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FROM HABSBURG CLASSROOMS TO SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA: A TRAJECTORY OF SLOVENIAN CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH SONGBOOKS

Abstract: This article examines the development of Slovenian children's and youth songbooks from the nineteenth century to the early 1970s, culminating in the influential school songbook *Prek sveta odmeva pesem* (1972). By analysing curricula, pedagogical reforms, and editorial practices across the Habsburg, interwar Yugoslav, and socialist periods, the study demonstrates how songbooks functioned as cultural artefacts shaping musical, educational, and national identities. Despite political shifts, strong continuities persisted, particularly the central role of folk song. *Prek sveta odmeva pesem* is shown to synthesise these traditions within the modernised framework of the unified eight-year school system.

Keywords: songbooks, music education in Slovenia, children's and youth musical culture, school curricula and reforms, *Prek sveta odmeva pesem*.

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Introduction

Children's and youth songbooks constitute a fundamental yet surprisingly under-researched source for understanding twentieth-century Slovenian cultural and musical history. Although they were used continuously in school settings from the nineteenth century onward, scholarly literature has tended to treat them merely as peripheral didactic tools rather than as complex cultural documents. Only a systematic historical-analytical approach reveals that songbooks – through their selection of repertoire, editorial interventions, visual design, and institutional oversight – reflect key aspects of the development of schooling, cultural policy, ideological orientations, and artistic standards of their time.

In the post-Second World War period (the era on which this study focuses) songbooks occupy a position at the intersection of several dynamic processes: school reform, the professionalisation of music education, the emergence of new youth cultures, and the shaping of socialist cultural identity. At the same time, this period displays a clear continuity with pre-war editorial traditions. Songbooks embody the tension between rupture and continuity, between ideological instrumentalisation and pedagogical expertise, between folk tradition and new creative output.

Within the Slovenian context, the songbook is a distinctly hybrid genre. Publications intended for school singing or choral training often incorporate a wide array of elements: conducting instructions, rhythmic exercises, improvisational prompts, choral arrangements, didactic guidelines, and illustrated content. The boundaries between songbook, choral anthology, pedagogical handbook, music textbook, and printed collection of songs are frequently fluid. This genre openness allows songbooks to be understood as part of the material culture of education (Burke) – as objects that transmit cultural norms, aesthetic preferences, and institutional practices.

This study focuses primarily on the period after 1945, when modern Slovenian music pedagogy emerged within socialist Yugoslavia. The years from 1945 to roughly a decade after the introduction of the eight-year primary school (1958/60) were crucial for the development of songbooks: the system became centralised; schools received clearer pedagogical guidelines; editorial processes were professionalised; and institutional support for youth singing became a significant pillar of cultural policy. Songbooks thus found themselves situated between the demands of curricula and professional ambitions, between publishing constraints, teachers' expectations, and the broader cultural objectives of the state.

Yet the repertoire of postwar songbooks often continued to draw on pre-war traditions. Editorial teams retained many of the same figures, pedagogical approaches remained similar, and the understanding of the folk song as the “natural” foundation of musical education persisted. Consequently, postwar songbooks were not simply products of the new state, but rather outcomes of long-term processes in which older models and new ideological emphases intertwine.

Curricular Continuities and the Making of a Canon: Towards *Prek Sveta Odmeva Pesem*

Prek sveta odmeva pesem is one of the most recognisable Slovenian songbooks and, despite more than 50 years of history, it remains a staple of music education in primary schools. In 1971, it was officially approved as a textbook by the Republican Secretariat for Education and Culture, a decision that significantly shaped its subsequent status. Although such approval may seem unsurprising in a period when textbooks were the primary teaching resource, elevating the songbook to textbook level effectively overshadowed numerous other collections and even curtailed the publication of new songbooks. The reasons for its exceptional prominence become clear only through an understanding of the historical development of children’s and youth musical literature up to that time.

An examination of curricula after 1945 reveals a compelling picture. Until 1958 the subject was still called *petje* (singing), a legacy of the school systems of the former Yugoslavia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in which singing was closely tied to basic musical-theoretical instruction.¹ This is confirmed by the 1879 curriculum, which even lists specific collections of songs, including Anton Nedved’s *Šolske pesmi*.²

In socialist Yugoslavia, frequent educational reforms significantly influenced curricular structures. Although the content of music education did not undergo radical changes, pedagogical methods and systematic didactic approaches developed substantially.

It is noteworthy that postwar curricula generally did not specify textbooks or songbooks, with the exception of the Rationale for the Eight-Year

¹ The curricula for primary and secondary schools are held by the Slovenian School Museum in Ljubljana.

² The title does not correspond to the titles of Nedved’s songbooks. It was most likely a reprint of the 1865 edition *Pesmi za mladost* (*Songs for Youth*).

School Curriculum (1959),³ which recommended several collections: from new postwar songbooks (Kalan, Kramolc, Mihelčič-Potočnik) to older pre-war editions, especially Pregelj's *Nageljčki*. The list in footnote 3 is instructive for several reasons: it includes most – but not all – new postwar collections; it also cites a songbook from an earlier period; it names the key figures shaping postwar primary-school vocal literature; the listed songbooks contain monophonic and polyphonic songs as well as choral works; the document explicitly notes that none of the existing collections was fully adequate.

Despite the intense postwar musical production and the steady flow of new repertoires published in the music periodical *Grlica*,⁴ earlier songbooks continued to appear in the curriculum. This points to a clear continuity: postwar youth musical literature was built upon traditions long established in schools since the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes/Yugoslavia.

The central role of Pregelj's songbooks in the subject *Petje* (Singing) in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes is further confirmed by the 1926 curriculum for the first four years of primary school, which lists as “convenient songbooks for the teacher” the collections by: Drago Ilić, Anton Dobronić, Ciril Pregelj, France Marolt, Janez Žirovnik, and Hinko Druzovič.

In accordance with the ideals of the new state and its emphasis on education in the spirit of national and civic unity, the selection also includes Croatian and Serbian songbooks. Alongside the newer Slovenian collections, the curriculum likewise envisages older ones dating back to the Austro-Hungarian period (Druzovič, Žirovnik). This again illustrates the continuity and persistent presence of songbooks from earlier eras.

The curriculum defines its primary aim as the “awakening and developing of aesthetic and patriotic sentiment”, with an emphasis on singing “lighter

³ In the 1959 curriculum, the following songbooks are listed under “Sources”:

Kalan Pavle: *Drobne pesmi*, vol. II, Ljubljana, 1954.

Kramolc Luka – Matija Tomc: *Pesmarica za srednje šole*, several postwar editions.

Mihelčič Slavko – Potočnik Peter: *Zapojmo*, vol. I and II, Ljubljana, 1949.

Pregelj Ciril: *Nageljčki*, in particular vol. I and II, Celje, 1928–29.

Some suitable material can also be found in the music journal *Grlica*, as well as in several collections by individual composers (Bitenc, Kuhar, Pahor, Pirnik).

In: Učni načrt (nastavni program) za I., II., III. in IV. razred vseh osnovnih šol v Kraljevini Srbom, Hrvatov in Slovencev, Beograd 1926, p. 20 (Curriculum [Instructional Program] for the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Grades of All Elementary Schools in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, Belgrade).

⁴ <https://www.dlib.si/details/URN:NBN:SI:spr-MALM3JLG>

patriotic songs”, both folk and art songs. Art songs were to be chosen from the domestic compositional output, while folk songs continued to serve as the fundamental instructional material.

A retroactive examination of curricula from three different historical periods reveals that efforts to cultivate children’s and youth musical literature in Slovenia have been present since at least the second half of the nineteenth century, and that traditions were carried forward from one period to the next. By 1959, when the number of available songbooks reached its historical peak, the *Rationale* to the curriculum explicitly stressed the need for “a suitable, systematically organized songbook”. This aspiration cannot be attributed solely to socialist ideology; rather, it stemmed from professional and didactic efforts to provide music education with high-quality material aligned with contemporary pedagogical principles. Such a conclusion is possible only through a comparative historical perspective, which shows that early vocal literature for young people developed in close connection with the evolution of the school system, itself shaped by broader socio-political circumstances.

Austro-Hungarian Foundations: Between Institutional Constraints and the Emergence of the First Systematic Songbooks

Music education in the Habsburg Monarchy was marked by pronounced stratification: it differed significantly between urban and rural schools, and among regular primary (Volks-) schools, Bürgerschulen, and gymnasiums. Singing was formally a compulsory subject, yet its quality depended heavily on the individual teacher’s musical competence and on the availability of appropriate instructional materials.

It is within this context that the first Slovenian songbooks emerged – initially with a strong moral and educational emphasis (Anton Martin Slomšek’s *Drobtinice* and *Šola veselega lepega petja za pridno šolsko mladino*), and later with more methodologically-structured collections by Jurij Flajšman and Anton Nedvěd, both of whom aligned their approaches with broader Habsburg pedagogical principles. Given that Nedvěd’s contribution represented pioneering work in the field of children’s and youth songs for school use,⁵ it is unsurprising that his songbooks were prescribed in contemporary curricula. Nevertheless, due to the structure and stratification of the school system, one should not assume that this repertoire was consistently – or even widely – used across all institutions.

⁵ *Kratek nauk o glasbi* (1863, 1893), *Pesmi za mladost* (1867), *Slavček* (1879–1896), *Početni pouk v petji za ljudske šole* (1894).

The 1869 school reform established minimal guidelines for the teaching of singing but did not introduce systematic songbooks. Early collections thus arose from the individual initiatives of teachers, resulting in substantial variation in repertoire from one school to another.

Although Anton Foerster made a significant contribution to youth choral literature, Hinko Druzovič emerged as Nedvéd's true successor at the beginning of the twentieth century. The author of the first Slovenian music pedagogy handbook and a staunch advocate of teaching singing through notation, Druzovič was critical of singing instruction in primary (folk) schools, arguing that pupils generally lacked adequate musical grounding. In his songbooks he therefore systematically integrated teaching methods, theoretical foundations, vocal exercises, and curated song selections, which made his collections a hybrid form between a songbook and a textbook.

Although it remains uncertain whether teachers of the time were sufficiently trained to use such demanding material, Druzovič's songbooks – with their progressive pedagogical approach – became fundamental instructional resources after the First World War, as confirmed by the 1926 curriculum. His *Lira*, intended for secondary school students, sought to elevate school singing to a higher, more artistically ambitious level. The fact that multi-voice youth singing was still in its developmental stages before the war – and strongly shaped by the social conditions and school structures of the period – was also emphasised by Vasilij Mirk in the postwar *Grlica*.⁶

The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes/Yugoslavia: Consolidation of Tradition and the Development of Youth Song Literature

With the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy and the establishment of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, the cultural conditions for Slovenians changed significantly. Owing to substantial disparities in cultural and educational development among the various regions, the pre-1918 school legislation largely remained in force; it was only with the 1929 School Act that elementary education was unified and compulsory eight-year schooling introduced.⁷ The elementary school was defined as a “national school”, divided into lower and upper stages, after which pupils could continue their

⁶ Vasilij Mirk, “Poziv višjim gimnazijam”, *Grlica*, 20, 1956–57, 20.

⁷ Ervin Dolenc, “Kultura 1918–1941”, in: Jasna Fischer et. al. (Ed.), *Slovenska novejša zgodovina: Od programa Zedinjena Slovenija do mednarodnega priznanja Republike Slovenije*, Ljubljana, Mladinska knjiga, Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2005, 415–440.

education in different types of institutions – though graduates of *meščanske šole* (civic schools) were barred from progressing to the higher gymnasias. Attempts to standardise schooling across the kingdom faced considerable difficulties, influenced by ideas of the “triune nation” and by the introduction of a non-existent Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian language as the official state language.⁸ This was reflected also in the curricula – for instance, the 1926 primary school curriculum, which lists among recommended songbooks several Serbian collections by Drago Ilić. Because singing instruction was now included in all four grades of primary school, the lower stage of compulsory education became more uniform, which in turn contributed to greater consistency in the teaching of singing.

Although Druzovič's songbooks constituted fundamental pedagogical material, the journal *Grlica* documents a growing need for new and more suitable songs.⁹ Existing collections were regarded as insufficiently “domestic” and overly “school-like”, prompting Ciril Pregelj to begin collecting folk songs appropriate for young singers and to arrange many of them himself – particularly to address the lack of three-part repertoires for youth choirs. The formation of a new repertoire was also shaped by Hubad's pedagogical courses at the newly established State Conservatory, which trained teachers in more modern methods of choral instruction. These courses reportedly produced numerous influential music educators and authors of school songbooks, among them Pregelj and Pavel Kozina, who expanded the repertoire in accordance with Druzovič's didactic principles. During this period, the emphasis on folk material became the dominant criterion of school song literature – a noteworthy contrast to Druzovič's own collections, which consist predominantly of original compositions.

In the nineteenth century, the principal criterion for identifying folk songs was their circulation and popularity among the people. A more precise understanding of folk material began to develop only with the large-scale collection of Slovenian folk songs undertaken by the so-called Committee for the Collection of Folk Songs as part of the wider Austrian project *Das Volkslied in Österreich* (1905–1918). In the interwar period, this initiative primarily strengthened public awareness of the significance of the folk musical heritage, even though teachers themselves did not yet possess a thorough

⁸ Aleš Gabrič, *Sledi šolskega razvoja na Slovenskem*, Ljubljana, Pedagoški inštitut, 2009, 22.

⁹ In: [the editors of *Grlica*], “Ciril Pregelj – 70-letnik”, *Grlica*, 1, 1956/57, 12.

knowledge of it. This context helps explain why Žirovnik's *Narodne pesmi* remained part of the primary school curriculum: they provided an accessible and practical source of folk repertoires for school use.

From Education to Art: The Development of Slovenian Youth Music Literature Between the Two World Wars

The interwar period opened new horizons for Slovenian children's and youth music literature, particularly with Emil Adamič's *Mladinske pesmi* (1922) and Srečko Kumar's *Otroške pesmi* (1924). Their significance was quickly recognised both in Kumar's *Grlica* and later in the cultural discourse of the Second Yugoslavia, where authors spoke of the "birth of our youth song", the "ascent of youth choral music", and even a "rebirth" of youth creativity. In assessing the situation before the First World War as modest and largely confined to the school environment, Borut Loparnik adopted a broad cultural perspective, though in doing so he overlooked the school-oriented works of Nedvčed and Foerster.¹⁰ Nevertheless, he acknowledges that without these early efforts, the later artistic flourishing of the interwar years would not have been possible.

In the preface to *Mladinske pesmi*, Adamič noted that young people had grown weary of the monotonous school repertoire and that teachers lacked suitable compositions for school ceremonies and events.¹¹ The increased demand for high-quality literature resulted from both the new school system and changing cultural circumstances: the establishment of the Conservatory and the activity of two major choral organisations significantly strengthened choral life across Slovenia. Alongside the Glasbena matica, Kumar's Teachers' Choir and Marolt's Academic Choir played an important role, frequently performing more contemporary works by Slovenian and Yugoslav composers.

With the reform of the school system – particularly the introduction of co-education as a new educational reality – the need for song and choral repertoires simultaneously changed and expanded. Kumar's *Otroške pesmi* (1924) appeared to have anticipated a shift towards more artistically oriented youth music literature by inviting composers such as Adamič, Dobroni, Grbec, Kogoj, Lajovic, Vodopivec, and others to write new works for children and young people. He continued in this spirit with *Grlica* (1933–1935), a

¹⁰ Borut Loparnik, "Po stopinjah časa", *Grlica*, 16, 1973/74, 14.

¹¹ Emil Adamič, *Mladinske pesmi*, Učiteljska tiskarna, Ljubljana, 1922. <<http://www.dlib.si/?URN=URN:NBN:SI:DOC-ZJWP9AEL>>

Yugoslav-oriented serial publication devoted to youth music. Kumar initially intended to adapt the contributions for use in a school songbook,¹² but it became evident that the pieces were too demanding and extensive for school needs and for the standards set by the curriculum.

The interwar development of songbooks thus produced two new types: the songbook as artistic choral literature and the songbook as a school-oriented didactic tool. It was within this environment that Kumar's student Avgust Šuligoj – “the founding father” of the Trboveljski slavček choir (Trbovlje Nightingale) – emerged. Working with children from the mining community, he created a choir of remarkable quality, a cultural symbol of the state, and a source of inspiration for numerous composers. The successes of the Trboveljski slavček choir significantly accelerated the development of youth musical creativity and raised the standard of vocal instruction in schools.

In 1934, Šuligoj organised the Days of Youth Music, bringing together twenty choirs; at the main concert, 1,200 children performed works by Grbec and Adamič. With the Trboveljski slavček choir he presented contemporary works at home and abroad by composers such as: Osterc, Pahor, Kogoj, Mirk, Bravničar, Premrl, Adamič, Papandopulo, Matetič Ronjgov, Krstić, and others.

After 1945: Leading up to *Prek sveta odmeva pesem*

The new state and its new social order after 1945 profoundly influenced the development of schooling in Slovenia and throughout Yugoslavia. In the altered sociopolitical circumstances, the ruling ideology of the Communist Party sought new principles for the education system;¹³ however, the envisioned structural reforms could not be fully implemented until the 1950s, owing to the country's poor economic conditions. Immediately after the war, a commission was appointed to review curricula and textbooks and to assess their suitability. Some textbooks were rejected, others revised, while in the

¹² *Grlica: revijalna zbirka omladinske muzike*, Zagreb, self-published by Srečko Kumar, 1933–1935, II.

¹³ According to the Minister of Education, Lidija Šentjunc, the task of the school system was as follows: “Our education and our schools must, in addition to providing basic knowledge, instil in our people and youth the lofty ideas and achievements of the National Liberation Struggle, show them the perspectives of future development, and educate strong, fearless, and courageous builders of the new Yugoslavia, who will believe in the success of their work and their efforts.” This is how Minister Šentjunc articulated the mission of education in her speech in 1947. In: Aleš Gabrič, *Slovenska agitpropovska kulturna politika 1945–1952*, Ljubljana, Mladika, 1991, 508.

case of textbooks for Latin, Greek, physical education, music, and chemistry only minor corrections were required, such as the removal of authors' and translators' names. Several textbooks were approved simply because no alternatives existed, which meant they were free of any ideological tendencies.¹⁴

Organisational and curricular reform (aside from the most ideologically-sensitive subjects – history, geography, religious instruction, and, to a degree, the Slovene language) followed the Third Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (29–30 December 1949, Belgrade), when the authorities acknowledged the serious missteps caused by unsuccessful organisational experiments and excessive ideological interference in education. In addition to the poor equipment of schools, dilapidated buildings, and the challenges of teaching combined classes, the new government faced significant difficulties due to the heterogeneity of the four-year upper stage of compulsory schooling. The division into lower gymnasiums, eight-year schools, and higher elementary schools did not provide equal educational opportunities for all children between roughly eleven and fifteen years of age,¹⁵ even though the curricula of these institutions became increasingly similar during the first five years of the new state.¹⁶

With the establishment of the Commission for School Reform at the Federal Assembly in 1954, numerous public debates emerged concerning the future organisation of the school system, the introduction of a unified elementary school, possibilities for further education, and the standardisation of the system and curricula throughout the country. All these initiatives were grounded in the idea of shaping the “new socialist human being” in the spirit of a socialist, working-class society. According to Gabrič, the commission completed its final proposal by mid-1957, and this document became the basis for the legislation adopted in the subsequent years.¹⁷ Since education fell under the jurisdiction of the republics, the Federal Assembly enacted only a general education law in 1958, which abolished the system inherited from the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and introduced an eight-year unified elementary school compulsory for all children. The gymnasium became a four-year secondary school, equal in status to other secondary-school pro-

¹⁴ Ibid., 514.

¹⁵ Aleš Gabrič, “Šolska reforma”, in: Jasna Fischer et. al. (Ed.): *Slovenska novejša zgodovina: Od programa Zedinjena Slovenija do mednarodnega priznanja Republike Slovenije*, Ljubljana, Mladinska knjiga, Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2005, 1035–1038.

¹⁶ Aleš Gabrič, *Slovenska agitpropovska kulturna politika 1945–1952*, 559.

¹⁷ Aleš Gabrič, “Šolska reforma”, 1036.

grams.¹⁸ The reform process concluded in April 1960 with the adoption of a new curriculum, described as a “compromise between the previously less demanding upper grades of the elementary school and the more demanding lower gymnasium”, which ensured equal access to secondary education for all children.

The reform also significantly affected music education. In the justification of the 1959 curriculum, the former subject “singing” appears under the new name “music education”, accompanied by a detailed articulation of its aims, the grade-by-grade content structure, and the sources on which teachers were expected to rely. The final printed version of the curriculum from 1962 no longer includes these sources; instead, it merely recommends that teachers select up to ten songs as a mandatory repertoire for all schools. The curriculum also emphasises the development of choral singing – each school was encouraged to establish, where possible, three choirs: a children’s choir, a youth choir, and a youth choir for the upper grades.

In the 1950s, issues concerning music education were a regular topic of professional consultations among music educators throughout the country, including within the Slovenian Association of Music Educators (*Društvo glasbenih pedagogov Slovenije*). Significant systematic contributions to the reform of music instruction were published in *Grlica* by Peter Potočnik,¹⁹ author of the *Methodology of Vocal Instruction* for the first four grades (1950, 1952, 1957), which Slavko Mihelčič complemented with the song collection *Zapojmo* for the first and second grades of primary school.

In *Grlica*, two distinct tendencies became clearly established during the 1950s: the need for systematic didactic methods for teaching music and for appropriate instructional materials; and a commitment to publishing original artistic choral literature for young singers, which was also the journal’s founding mission. Both orientations had their roots in the interwar period – in the work of Druzovič and Pregelj on one side, and Kumar on the other. This duality was likewise reflected in postwar youth music creativity, while *Grlica* itself gradually transformed during the 1960s from a journal of youth choral music into a journal of music education.

Because the Trboveljski slavček choir had profoundly shaped youth choral culture and stimulated the growth of school choirs, the postwar period

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Peter Potočnik, “Razmišljanje o reformi glasbenega pouka na osnovnih šolah v Sloveniji”, *Grlica*, 1, 2, 4, 1958/59.

frequently invoked its legacy. Although the rise of youth singing was not as rapid as during Šuligoj's tenure, the number of school choirs far exceeded that of the prewar period, even if their early activities were largely limited to performances at the many school ceremonies of the time. One new development in schools was the introduction of unison children's singing, initially met with hesitation but accepted as an equal part of school practice after Janez Kuhar's successful 1956 concert of 34 unison songs with piano accompaniment.

The Youth Choral Festival in Celje, founded in 1946, began full operations in 1958, expanded beyond the local framework in 1961, and by 1963 became an international biennial festival. The Slovene Philharmonic Youth Choir, founded under Šuligoj in 1949, existed for only three years; a far more lasting influence was exerted by the Children's and Youth Choir of Radio Ljubljana, established in 1957 by Janez Bitenc and Janez Kuhar, through which youth choral singing became an integral part of the radio programme.

The growing choral activity was also described in 1966 by Ignacij Ota, who emphasised that children's choir singing had become a regular component of school and extracurricular events, while teachers increasingly sought out new songs and repertoires with notation.²⁰

In the 1960s, municipal festivals of youth choirs expanded significantly, and from 1968 onward the central event became the republican festival in Zagorje ob Savi. This development grew directly out of the tradition of the Trboveljski slavček choir, as postwar youth choirs in the Zasavje region increasingly sought stronger interconnection and the elevation of their activities to the republican level.²¹

Grlica (together with the musical journal *Naši zbori*) and the published works of Slovenian composers could not meet the increasing demand for youth choral literature. As school choirs became a permanent feature of cultural life, various institutions began independently issuing songbooks and choral collections. In the 1960s, Celje Youth Choral Festival, Radio Ljubljana, and Pionirski dom Ljubljana published several collections of children's and youth choirs. These volumes expanded the available repertoires – particu-

²⁰ Ignacij Ota, "Predgovor", in: Ignacij Ota (Ed.), *Otroške in mladinske pesmi*, Trst, Slovenska prosvetna zveza, 1966, 3.

²¹ Janja Dragan Gombač, Lenka Gašpirc, Dragica Žvar, *Najlepši čas, mladosti čas!: dvajset revij slovenskega mladinskega petja v Zagorju ob Savi: 1968–2006*, Ljubljana, JSKD, Glasbena matica, 2006, 17.

larly important at a time when access to foreign music literature was limited – while simultaneously articulating positions on programme policy, which was expected to be broad, stylistically diverse, and musically and rhythmically fresh. Such guidelines gradually shaped the criteria for assembling school choir programmes. While the Celje festival published new works by Slovenian composers, RTV and the Pionirski dom primarily selected historical works by foreign authors.

Songbooks after 1945: Typologies, Pedagogical Functions, and the Path toward *Prek sveta odmeva pesem*

If we set aside literature intended for school-based choral singing, more demanding works for youth choirs, and original compositions for children and young people,²² and instead turn to music-didactic collections, the following set of songbooks emerges:²³

1945

- *Mladinske pesmi iz naše osvobodilne borbe*, Selection of Songs by Partisan Composers
- *Otroške narodne pesmi*, ed. Makso Pirnik

1948

- *Igraj, kolce!* Collection of Regional Songbooks, ed. Matija Tomc
- *Mladinske pesmi za predšolsko dobo* for voice and piano, ed. Vida Jeraj
- *N'mav čez izaro*, Collection of Regional Songbooks, ed. France Marolt

1949

- *Pesem najmlajšim "Biba leze"*, Collection of Songs for Preschool Children, ed. Vida Jeraj
- *Pevska vadnica*, ed. Adolf Groebming, Luka Kramolc in Matija Tomc
- *Zapojmo! 1*, Songbook for the 1st and 2nd Grades of Primary School, ed. S. Mihelčič in P. Potočnik
Zapojmo! 2, Songbook for the 3rd and 4th Grades of Primary School, ed. S. Mihelčič in P. Potočnik

²² Composers who published original, artistically-autonomous works for children and youth up to 1973 include: Rado Simoniti, Slavko Mihelčič, Karol Pahor, Danilo Švara, Marjan Kozina, Janez Kuhar, Makso Pirnik, Ivan Šček, Matija Bravničar, Pavel Šivic, Jakob Jež, Srečko Koporc, Viktor Šonc, Viktor Mihelčič, Franjo Luževič, and Janez Bitenc.

²³ The bibliographic information for all songbooks mentioned in this article is available on the COBISS portal: <https://plus.cobiss.net/cobiss/si/sl>

1952

- *Drobne pesmi tolminskim učiteljiščnikom na pot*, vol. I, ed. Makso Prinik
- *Pridi Gorenč – vabi Dolenč*. Collection of Regional Songbooks, ed. Matija Tomc

1954

- *Drobne pesmi učiteljiščnikom na pot*, vol. II, ed. Pavle Kalan
- Ivan Grbec, *Pesmarica za osnovne, nižje srednje in strokovne šole*, vol. I

1955

- *Drobne pesmi učiteljiščnikom na pot*, vol. III, ed. Pavle Kalan

1959

- *Mladina poje: pesmarica za koroško mladino*, vol. I, ed. F. Aichholzer in R. Vouk

1960

- Janez Bitenc, *Naša četica koraka*, Collection of Children's Songs and a Handbook for Early Childhood Music
- *Mladina poje: zbirka pesmi, iger in plesov s petjem, urejena po tonskem obsegu*, vol. I

1961

- *Otroci domovini*, collected and edited by Albin Weingerl

1962

- Janez Bitenc in Janez Kuhar, *Otroške pesmi*
- *Otroške pesmi raznih narodov*

1964

- *Mladina poje*, Song Collection for the Upper Grades of Primary School, vol. II, ed. Luka Kramolc
- *Partizanske pesmi za otroke*
- *Pesmi za osnovno šolo*, ed. Franc Gruden

1965

- *Partizanske pesmice*, ed. Janez Bitenc in Mirko Kokol

1966

- Janez Kuhar, *Cicibanom na pot*
- *Otroške in mladinske pesmi*, ed. Ignacij Ota
- *Uspavanke in nagajivke*
- Mira Voglar in Marta Paulin, *Čirule, čarule, pojte pesmice in rajajte*

- *Zapojmo s kitaro*, Songbook for the First Four Grades of Primary School and for Music Schools, ed. Stanko Prek

1967

- *Pesmarica za višje razrede osnovnih šol* (5th to 8th grades), ed. Stanko Prek

1969

- *Slovenska pesmarica*, vol. III, folk songs, ed. L. Kramolc, Z. Kumer in M. Tomc

1971

- *Pesmi z gora*, a selection of songs by Danilo Škerbinek

1972

- *Prek sveta odmeva pesem*, Songbook for the 4th to 8th Grades of Primary School, ed. Miro Kokol

What picture does this survey of songbooks reveal? The songbooks can be divided into four categories:

- a) Songs for the youngest children, intended for preschoolers and possibly first grade pupils, characterised by clearly-emphasised didactic strategies. Within this tradition of simple, careful, pedagogically-conceived monophonic songs, we find works by Vida Jeraj, Janez Bitenc, Janez Kuhar, and Mira Voglar.
- b) Songs for primary school children arranged by levels of difficulty and by grade, such as the songbooks *Zapojmo* by Slavko Mihelčič, Grbec's *Pesmarica*, and the Carinthian (Celovec/Klagenfurt) collection *Mladina poje*.
- c) Collections of regional songbooks, presenting multi-part choral settings from different Slovenian regions.
- d) Youth songs from the Liberation Front (OF) and partisan songs.
- e) Folk songs, as represented in the *Slovenska pesmarica*.

An analysis of the songbooks reveals an increased interest in materials for preschool children and a marked lack of songbooks for the upper grades of primary school. The works that most closely meet the needs of these higher grades are Grbec's *Pesmarica za osnovne, nižje srednje in strokovne šole* (1954) and *Mladina poje* (1959). In addition to songs arranged by grade and level of difficulty, Grbec's songbook includes an overview of the fundamentals of music theory, musical texture, and conducting, and it demonstrates a clear awareness of Kumar's legacy. *Mladina poje* was originally intended for bilingual schools in Austria and contains primarily folk songs, organised accord-

ing to their tonal range. A year later, a revised Slovene edition was published, while the second volume (1964) added canons as well as patriotic and partisan songs.

Grbec's songbook emerged from an environment with a strong choir tradition, whereas the Klagenfurt collection was developed with the aim of preserving Slovene song in postwar schools. Patriotic and battle songs had been firmly embedded in earlier songbooks, so their presence after the war is not surprising. The collections published immediately after 1945 reflect the legacy of the Partisan school system, while those from the 1960s primarily address the need for music suitable for school celebrations on state holidays. The shortage of appropriate material was also emphasised by Pavle Kalan in *Grlica* in 1960.²⁴ Nevertheless, patriotic and partisan content in most songbooks is not prominent enough to suggest a deliberate politicisation of youth music.

The *Drobne pesmi* volumes, intended for teacher training colleges (Pirnik in Gorica, Kalan in Ljubljana), contain folk and original songs in one, two, or three parts, and depart from older models of multipart writing. *Pevska vadenica*, compiled by Kramolc and Tomc (1949), was based on a pre-war textbook but introduced a new organisation and selection of songs, thereby constituting a new publication; its structural design significantly influenced the later songbook *Prek sveta odmeva pesem*.

A less successful attempt is Prek's *Zapojmo s kitaro*, which offered practical support for teaching through its instrumental accompaniment, but was criticised by Kramolc for its abundance of foreign songs and imprecise attributions of folk material.²⁵ Prek would likely have avoided these shortcomings had the third volume of the *Slovenska pesmarica* (1969) already been available – this was the first scientifically-grounded edition of Slovenian folk repertory. Although not explicitly intended for schools, it enabled a more informed performance of folk music in educational settings, while Zmaga Kumer's introduction contributed to a more rigorous scholarly understanding of folk song, which had previously often been oversimplified.

The long-anticipated songbook for primary schools was published in 1972, although it had already been approved as a textbook for the 4th–8th grades by the Republican Secretariat for Education and Culture on 10 March 1971.

²⁴ Pavle Kalan, "Kakšnih pesmi nam manjka", *Grlica*, 1, 1960, 7–9.

²⁵ Luka Kramolc, "Stanko Prek, *Pesmarica za višje razrede osnovnih šol osnovnih šol. S sodelovanjem Janje Korošec uredil in priredil* – Ljubljana 1968", *Traditiones*, 1, 1973, 272.

Prek sveta odmeva pesem (*A Song Resounds Across the World*), comprising 536 pages, became by far the most extensive Slovenian songbook to date and was therefore printed in two volumes for technical reasons. The first volume contains folk songs – organised into songs from Slovenian regions, from other Yugoslav nations and nationalities, and from foreign traditions. The second volume consists of art songs (by Slovenian and other Yugoslav and foreign composers) as well as battle and revolutionary songs from Slovenia, other Yugoslav nations, and international composers.

Although the songbook is the work of Miro Kokol, Jakob Jež emphasised that “the compiled material underwent expert review and assessment to an extent unprecedented in the past, as distinguished composers and pedagogues were consulted.” The reviewers included Makso Pirnik and Pavel Šivic, while the expert committee consisted of Pavle Kalan, Uroš Krek, and Alojz Srebotnjak; Zmaga Kumer contributed specialised advice on Slovenian folk songs.

The songbook contains both monophonic and two-part songs, the latter taking the form either of canons or of settings for two independent voices. Kokol deliberately avoided parallel-third or parallel-sixth textures, arguing that such two-part writing represents “the simplest form of folk polyphony, which is improvised spontaneously and therefore should not be prescribed”. At the same time, he added notes wherever a folk third or sixth could be introduced, thereby encouraging improvised folk-style two-part singing in the school environment, as he believed that polyphonic singing brings children genuine enjoyment. Although officially classified as a textbook, Kokol departed from the established practice of earlier songbooks by refraining from assigning songs to specific grade levels.

Viewed from a broader historical perspective, and taking into account the long trajectory that preceded it, the songbook reflects contemporary scholarly insights into the transcription and interpretation of Slovenian folk music; it provided schools with a carefully-selected repertoire for state holiday celebrations, while simultaneously resonating with the increasingly cosmopolitan spirit of the period. It undoubtedly fulfilled its mission: through its substantial and thoughtfully curated corpus of Slovenian folk songs, it succeeded in preserving the foundational aim of earlier songbooks – capturing the spirit of the nation in song.

By Way of Conclusion

The historical trajectory of Slovenian songbooks for children and young people demonstrates that these publications consistently functioned as much more than pedagogical tools – they were key cultural artefacts through which aesthetic values, educational norms, and collective identities were shaped. Although political frameworks shifted – from the Habsburg Monarchy to the interwar Yugoslav state, and finally to socialist Slovenia – the role of the songbook as a mediator between schooling, musical culture, and notions of belonging remained remarkably stable. The emergence of *Prek sveta odmeva pesem* in 1972 can thus be understood not as an isolated achievement but as the culmination of long-standing editorial, pedagogical, and musical traditions.

The songbook's enduring relevance is tied to its breadth, internal coherence, and its grounding in contemporary scholarly approaches to folk music transcription and music education. Its approval as a textbook undoubtedly strengthened its institutional authority, yet its real significance lies in the way it synthesised diverse musical repertoires and provided a usable, culturally-resonant framework for primary school singing. Precisely because songbooks stand at the intersection of music, pedagogy, and cultural policy, they open important avenues for further inquiry.

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Summary

This article approaches Slovenian children's and youth songbooks as culturally-embedded artefacts that operate at the intersection of music pedagogy, cultural policy, and the material culture of schooling. Rather than treating songbooks as neutral didactic tools, the study situates them within broader processes through which educational systems articulate ideological aims, aesthetic values, and models of collective identity. In this sense, songbooks function as mediating objects: they transmit curricular priorities, reflect pedagogical norms, and embody tensions between continuity and reform.

The analysis begins with the post-1945 curricular landscape, which – despite profound political and ideological changes – reveals marked continuities with earlier

educational traditions. Until 1958, the subject of music remained officially designated as *petje* (“singing”), echoing Austro-Hungarian and interwar practices that linked vocal instruction with foundational music theory. Although socialist Yugoslavia introduced numerous school reforms, curricula rarely prescribed specific songbooks. The notable exception is the Rationale for the Eight-Year School Curriculum (1959), which recommended a mixed repertoire: newly created postwar collections (Kalan, Kramolc, Mihelčič–Potočnik) alongside older, prewar songbooks, in particular Pregelj’s *Nageljčki*. This co-existence indicates both the persistence of established pedagogical models and the recognition that no existing songbook fully met the demands of the reformed school system.

A parallel survey of published songbooks reveals similar patterns. The most intense period of production – late 1940s to 1960s – coincides with structural changes in primary education and the increasing professionalisation of music pedagogy. Yet many collections continue to rely on long-standing principles, especially the centrality of folk song as foundational musical and cultural material. Songbooks for upper primary grades remained scarce, and the repertory gap was filled only partially by regional anthologies, partisan-themed collections, and a limited number of more advanced pedagogical volumes.

Within this trajectory, *Prek sveta odmeva pesem* (1972) represents a pivotal culmination. Combining ethnomusicological rigor, expert review, and pedagogical functionality, it synthesises decades of songbook production and reflects the shifting expectations placed on music education. As such, the article argues that the study of songbooks offers a productive lens for examining how music, ideology, and schooling co-produce youth musical culture across changing historical contexts.