspaper *Il Piccolo*, a crowd of more than 15,000 people marched through the city in honour of Verdi. They started at the Domenico Rossetti monument near the *Giardino pubblico* – the city garden – and continued through the city centre and *Piazza San Giovanni*, where the Verdi monument was located, in the direction of the Hotel de la Ville and the theatre on the seafront. Blank spaces on the pages show that the censors have intervened massively;<sup>11</sup> nonetheless, in the censored article one can read about how Austrian police stopped the choir's performance of *Va pensiero*, which was being sung while a marble plate with a text by Silvio Benco was unveiled at the Hotel de la Ville to commemorate Verdi's stay there in 1850. It was there that Verdi may have composed (more likely finished) the Overture to *Stiffelio*. In the opinion of the liberal-national newspaper, it was an affront to the *performance* of Italianness. The events on 12 October 1913, were also cited by Giuseppe Stefani in his monograph about the connection between Verdi and Trieste. The book was published in 1951 by the city council of Trieste, on the fifty-year anniversary of Verdi's death, when the city was part of the Free territory of Trieste under the Anglo-American government, and the definition of its cultural, if not national affiliation, was perceived as crucial. Stefani picked up on the scene of the conflict between the crowd and the Austrian police: although the police dispersed the crowd, people sang *Va pensiero* while they were forced to leave the spot and go to the *Piazza Grande*.<sup>12</sup> Today we know that at the premiere of *Nabucco* in Milan in 1842 no one in the audience asked for an encore of *Va pensiero* – as was claimed by Verdi's first biographer.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless the piece entered the collective imagination in the second half of the 19th century as a symbol of the Italian *Risorgimento*, the movement for Italian national unification. In Italian opera productions of the 19th century, the choir often embodied people suffering under foreign domination; thus, corresponding to

10 Silvio Benco, *Il monumento a Giuseppe Verdi in Trieste* (Trieste: Caprin, 1901).

11 "Nel centenario della nascita di Giuseppe Verdi," *Il Piccolo*, 13 October 1913.

12 Giuseppe Stefani, *Verdi e Trieste* (Trieste: Comune di Trieste, 1951), 148.

13 Roger Parker, "Va pensiero' and the Insidious Mastery of Song," in *Leonora's last Act: Essays in Verdian Discourse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 33–37.

the sociopolitical situation of the time, the suffering crowd in the opera was associated with suffering fellow countrymen under foreign domination – Italians under the Habsburg crown.<sup>14</sup> The performance of *Va pensiero* in Trieste in 1913 is a political statement that literally performs *Italianità*, even if this Italianness is based on an invented tradition.<sup>15</sup> Also, even if the crowd didn't sing *Va pensiero* and the newspaper invented the performance, it remains an important symbol and historic subject which lives on in Italian collective memory to this day. A counterpoint to this nationalistic interpretation of Verdi and his music was found in the socialist newspapers.<sup>16</sup> The figure of the universal artist, who was able to address his music to everyone across national and social borders, was also taken up by the Slovenian newspaper *Edinost*. A group of Italian national activists threw stones at the *Narodni dom* on the day of the hundred-year anniversary of Verdi's birth in 1913. On this occasion, the Slovenian newspaper rechristened him Josip Verdi and criticised the nationalist violence done in his name.<sup>17</sup> Music by Wagner and Verdi had already been performed at the *Narodni dom* in 1911 on the occasion of the 50-year celebration of the *Slovenska čitalnica*, although this was described as a curiosity within the Slavic music program.<sup>18</sup> The importance of Verdi as Ivan Zajc's teacher was emphasised at the performance of *Nikola Zrinjski* in December 1912;<sup>19</sup> as we can see, composers and their music are carriers of multi-layered significance ascriptions.

Even though a piece for choir – *Va pensiero* – came to represent a central item of Italian identity, choir singing wasn't really as present in the everyday life of the Italian-speaking community in Trieste as it was in the Slovene-speaking one. As documented by Giuseppe Radole, at the turn of the 19th century the *Coro Palestriniano*, which was primarily interested in Renaissance repertoire, was active in Trieste, and in 1913 the ensemble *I madrigalisti Triestini*, whose members were also employed in the choir of the opera theatre, was founded.<sup>20</sup> An interesting contemporary source is the article by Emil Adamič, which appeared in the pages of the periodical *Novi akordi*. He had already expressed in 1910 the extent to which musical activities by Slovenes in Trieste were hindered by political issues: "It's sad that our political fight doesn't allow any arts to arise."<sup>21</sup> Adamič later described the musical landscape in Trieste, insisting on the "extreme musicality" of the local Slovene population, as opposed to the general disinterest in music of the other ethnic and linguistic groups in the city, a city which was, in his opinion, led primarily by opportunistic interests.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, his reports about the Slovene associations are not free from biting remarks: he described how the sunny weather contributed to the organisation of several "singing festivals" (*pevskih*

14 Franco Della Peruta, "Giuseppe Verdi e il Risorgimento," in *Suona la tromba: Verdi, la musica e il Risorgimento* (Genova: Comitato delle celebrazioni verdiane, 2001), 15.

15 Eric J. Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1–14.

16 "Concerto popolare Verdiano," *Il Lavoratore*, 15 March 1901.

17 "Kako so praznovali Verdijevo stoletnico!," *Edinost*, 13 October 1913.

18 "Akademija v proslavo 50-letnice 'Slov. Čitalnice' v Trstu," *Edinost*, 7 March 1911.

19 "Slovensko gledališče. 'Nikola Šubič Zrinjski,'" *Edinost*, 24 December 1912.

20 Giuseppe Radole, *Ricerche sulla vita musicale a Trieste (1750–1950)* (Trieste: Italo Svevo, 1988), 190.

21 "Žalostno je tudi to, da naš politični boj ne dopušča kakršnikoli umetnosti na površje," Emil Adamič, "Koncerti. Trst," in *Novi akordi: glasbeno-književna priloga* 9, no. 1 (1910): 3.

22 Emil Adamič, "Koncerti. Trst," in *Novi akordi: glasbeno-književna priloga* 9, no. 3 (1910): 21.

*slavnosti*) and “folk fetes with singing” (*ljudskih veselic s petjem*), but what he found missing was the audience’s understanding of more demanding pieces.<sup>23</sup> The concentration of choir associations on the coast – the *Primorje* (or *Küstenland*) – is shown also by the fact that two numbers of the literary supplement to the *Novi akordi* were dedicated to composers and choirmasters who worked there: as for example Anton Hajdrih in Trieste and Josip Kocijančič in Kanal ob Soči and Gorizia. Quite impressive is the number of Adamič’s articles about different small Slovenian choral associations in Trieste, especially if we bear in mind that *Novi akordi* was a widespread publication, read all over the monarchy. This concentration is to be understood as a consequence of the geographical position of Trieste and Gorizia on the language border. In an attempt to avoid a cultural and linguistic assimilation, cultural activities were massively supported because performing Slovene music – also in the framework of “singing festivals” and “folk fetes with singing” – was a way of strengthening collective identity. Singing was also a tool of constructing – and performing – loyalty: In 1913, a month after the Verdi celebration, the choral society *Kolo* came to Trieste from Zagreb. The meticulous description of the arrival, the singing and related activities on the pages of the Slovenian newspaper *Edinost* showed the importance of the event. A concert took place in the *Narodni dom*. That evening, the member of parliament Otokar Rybář held a speech in which he underlined the importance of the Slavic popular song as a way to show the other ethnic groups of Trieste that the Slovenes were “people with culture”:<sup>24</sup> the singing of folk songs in a choir was a symbol of national culture. On the pages of *Edinost*, the description of a cruise ship in the bay of Trieste can be found: the author described with a poetic gesture how the Slavic song “fluctuated” over the Adriatic sea. He was maybe referring to the well-known piece *Buči buči morje adrijsko* that had been composed almost half a century earlier in Trieste by Anton Hajdrih and that described the Adriatic sea as Slavic: A counterpoint to the Latin (and Italian) concept of *mare nostrum*. The ship stopped in front of the Miramare castle, where the choir sung the hymn *Lepa naša domovina* for the Grand-Duchess Marie Josephine, who was staying there at that time. The hymn was praised in the newspaper as “Jugoslav”;<sup>25</sup> in fact, at that time the idea of Trieste as a Yugoslav commercial harbour was rising in importance.

In 1918, shortly before the end of war, Franz Rabl, a member of the German intellectual elite in Trieste, published a pamphlet about the importance of Trieste as an Austrian commercial harbour. In his explanation, only the German-speaking hinterland – not the Italian or Yugoslav – could guarantee the city economic prosperity.<sup>26</sup> Since 1861, when the association was founded, the *Schiller-Verein* represented the cultural centre of the German intelligentsia. This association distinguished itself through its openness to other linguistic groups and activities that were very heterogeneous – they ranged from lectures to concerts in which the most famous soloists and ensembles of the

23 Emil Adamič, “Koncerti. Trst,” in *Novi akordi: glasbeno-književna priloga* 9, no. 4–5 (1910): 35.

24 “Zagrebsko ‘Kolo’ v Trstu,” *Edinost*, 16 November 1913.

25 “Po našem morju,” *Edinost*, 17 November 1913.

26 Franz von Rabl, *Tergestinae res: Von einem deutschen Triestiner* (Triest: Lloyd, 1918), 17.

time (which often also played in the *Teatro grande*) appeared.<sup>27</sup> The performance of compositions like *Paulus* by Mendelssohn (1866) or *Die Schöpfung* by Haydn (1867), organised by the association, seem to have also served as political statement: As described in the *Triester Zeitung*, all the people of different nationalities who had come together in the choir and in the orchestra in order to perform the works were an allegory of the monarchy. Like at many cultural associations in the German-speaking regions, a *Liedertafel* was active in *Schiller-Verein* and the association organised, beside the performance of oratorios, many events with other choir associations from Germany and Austria. For example, in July 1914 – after the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo – the *Männergesangsverein* from Radkersburg, which was on the way to Italy,<sup>28</sup> visited Trieste and only a few days later the *Liederkrantz* from Stuttgart was received as a guest.<sup>29</sup> The German associations served both as social catalyst within the city and as a connecting link to a broader German-speaking region. Articles about such events appeared quite often in the *Triester Zeitung*. In December 1913, a month after the above-mentioned Verdi commemoration in Trieste, the *Männergesangsverein* organised a concert at the *Turn-Verein Eintracht* in cooperation with the band of the Bosnian infantry regiment – a practice also found in the *Narodni dom*, where the band of the 97<sup>th</sup> regiment (which was also very active in the *Schiller-Verein*) often played. At the *Turn-Verein*, the band performed the *Euryanthe Overture* by Carl Maria von Weber and the 1<sup>st</sup> Symphony by Ludwig van Beethoven. The choir sang, among other pieces by German composers, compositions by Richard Wagner: *An die Kunst* for men's choir, *Gesang der Rheintöchter* for women's choir and *Apotheose des Hans Sachs* for mixed choir. The author of the article in the *Triester Zeitung* pointed out that these pieces were an homage to the 100-year anniversary of the birth, as well as the 30-year anniversary of the death, of Wagner, the “prince of the Kingdom of music.”<sup>30</sup> 1913 was also the centenary of the German victory against Napoleon. The event was celebrated with the performance of *Der deutsche Rhein* by Robert Schumann and *Blücher am Rhein* by Gottlieb Reissiger, both for men's choir. Further pieces are mentioned as “Zwischennummer” – buffer pieces: *Schlummerlied* by Carl Maria von Weber, and *Das Testament* by Heinrich Marschner, *Waldkönig* by Carl Attenhofer for men's choir. Music and politics, Wagner and the fight against French imperialism, all seemed to be related to one another in order to serve as topics for national self-representation. The prominence of the event was emphasized by the list of guests, such as high officers, seen at the beginning of the article, which related the event as almost a *raison d'état*. Thus, this concert and its staging in the media showed how the Germans in Trieste set their own musical culture against the Italian staging of Verdi as a manifestation of Italianness. In the pre-war context of Trieste, Wagner and Verdi were far more than composers: they embodied opposing geopolitical plans for the city, and their music for choir allowed an effective *performance* of the two different nationalistically oriented points of view. Although the relation between Austrian and German nationalists wasn't really

27 Giuseppe Radole, “Lo Schillerverein” a Trieste: Storia e personaggi (Udine: Pizzicato, 2010), 39–162.

28 “Die Radkersburger Sänger in Triest,” *Triester Zeitung*, 20 July 1914.

29 “Sängerbesuch in Triest,” *Triester Zeitung*, 23 July 1914.

30 “Triester Männergesang-Verein,” *Triester Zeitung*, 9 December 1913.

clear, it comes as no surprise that, as mentioned above, after the declaration of war by Italy on May 2th, 1915 (initially on Austria) the Verdi marble monument was damaged by pro-Austrian activists; the offices of the newspaper *Il Piccolo*, the offices of the *Lega nazionale* and the building of the *Società ginnastica* were set on fire.

## Bodily regime

Examples were given of the creation of social and political alliances through performative activities spread by the media. The focus, until now, has been on the collective level. What about the individual level? There is an aspect that deserves special consideration in thinking about the Great War: Soldiers weren't paid in this conflict as the Medieval Latin term *soldarius* would actually suggest – literally meaning “one having pay”. Individual citizens who were now also soldiers went to war under the direction of a leader, and identified themselves with their nation and its historical rights. As Jürgen Osterhammel stated, the relation between the establishment of universal conscription and nation-building as well as nationalism is quite complex and proceeded differently from country to country; nonetheless, the presence of an army in the military barracks, also in times of peace, was a 19th century innovation.<sup>31</sup> It is evident that a new sense of belonging to a community came up in every area of social life, and a crucial role was played by performances of collectiveness, as for example in the framework of different kinds of associations such as amateur choirs and gymnastics clubs. By reflecting on what happened in such places on an individual level, what comes to the fore is the control over the body, or – in the language of Michel Foucault – “bio-power.”<sup>32</sup> Like choir associations, gymnastics clubs have their origins in the first decades of the 19th century. Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, “Turnvater Jahn”, initiated the *Turnbewegung* in order to prepare German youth to fight against the French after the Napoleonic era and the *Turnbewegung* had had a correspondingly leading role in the German *National-Bewegung*.<sup>33</sup> Following this model, the Slavic *Sokol* developed in the 1860s and *Južni Sokol* was founded in Ljubljana (1863).<sup>34</sup> A branch was also found at the turn of the century in Trieste, at the *Narodni dom* (all the major Slovenian cultural institutions, like the *Glasbena matica* and its choir, were housed in this building). The idea of choral singing as a matter of bodily regime was thematised by Liz Garnett through the analysis of the literature written by and for choir conductors.<sup>35</sup> In the language of Michel Foucault, choral singing could be understood as an apparatus (*dispositif*) that teaches individuals to exercise control over their own bodies together in a choir by following

31 Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt: Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (München: Beck, 2009), 882–883.

32 Michel Foucault, “Right of Death and Power over Life,” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books 1984), 262.

33 Willi Schwank, “Geschichte des Sports in Deutschland,” in *Deutschland: Porträt einer Nation*, vol. 4, *Kunst und Kultur* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Lexikothek Verlag, 1985), 417.

34 Wolfgang Kessler, “Der Sokol in den jugoslawischen Gebieten (1683–1941),” in *Die slawische Sokolbewegung: Beiträge zur Geschichte von Sport und Nationalismus in Osteuropa*, ed. Johannes Hoffmann (Dortmund: Forschungsstelle Ostmitteleuropa, 1991), 201.

35 Liz Garnett, “Choral Singing as Bodily Regime,” in *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 36, no. 2 (December 2005): 249–269.



instructions from a leader in order to create (or recreate) a work of art. This is also true of instrumental ensembles, as shown by Benito Mussolini's understanding of the symphonic orchestra, which was taken to be an allegory of the ideal state when under the control of an authoritarian conductor such as Arturo Toscanini.<sup>36</sup>

It would be too simplistic and misleading to say that these practices led to the war, but it cannot be denied that these phenomena – among others – are to be contextualised as part of the nationalistic tendency that characterised the 19th century and that prepared the field for a new type of war – the first global one. (Self)Discipline, obedience, the cult of genius – as belief in the spiritual and intellectual superiority of many individuals – and the new sense of belonging to a community that identified itself with its own language and culture grew in importance during the 19th century – not least through performative processes which included the use of music and choirs, as spread by the media. The cultural practices of the 20th and of the early 21st century are largely inherited from the habits of the 19th century, although reinterpreted in new ways, especially in the cultural and educational politics of both the Western as well as the Eastern Bloc (and successor) states. Nevertheless, the focus remains fixed on the 19th century's concept of *Bildung* as a humanising power (if not bourgeois status-symbol), even without using the term. Ignoring the broader historical context of social changes that happened in the 19th century leads to forgetting that *Bildung*, in its different manifestations, also represented an instrument for control and power that allowed the ascent of the bourgeoisie as the leading elite. Contemporary democratic society, characterised by the broader participation of social layers in political and social life, can no longer ignore the complexity of cultural practices as a projection for both humanising as well as de-humanising political forces and ideologies, as shown by the use of (classical) music in authoritarian political systems. A first step could be to question the myth of music as cultural bridge: as shown in this case study, bridges were actually built not to bring about peace, but to forge alliances. And, as is well known, alliances are to be understood as strategic connections that allow the identification of new enemies that will remain *outside* and embody *otherness*, and who will not seldom be subject to stigmatisation. Consequently, nationalism, and with it music are no longer absolute values like in the enlightenment's concept, but rather, as every human activity, an ideologically charged practice that should be often questioned – and if necessary, redefined – in terms of its political and social meanings.

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<sup>36</sup> Stefano Biguzzi, *L'orchestra del duce: Mussolini, la musica e il mito del capo* (Torino: Utet, 2003), X.

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## POVZETEK

V 19. stoletju so kulturna društva, zlasti zborovska, s samo-reprezentacijo prispevala k razvoju nacionalnih kultur. To je še posebej veljalo za Trst, ki se je nahajal na stičišču italijanske, slovenske in nemške kulture. V članku smo raziskali, kako so performativne prakse zborovstva pomagale trem jezikovnim skupinam z najmočnejšimi gospodarskimi in političnimi interesi na tem območju – Slovencem, Italijanom in Nemcem – pri vzpostavljanju širših političnih zaveznih zvez; Slovencem z Južnimi Slovani, liberalno-nacionalnim italijanskim govorcem z Italijo, in Nemcem s severnimi deželami.

Kritike, ki so izhajale v dnevnem časopisju, so razkrile, kako je bilo petje povezano z različnimi vidiki družbenega življenja, recimo z javnimi demonstracijami, srečanji z gostujočimi zbori in praznovanji obletnic. Ne le izbira repertoarja, ampak tudi širši družbeni kontekst in način poročanja ter predstavljanja v medijih, so pokazali, da teh dogodkov ne smemo razumeti samo kot koncerte, temveč tudi kot performativna dejanja, ki so vključevala proces preoblikovanja družbenega konteksta samega. Temu ustrezno je glavna kategorija za raziskovanje implikacij zborovstva, tako na kolektivni kot na individualni ravni, koncept performativnosti, kakor ga opredeljujejo kulturne študije.