

“Full Voice” Songs of Montenegro Seacoast and Hinterland

On the Origins of the “Full Voice” Songs

“To the honor of the bridegroom’s guest!” If one would ask any person from the Montenegro seacoast which is the first association to this sentence, the reply would be that it reminds of the wedding toast required for any wedding in this area. Such a toast must be held but also it has to be sung in “full voice”.

The “full voice” singing is a traditional rural style of performing music in this area which is an open space circumvented by mountain cliffs. The “full voice” singing is very loud, piercing and vocal singing.¹

“When they sing”, the performers describe, “it could be heard far and wide”, because their songs are sung “from the top of ones lungs”, and due to that, “stronger vocal cords are required”. Therefore it is not surprising that such manner of singing on the Montenegro seacoast with Hinterland is usually called “full voice” singing (Grbalj, Maine, Spič) or “the back” singing (Boka Kotorska, Bijela and Gornja Lastva).

Besides defining loud and vocal singing, it should be mentioned that in the rural areas, it is common to use the term “full voice” singing and “back voice” singing for the certain group of songs (“full voice” singing – Grbalj, Maine, Paštrovići, Spič; “back voice” singing – Boka Kotorska).² Such songs are, traditionally, sung loudly, and due to their ceremonial use and tradition derived origin, that may be interpreted as one of the archetypical mode of musical expression of the people of the Montenegro Seacoast with Hinterland.

The “full voice” songs were passed from the continental areas and from the mountains, most of all from the ones in Montenegro.³ These songs are commonly sung by one performer, usually a man⁴ during the wedding celebration (at the table, when the bride had already entered the new home, or on the way while the wedding guests are going to bring the girl⁵ and the banner is risen on the house as a symbol that the wedding celebration has begun, in Boka Kotorska).⁶

A wedding is the crucial moment in a life of any person, and as such, it is based, since the old days, upon a desire to provide the continuity of human life. On the Montenegro Seacoast with Hinterland this act may also be considered a combination of magic rituals and religious rites which should enable “the eternal continuity”.⁷

¹ There three styles in the music of the Montenegro Seacoast with hinterland: the rural one (as a part of the cultural milieu of the continental area and of mountain area), the urban one (as a part of cultural milieu of the seacoast area and the Mediterranean area) and the rural-urban one (created by merging traditional features of both cultural milieus, see further: Marjanović Krstić 1998; Marjanović 2005a; Marjanović 2005b).

² Aside the name “full voice” songs which is common in the entire Montenegro Seacoast with Hinterland, in some areas these songs are called “velja popijevka” or that they are sung in “grand voice” (Paštrovići). See further:

³ According to the data from the existing literature the majority of the population of the Montenegro Seacoast with hinterland is of Slav origin, and they moved from the continental areas and mountain areas and from the rural-patriarchal areas of Montenegro. The majority of the population now living at the seacoast once again decided to live in the country (to grow cattle and to apply Mediterranean agriculture) and not on the seacoast but in the hinterland (Cvijić 1991: 130, 390, 396. Nakićenović 1999: 114, 118, 406, 418. Vukmanović 1960: 69. Vukmanović 1961: 10).

⁴ The full voice songs were once sung by women, witnessed not only by the verbal recount (Grbalj, Spič) but also by existing tapes (for example the footage made by the composer Nikola Hercigonja in 1954, in Morinj, in Boka Kotorska). The tapes are being kept in Phonoarchives of the FMU in Belgrade). Lately women do not perform the songs which are most likely due to the new life style resulted from the new social order that came to be in 1945. The great migrations from country to town happened at that period, and they were spurred further by the cataclysmical earthquake in 1979.

⁵ The wedding guests used to go to bring the girl to her new home either on horses or on foot, and on their way they would stop before every house whose host places a bottle of liqueur in front of the house. The guests would toast on this occasion not only using words, but singing “full voice” songs. Due to that moment the “full voice” songs are said to have nurtured the “travelling” songs (Boka Kotorska, Paštrovići, Marjanović Krstić 1998: 32; Miković 1998: 107).

⁶ On the area subjected to the research “full voiced” songs are sung during “djerkanje” which means mourning “after the deceased”. On the other hand, quiet singing of, for example, lullabies is called “under voice” singing.

⁷ “Full voice” singing can be noticed (on the researched area), on the saint patron’s day of the families, when it is used as a blessing and protection, and at Christmas Eve as sort of announcement that the traditional dry oak branch has burnt out (Grbalj). During the second half of the 20th century, the “full voice” songs were used as an announcement that the folklore dance is about to begin (Grbalj) and the shepherds would deal with boredom while spending their days on the meadows watching over sheep by singing “full voice” songs (Paštrovići). “Full voice” songs were sometimes satirical (for example, in Grbalj a singer Mara Baćina from Pelinovo is still remembered for her “criticism” of the wedding guests who were late and who arrived at the bride’s house in the late afternoon instead in the morning). The end of that type of singing is related to the great migration of the rural population into towns (the shepherds were no more), especially after establishing the new social order after 1945, and the cataclysmical earthquake in 1979.

The “full voice” songs of the researched area express, as it seems, through their features very old principles of the functioning of the human society and of human way of thinking: the magic imitative ritualistic expressions throughout the songs of blessings and protection, the perpetual circling, syncretistic connection of the songs to the specific moment in the ritual. The “full voice” songs are sung at the specific occasions determined by tradition (weddings, mostly), as well as the musical form also determined by tradition. That is how, in time, the “frame” was created for singing different toast lyrics. The melody which is based on a non-tempered tone line and the ambit which is narrow and does not exceed the range of a fourth,⁸ also witness the traditional character of the “full voice” songs:

Grbalj

A. bar-jak-ta - re , na va - še

8 po (ho ho...) - nj(o)e, haj! o.f. "To the honour of the banner barer!"

* shot

On the Archetypical Essence of the “Full Voice” Songs of Montenegro Seacoast Hinterland

Aside from the traditional basis of the “full voice” songs sang by the people of the Montenegro Seacoast with Hinterland the archetypical musical features can be noticed. There are several parameters derived from different levels, conditioned by the tradition of the area, and which are undisputedly related with the sound. The valuable research of ethnomusicologist MA Rastko Jakovljević on the archetypical in music is the initial point of the research in that area.⁹

“Full voice” songs start with melismatically performed syllables (“oj”, “ej”, “aj”), and that differs them from all other songs of the Montenegro Seacoast with Hinterland. The task of the singer is to maintain the voice tremors as long as possible while singing as loudly as possible (“the voice must tremble: ohohohoho...”, Paštrovići). This particular technique of the use of voice tremors could be interpreted as masking of the voice during the rites, when the performer “rises” to the higher level from other participants (who cannot sing in such manner).

The use of voice tremors can be seen as a sort of a sound weapon. According to the people’s beliefs it secures not only the successful wedding ceremony, but also the protection of all involved. So **masking** of the voice represents one of the main music features.¹⁰

The voice tremors in general sense may be seen as a form of repetition, i.e. as a specifically achieved sound oscillation of one tone, which, according to the research, is one of the most significant and most common archetypical feature in music generally speaking.¹¹

Due to the described voice tremors, the “full voice” songs of the Montenegro Seacoast could be related to the vast family of the songs that use voice tremors, and which are noted in the area of the Dinars

⁸ The ambit of the “full voice” songs has been diminished if we compare it to the songs of the urban style noted in the area of the Montenegro Seacoast with Hinterland, but it matches the style of the rural songs of that area completely.

⁹ Jakovljević 2007.

¹⁰ The importance of a voice tremor can be witnessed in performers’ need to emphasize the tremor by making jerky movements by pressing the finger against the external part of his earlobe (mad. Tragus). The masking of the voice has also been studied by an ethnomusicologist MA Rastko Jakovljević, as one of the archetypical music features (Jakovljević 2007: 47).

¹¹ Jakovljević 2007: 36 and 37.

Mountains (parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia).¹² On the other hand, the “full voice songs” of the Montenegro Seacoast with Hinterland defer themselves from the other areas of the Dinars Mountain’s region by the fact that they are performed solo while the others are performed in duets.¹³

Another part of the “full voice” performing, are the lyrics of the songs which consist of particularly chosen words in the epic decasyllable. The lyrics first of all propose a toast and honor some of the important guests (bridesman, the best man, bridegrooms’ brothers) at the wedding or the host at the saint patron’s day by naming them or emphasizing their role at the wedding. The named guest must reply in the same fashion (by singing a “full voice” song) and then call out the next performer. Although the performers are not aware of it, one could recognize the adapting of the lyrics to the function of the rites (at the wedding the name of the roles of the guests is applied into the song), as well as previously mentioned attempt of establishing perpetual circling during the performance of the songs which rose from the belief that it is possible to influence the perpetual circling of life in that fashion as well. With such lyrics of the toast, the performer takes over the role of a priest because he gives a sort of a blessing.¹⁴

Health and joy that he wishes to the newlyweds are not mere words and their origins could be traced back in time when the cult of fertility (fertility is one of the desired results of the wedding) was at its peak.

The people of Montenegro Seacoast with Hinterland respect most of all the part of “full voice” songs where voice tremors are used. Such view can not be applied to the other folklore songs of the rural style in which voice tremors are not applied, but in which the lyrics are of great importance for the community because they describe some of the important moments of the event in progress.¹⁵ The performers on the researched area are very much aware of the voice tremors. However, all the performers cannot perform using voice tremors. There are few of those who can actually use voice tremors so such performing implies unquestionably high level of musical awareness of the performers on the researched area. It does not only reveal the obvious awareness of the performers about the melody component deprived of the usual role of the lyrics but it also represent one of the criteria according to which the performer recognizes an values one another.¹⁶ The lyrics of the “full voice” songs, in practice are not of great importance and the sound has the advantage over them (on the researched area some other wedding songs with similar content exist). The performers themselves say that the voice tremors are important but the “words” are not (Grbalj).

The third part of a “full voice” song, also has voice tremors similar to the ones in the beginning of the song that interrupt the lyrics. They are performed in the middle of the last word or the word before in the melostrophe, usually on eighth syllable, then on the eighth and ninth syllable or on the last: the tenth syllable.

According to the already stipulated and relative to the macro form of the “full voice” songs, it is possible to recognize another one of their archetypical features. They are made in contrasts, so behind the melismatically performed introductory part, the syllabically performed part follows and another melismatic part comes after that one.¹⁷ The tendency towards the infinity and continuity can be recognized is such a form of a song, mostly in the initial and the final part where the voice tremors are applied.

The second view of the archetypical musical features did not originate from the common music studies. The performing of “full voice” songs, in some parts of the Montenegro Seacoast with Hinterland, consists

¹² The similar performance technique has been noticed amongst the people of the region of the Dinars Mountain (aside from Montenegro, some parts of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina), by many researchers starting from 19th century (see further: Vujović 1933: 36–39; Vukmanović 1960: 327; Miković 1998: 107; Kuba 1898: 516; Gavazzi 1988: 81; Rihtman 1963: 75, a group of authors DVD 2004, etc.), in parts of Croatia, for example, such singing is called “ojkanje” (due to the ornamental melodic entry and closing with an accent on the “oj” syllable) and “grohotavanje”, “orcanje”, etc. in east Herzegovina such singing is named “deleganje” or singing “by the ear” etc. (Rihtman 1963: 74; Gavazzi 1978: 81, a group of authors DVD 2004, Bezić 1959, etc.).

¹³ Opposing to the solo performing of the “full voice” songs on the Montenegro Seacoast with Hinterland (even when two performers sing them), as well as in the continental areas of Montenegro (Music from Montenegro 2005: 16), in some parts of Croatia “full voice” songs with voice tremors are usually performed in duets (commonly with secondary sound, Gavazzi 1988: 81, the group of authors of DVD 2004, Bezić 1959 and others).

¹⁴ According to the tradition, the priest cannot be present at the wedding when “full voice” songs are sung. The role of a priest during the wedding is limited to the church premises.

¹⁵ See further: Marjanović Krstić 1998 and Marjanović 2005.

¹⁶ The performers like Grbljanin Batuta are still remembered. Apparently, he was timing the duration of the voice tremors by the time needed to load up an old piffle. He would start singing before the beginning of loading the riffle, and sang while taking the powder, weighting it, stuffing it into the riffle, and ending the song only after he fires the shot.

¹⁷ Jakovljević 2007: 45.

of another part which is by its origin non-musical, and it is a part of the local musical dialect. According to the tradition this sort of performing must be followed by a rattle shot.

Such firing might be a substitute for natural phenomena that cause fire and loud noise (thunder, lightning) and as such it has multiple role in folklore beliefs from the days when cults were worshiped. According to the relevant research, the notions of lustrative and protective power of the fire gained from different sources were dominant in old religion.¹⁸ So the rattle shot at the end of the “full voice” song might bare the same significance. This non-musical part of the “full voice” songs signals that the archetypical view applied to the tradition may not be solely musical, but also non-musical. The performers claim that a “full voice” song sung without a rattle shot at the end might as well not be sang. In fact they sing to provoke shooting for pleasure.

In modern days the performing of the “full voice” songs on Montenegro Seacoast with Hinterland is so demystified that it is done regardless of the occasion and if there is one (wedding) at all. The rattle shot became the relevant motivation for performing “full voice” songs. The most important parts of the “full voice” songs are voice tremors and a rattle shot which must follow these songs.

This sort of people’s beliefs reveal the archetypical musical features related to the performing of “full voice” songs on Montenegro Seacoast with Hinterland. The emphasis on voice tremors and the rattle shots leads to the essence of “full voice” songs, which is lately utterly unknown to the performers, and it had originated from the ancient universal human need to achieve everything that is not common by something extraordinary as well as by something ordinary (a contrast again). From that point of view the archetypical musical features of the researched area are not solely made of melodic feature of “full voice” songs, or of lyrics, but also of the vision of common shepherd ones living in the continental region of the Dinars Mountains of how his arche-song should sound. Following that strain of thoughts the arche-song must be based on wide effects on general idea of a music blast (i.e. it must be based on loud singing and voice tremors as well as on the shot that follows it),¹⁹ which envelopes the human ideas from ancient times when the cults were worshiped (protection, securing success, the transformation of a common man in a being with supernatural powers etc.).²⁰ In that context the blast is a particular sound, unique, masked, piercing. Although it is related to the joyous and solemn occasions such as weddings, the blast spreads trough the open space and echoes against the foot of the mountain of the blast bearer’s native land. This blast, aside from the acoustic effect, has its symbolic meaning: it reflects the characters of the people that created it, because they are as the sound they make: simple, free, piercing and special, in their own original way since the old days, and they and their tradition are both fused with the land of their origin.

That is the manifestation of their idea of their world, which, finally, is one of the music features.²¹ In the archetypical need for the blast is unified all that has been presented as the archetypical features of the rural way of life on the Montenegro Seacoast with hinterland: the musical principles of masking, repetition and contrast as well as the non-musical principal.

The Archetype: Constant or Evolutionary Form of the “Full Voice” Songs of the Montenegro Seacoast

In favor of the idea that the archetypical relation of people living on the researched area towards music could be observed through their relation with a sound, are the “full voice” songs whose sound suffers a transformation on the researched area. The transformation is conditioned by abandoning the mountain region where they were made in favor of the existence on the seacoast.²²

¹⁸ Bandić 2004: 70 and 71. Firing from the fire arms during the wedding celebration has been recorded in the 19th century in the continental part of Montenegro (Karadžić 1985: 334).

¹⁹ Describing this way of performing on the researched area, in the first half of the 20th century, Slovenian ethnomusicologist Matija Murko said that it is “explosive” (Murko 1951: 225 and 555).

²⁰ At this point, it is important to present the opinion of the ethno musicologist MA Rastko Jakovljević, who claimed that intensity of the sound marks the importance of the occasion and impresses it upon the memory of the participants. Loud and strong performance may, also, “significantly add to causing the state of altered consciences or a trance” (Jakovljević 2007: 58).

²¹ The necessity to perform may be seen as an archetype, but also as one of the codes that enable recognition and explanation of the rural music of the people from the Montenegro Seacoast with Hinterland. In the same fashion the separate Montenegro (the Dinars Mountains) musical archetype may confirm the origins of the majority of population on the Montenegro Seacoast with Hinterland.

²² Referring to the populated areas such as Kamenari, Jošice etc. in Boka Kotorska, which were in the 19th century important merchant and marine centers of these areas.

Honoring the tradition of their ancestors, these people still sing textual toast at the weddings in the “full voice” manner, greatly reduced though, with less voice tremors, and they do not end their singing with a rifle shot. On the other hand, honoring the land they inhabited, they add to their “back voice attacca” the same lyrics sang with voice tremors and fused with cheery almost motoric melody with triple meter, with homophonic two-part singing or sporadically three-part singing:

Bijela (Boka Kotorska)

I singer
 ♩ = cca 92
 O, sta - ri sva-te, na tvo-je po-šte - nje!
 "To the honour of the bride's groom's guest!"

II singer
 O, po-šten bi-o i ko te ro-di-o!
 "May you be honourable and blessing on your mother!"

tutti
 ♩ = 132
 Sta - ri sva - te, sta - ri sva - te, na tvo - je po - šte - nje, sta - ri sva - te, sta - ri sva - te, na tvo - je po - šte - nje.
 "To the honour of the bride's groom's guest!"

This type of songs ends in one fifth chord which is also one of the elements of the archetypical musical feature but which is completely unknown to the people living in the Hinterland of the Montenegro Seacoast.²³ The archetypical musical features of the highlanders' music accompanied by the desire for the archetypical effect of a blast are suppressed at this point. After abandoning the mountain region the blast has been “shuffled” by the sound of the sea.

It could be said that the songs of this part the Montenegro Seacoast with Hinterland are slowly ceasing to be “full voice” songs.²⁴ These songs can present how a highlander becomes a seafarer which, in spite of all, has not lost the essential comprehension of his songs. He has merely insured that they prevail by paying attention to the sound, as well as to its uniqueness, achieved by the Mediterranean musical features.

From that aspect perceived, the archetype of the Montenegro Seacoast with Hinterland can be presented as a general result of the eagerness of its performers to create a particular sound of their own. It is possible to specify the essence of the archetype of the music features of the tradition of the Montenegro Seacoast with Hinterland, and as such those features are constant and permanent, and due to the environment of creation and the appliance of the music feature its “wrapping” changes, i. e. the tools of musical expression.

²³ One fifth chord is one of the pillar intervals in classical music (starting with *Ars Antiquae*), and in traditional music of many nations as well (see further: Jakovljević 2007: 43).

²⁴ It has been already stated that the songs in which voice tremors are used are not, according to the relevant research, related to the tradition of any specific nation, but they are related to the tradition of the Dinars Mountains region on the Balkan Peninsula. It is even possible to assume that the origin of such musical features is pre-slav (Gavazzi 1988: 81, Rihtman 1963: 76).

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Santrauka

Archetipai ir muzikos nacionalinis identitetas: Juodkalnijos pajūrio ir šalies gilumos dainos *iz glasa*

Kadangi Juodkalnijos pajūrio ir šalies gilumos liaudies dainos patyrė įvairiausių įtakų, jose išryškėja įvairūs stiliai. Vienas iš jų yra kaimiškas stilius, kilęs daugiausia iš kontinentinės Juodkalnijos dalies. Senoji kaimiškoji dainavimo maniera, tradiciškai vadinama *iz glasa* (verčiant pažodžiui – „pilnu balsu“), turbūt yra seniausia Juodkalnijos pajūrio ir šalies gilumos gyventojų muzikinės išraiškos forma. Dėl jos pirminės magiškos-ritualinės funkcijos, išryškėjančios tiek muzikiniame, tiek žodiniame dainų turinyje, jokių abejonių nekyla. Specifinis balso „maskavimas“ jį virpinant ir garsiai dainuojant buvo tiesiog priemonė įvardyti, šlovinti ir, galimas dalykas, tam tikru būdu apsaugoti pagrindinius senųjų ritualinių apeigų (vestuvių ceremonijų) dalyvius. Dainos, atliekamos specifiškai virpinant balsą, galėtų būti laikomos kaimiškojo dainavimo archetipu ne tik Juodkalnijoje. Iš vienos pusės, tai rodo Juodkalnijos pajūrio ir gilumos muzikavimo tradicijų specifiškumą, iš kitos pusės – Juodkalnijos pajūrio ir gilumos muzikavimo tradicijas sieja su kitų vietovių (Hercegovinos, Bosnijos ir Kroatijos teritorijų, priklausančių vadinamajam Dinarų kalnyno regionui), kurioms būdingas panašus dainavimo būdas, muzikinėmis tradicijomis.