Between Tradition and Innovation: Transformations in Wind Music in the Slovácko Region since the Early 20th Century

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Abstract

In the Moravian region of Slovácko, wind music occupies a special position, which has been influenced by a number of factors. At the time of its introduction into the rural environment, bringing with it modern contemporary elements, the discourse of authenticity was beginning to grow stronger in the field of ethnographic science. A few decades later, this construct of originality and ancientness became a factor that paradoxically contributed to the development of wind bands in this environment. This study describes the complex relationships between traditional music and its performance and repertoire development in the context of the long-standing discourse of authenticity in Czech folklore studies and the so-called folklore revival movement.

Keywords

wind music, Moravian region of Slovácko, discourse of authenticity, repertoire, interpretation, countryside

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Musical development is not merely a random alternation of fashions that arrive and depart quickly, it is a process that co-creates the cultural atmosphere of the time and has its own specific logic and regularity. Musical creation responds to the mood and taste of a particular time and society, which directs and definitively accepts only that which corresponds to its needs (Dorůžka – Mácha 1964: 7). As part of these transformations in Czech musical culture, wind music in various forms – including military orchestras, dance bands and village wind bands – has been employed for over a century to disseminate this musical production and alter the musical preferences of common classes of society. This study attempts to reinterpret the role and function of wind music in the rural environment of the Slovácko region, where wind bands are still closely linked to local ethno-cultural traditions. The objective of this text is to describe the transformation of the repertoire and performance of wind instrumental ensembles and the factors that have influenced this process in selected localities in the Slovácko region.¹ It is based on ethnographic research and its methods, specifically, participant and non-participant observation, interviews with performers, listeners and users of wind music, analysis of music recordings, as well as the study of sources (photographs, musical notations) and literature.

One significant factor influencing the role and functioning of wind music in the rural environment of the Czech Republic is the discourse of authenticity, whose criteria of evaluation are still present in society and contribute significantly to the perception and evaluation of wind music in the Czech lands. The debate as to what society currently perceives as the traditional music of rural Slovácko is ongoing, and wind music remains a controversial topic, especially regarding whether it can be defined as folklore in the case of its connection to contemporary ethno-cultural traditions.² In this respect, the perspective of the person for whom the answer to this question is significant is also important. The Czech cultural historian Ondřej Daniel was intrigued by the ambiguity surrounding the value of rural wind music in relation to what is often referred to as traditional (folk) culture. In his study

¹ The article is based on the author's doctoral thesis entitled *Od ľudovej piesne k popmusic: moravská dychová hudba ako predmet výskumu premien hudobného vkusu* (From Folk Song to Pop Music: Moravian Wind Music as an Object of Research into the Transformations of Musical Taste), which was defended in June 2024 at the Institute of European Ethnology at Masaryk University in Brno.

² In the context of Czech and Slovak folkloristics (as well as other Central European countries), the term *folklore* refers to musical, verbal, dance and dramatic expressions of culture that depend on tradition and are strongly intertwined with the way of life, customs and thinking of the rural peasant population, as well as urban folk (Tyllner 2007: 219).

of pop music in Austria and the Czech Republic, he noted that although the popularity of wind music is usually associated with the less educated older generation, it is often performed by young or middle-aged people who often have a high level of musical education, such as members of symphony orchestras (Daniel 2023: 169). Daniel builds on the sociological research conducted at the turn of the millennium by the Czech musicologist Mikuláš Bek (2003), who posited that audiences gradually develop the appreciation for the production of music bands. Daniel then states that the reasons for the popularity of wind music "can be seen in generational nostalgia, which is one of the grounds for criticism of it by younger and more cosmopolitan listeners" (Daniel 2023: 172). Texts on wind music and its functioning in the Czech Republic often only develop stereotypes (wind music is for old people, it lacks sufficient aesthetic value)³ and lack extensive research based primarily on long-term observation of audiences and users. It is as if many experts have overlooked the fact that music has more than just an aesthetic function. I therefore dedicated my research to analysing the conditions in which rural wind bands have evolved in the Slovácko region.

Wind music in the Slovácko region

Wind music in the Moravian countryside used to work in a specific way, and in some regions it still does. Up until the nineteenth century, wind music was primarily played in the army and later in the urban environment and the club life associated with it. It is impossible to determine exactly when wind music spread to the Moravian countryside and became part of its traditional culture. The clarinet was the first to join rural instrumental ensembles, followed later by the baritone and tenor horn, the helicon, and the French horn (Kapusta 1974: 26). The more pronounced emergence of these instruments commenced in the second half of the nineteenth century, after the fall of the political regime known as Bach absolutism,⁴ which suppressed manifestations of nationality in what was then the Austrian Empire. At that time wind music became one of the pillars of Czech national musical life. From the 1860s onwards, it spread mainly in the form of civilian wind bands in towns (Kapusta 1974: 26).

³ See, e.g., Janda 1972: 25-26; Bek 2003: 107; Klimeš - Greš - Novák 2023.

⁴ The Austrian Empire's form of government, established following the suppressed revolutions of 1848 and 1849, was characterised by the expansion of the secret police and informing, and the Germanisation of all Czech matters. This period, which was named after the Austrian Minister of the Interior, Alexander Bach, was marked by an atmosphere of fear and repression. Bach's absolutism ended in 1859.

Musicians who had returned from military bands or wind bands in towns joined local ensembles in the countryside, performing traditional local music with a predominantly string instrumentation. In addition to their long experience of playing in large instrumental ensembles, these musicians also brought with them a new repertoire of urban origin. Wind orchestras were more fashionable than traditional village instrumental ensembles, and their musicians were better paid. The contemporary term "noble music" is evidence that wind music was perceived as a qualitatively different musical production in the nineteenth century (Šálek 1965: 28).

A specific situation developed in the Moravian ethnographic region of Slovácko, where bands with purely wind instrumentation gradually emancipated themselves, and in the course of the twentieth century wind music there acquired a special significance. Wind ensembles became central instrumental groupings that performed local folk songs and dances that were closely linked to calendar customs and family ceremonies. In contrast to other Moravian regions (Wallachia or the ethnographic area of Haná), where wind bands were mainly dance, entertainment and concert ensembles, in the Slovácko region they became representatives of the local musical tradition. The Czech musicologist Dušan Holý described the consequence of the popularity of wind bands and their expansion in rural areas as a "dismantling of the traditional home repertoire" (Holý 1962: 147). The Czech musicologist Karel Vetterl commented on this situation in the region of Kyjov Dolňácko (the Kyjov area) in similar terms:

"The boom in wind bands has been supported by the transformations in village social life in recent decades, the building of new pubs with larger halls for social entertainment, in which small cimbalom bands, more austere in their sound, lost their effect. The repertoire of wind bands was also attractive, with fashionable pieces slowly but inexorably eroding the traditional village repertoire." (Vetterl – Bimková 1970: 232)

These negative assessments were based on the context of the prevailing discourse of authenticity in Czech ethnomusicology at the time. It was this construct of authenticity that, on the one hand, strongly influenced the perception of rural wind bands among common social classes and, on the other, paradoxically ensured their natural development.

⁵ The quotation relates to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Wind bands or *Streichs*⁶ mainly played at dance parties, and the rural occasions for performing were associated with social life reflecting traditional customs, habits, and ceremonies (weddings, kermesses, carnival processions, and some church ceremonies) as well as various other events (balls, trips, state ceremonies, etc.). In terms of acoustics, brass instruments were able to play to a larger number of people (in larger rooms and outdoors). Under the influence of the urban environment, funerals became a new occasion for playing. The repertoire was taken from the civilian bands of societies, one of whose tasks was to bid farewell to members of the society (Kapusta 1974: 51).

The discourse of authenticity, wind music and Czech folkloristics

Etymologically, the term "authentic" means original, genuine, or believable. In his essay *The Authenticity Hoax* (2010), the Canadian academic Andrew Potter, who focusses on research into pop culture and consumerism, writes that "authenticity is a contrastive term" and "is something people definitely want. That is, when something is described as 'authentic', what is invariably meant is that it is a Good Thing" (Potter 2010: 6). The American cultural anthropologist Richard Handler sees authenticity as a cultural construct of the modern Western world. In his article simply titled *Authenticity* he states:

"I take 'authenticity' to be a cultural construct of the modern Western world. That it has been a central, though implicit, idea in much anthropological enquiry and is a function of a Western ontology rather than of anything in non-Western cultures we study. Our search for authentic cultural experience – for the unspoiled, pristine, genuine, untouched and traditional – says more about us than about others." (Handler 1986: 2)

In her monograph *In Search of Authenticity*, subtitled *The Formation of Folklore Studies* (1997), the ethnologist Regina Bendix identifies the various motivations for the construction of authenticity. According to Bendix, the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) was one of the pioneers of the concept of authenticity in the European environment.

⁶ A *Streich* (or, in Czech spelling, *štrajch*) is a music band usually consisting of five to ten members, combining wind and string instruments (violins, violas, clarinets, flutes, double basses, trumpets, and flugelhorns). In the Slovácko region, they performed in two variants – either as bands with wind and string instruments or as groups that changed to wind or string instruments as required (Kurfürst 2002: 765).

He perceived authenticity in the context of the people, a group of lowerclass rural inhabitants who were considered to be the bearers of the spirit of the nation. This social class was identified as the bearer of the essence and, in the contemporary context, was seen as a necessary resource for the betterment of society. Herder saw this as a way of demonstrating national originality and cohesion (Bendix 1997: 27–44).

Additionally, within the Czech context, nationalism during the period of the so-called national revival (the national movement from approximately the late eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century) was interwoven with folklore through these ideas, which thus acquired new functions that were subsequently employed by the cultural policy of the newly established Czechoslovak Republic in the construction of the concept of the Czechoslovak nation (Pavlicová 2015) and by the Communist regime that ruled the country in the period between 1948 and 1989 (Stavělová et al. 2021 and others).

In the context of the rise of Marxist-Leninist ideology, whose key concept was the people (or the working people)⁷, after 1948 folk culture thus became a "natural" symbol of the culture of this working people, a symbol that had to be supported and developed (Pavlicová – Uhlíková 2023a: 186). Contemporary texts speak of the formation of a new society, a new human being, who would require a new culture. However, this new person could not come from a vacuum – he was to be brought up. Folklore became the domain of new, mass established folk ensembles, whose main task was that of political agitation (Pavlicová – Uhlíková 2013; 2023a). The repertoire of these folk ensembles was supposed to continue folk traditions, not conserve or safeguard them, but rather develop them; the repertoire was designed to reflect contemporary events in society as well as the transformation of rural communities (Uhlíková 2018b: 60).

"If the countryside itself was considered, almost unequivocally, a place of refuge from the pressures of the totalitarian state, the musical products of those country people – what has been called folk song and folk music until recent deconstructions – had a richly ambiguous role in Czech society under communism." (Beckerman 1996: 38)

⁷ The concept of power based on *the people* is here contrasted with the concept of power vested in the privileged classes of the population, in which the legitimacy of the government is not based on the will of the people (the people are in fact synonymous with the concept of the citizen). In Marxist-Leninist political doctrine, the definition of the people is specific in that the political system is based on a group of "working people" within the state ideology (see Maříková [n. d.]). It was the culture of the rural peasantry (especially folklore) that was perceived as a national symbol from the nineteenth century onwards and was contrasted by communist ideologues with so-called decadent urban bourgeois (capitalist) culture.

As the aforementioned Regina Bendix demonstrated, centuries ago folklorists transformed authenticity into the anonymity of entire social groups or individuals:

"Lack of identifiable authorship, multiple existence over time and space, variation of the items, and the social and economic circumstances of the 'bearers of tradition' served, instead, as ways of testing folklore's authenticity. Once individual performers or makers of artifacts entered the discussion, the criterion of anonymity or nameless tradition began to unravel, and the problem of authenticity could have rendered itself obsolete. However, the vocabulary of authenticity that permeated disciplinary discourse escaped the paradigmatic changes." (Bendix 1997: 15)

The concept of anonymity has long been regarded as a defining feature of traditional folklore (its authenticity) and the fiction of anonymity – as the Czech ethnomusicologist Lubomír Tyllner calls this research problem – persisted well into the twentieth century, although German research in particular has shown anonymisation, popularisation and loss of authorial consciousness rather than anonymous origins (Tyllner 2010: 107).8

The discourse of authenticity, initially employed to support national self-consciousness and operating as an important methodological pillar for laying the foundations of folkloristic documentation and analysis, also resonated strongly in the South Moravian environment that I studied. Since the nineteenth century, folklore expressions of the rural population have constituted a significant resource for the formation of identity, despite their ties to a specific place and community, and they also serve as a conduit for connecting across time and space (Feinberg 2018: 22). The objective of folklorists and ethnologists was not only to study selected traditional expressions, but also to safeguard them. This academic discourse was strongly influenced by the aforementioned nationalism, which became even stronger after 1918 due to the construction of the new state (the Czechoslovak Republic) and its national culture. In the mid-1950s, this discourse was continued by the Communist Party's totalitarian cultural policy, which modified the discourse with special demands of folklore and its presentation. The generously supported and flourishing folklore revival movement became one of its forms (for more see Pavlicová – Uhlíková 2013; Uhlíková 2018a; Stavělová et al. 2021). With the help of academic researchers and personalities from the folklore revival movement, the discourse of authen-

⁸ As Lubomír Tyllner points out, the situation in individual European countries is not identical; in the Czech context, for example, we do not know the authors of most folk songs.

ticity reached the general public, who accepted the previously unknown term "folklore" in the sense defined by this discourse.

At the time when the construct of authenticity was beginning to be applied in Czech folkloristics, wind music began to enter the rural environment and, quite logically, became the object of criticism. Those who defended the more archaic layer of traditional rural culture (regardless of the extent to which it is a cultural construct) perceived it as a destroyer of traditional or authentic culture. They were focussed on recording and safeguarding older cultural expressions, in our case songs, dances and certain types of instrumental ensembles, which they believed were disappearing due to the influence of wind music. This view was reflected in the words of the Moravian dialectologist and collector of folk songs František Bartoš (1837–1906), who claimed:

"... instead of the sweet sounds of string instruments, the small village pub now thunders with the hellish tumult of helicons, trumpets and clarinets, and the dancers, who used to twirl round and round with natural grace and delightful lightness, now, with a cigar in their mouths, trudge and stagger with a heavy and clumsy step to modern tramplánky and mazurkas." (Bartoš 1879: 53)

In reality, however, the more archaic instrumental groupings (and their song and dance repertoire) were disappearing as a result of the loss of their role and changing taste. In other words, they were simply outdated for the local community, as they did not meet its changing demands.

The misunderstanding of the process of adaptation of the Slovácko rural environment to the new musical requirements persisted into the twentieth century. In this context, the criticism of the Czech folklorist and biologist Vladimír Úlehla (1888–1947), author of the publication Živá píseň (Living Song) (1949), that wind music was the destroyer of folk song was symptomatic (Úlehla 1949: 5, 149, 176, 190, 339). In his monograph, which provides a detailed study of folk music, song and dance in the town of Strážnice in the first half of the twentieth century, Úlehla posited that wind music was leading to "the irreversible extinction of fiddle music, an extinction so complete that authentic Slovácko wind bands from X. Y. now perform at various festivals, which is as contradictory as genuine wooden Venetian glass" (Úlehla 1949: 65).

Some radical defenders of so-called folklore authenticity rejected wind bands even at the time when staged folklore was beginning to develop

⁹ *Tramplánka or trampolka* was the local name for *třasák* – a polka-type dance for pairs of a jumping nature.

after the Second World War. In his publication on the Strážnice folklore festival, the ethnologist Josef Jančář quotes the opinion of the Presidium of the Ethnographic Section of the Provincial Council for Public Education in Brno on the draft programme of the second year of the Strážnice festival, prepared for 1947: "It is not possible to admit brass instruments as music at the festival." (Jančář 1995: 49) As the Czech ethnologist Lucie Uhlíková notes (2021: 354), this approach in fact meant a denial of the natural development of folk culture and a staged presentation of folk traditions "cleansed" of undesirable modernisation. This led to paradoxical situations, where, for example, the traditional Norek band from Hrubá Vrbka in the Horňácko region, which had been using two trumpets in its string line-up from the end of the nineteenth century, was rejected (Jančář 1995: 2). On the other hand, cimbalom bands with a large pedaloperated cimbalom of the Hungarian type, which only came to Moravia in connection with the development of folklorism in the first decades of the twentieth century (Uhlíková 2000; Schoříková 2004), were presented as authentic. However, its decisive spread was only related to the mass folklore revival movement that emerged in connection with the demands of the cultural policy of the Communist totalitarian regime in Czechoslovakia after 1948 (Uhlíková 2020; Pavlicová – Uhlíková 2023b: 27, 30-35). Consequently, cimbalom bands are perceived by Czech society as instrumental groups typical for the folk music of certain Moravian regions (see, e.g., Čevela 2020).

As a result of similar opinions, there was a battle for popularity between wind bands on the one hand, and supporters or members of the folklore revival movement (folk ensembles, folk circles and cimbalom bands), especially in the South Moravian countryside, which was, however, based on a time-bound academic construct of folklore and its "correct" form in the field of traditional music and dance expressions, often reconstructed on the basis of written sources or the memories of the oldest bearers of the tradition.

The Irish musical anthropologist Riny Schiller distinguishes two approaches to authenticity – the formalist and the positionality approaches (Schiller 2022: 36–37). The formalist approach focusses on the purity (correctness) of the performance style as perceived by the performers themselves, whereas the positionality approach evaluates a particular genre through an ideology that is widespread in various groups of society. In the case of Slovácko village wind bands, it is evident that their members and the audiences of their production interpret the "authenticity" of their repertoire from their own perspective and based on their preferences, while the folklorists – members of the folklore revival movement and other sup-

porters of so-called traditional folklore – reject wind bands as part of the rural folklore tradition.

The discourse of authenticity represents a distinct stream of thought within the framework of which the ethnographic/ethnological academic community long evaluated selected folklore expressions. ¹⁰ As a result, certain cultural phenomena – including rural wind music – were condemned to disinterest on the part of both researchers and the public interested in folk traditions. It was only slowly that they began to receive attention and be valued. On the other hand, the discourse of authenticity was one of the reasons why wind music in the Moravian countryside was able to develop spontaneously and become a truly authentic musical expression of the Slovácko countryside, linked on the one hand to (folk) tradition and on the other to the changing taste of society as a whole.

Changes in the repertoire and interpretation of Moravian wind bands from the early twentieth century to the present day

In the early twentieth century, folk musicians in the countryside were still called "naturists", i.e., musicians with no knowledge of music and mostly self-taught. However, it was necessary for musicians playing in wind bands to be able to read music. The modern repertoire of the time was distributed in printed form, and band leaders also made copies for themselves. The repertoire was primarily comprised of polkas, waltzes and marches, a supra-regional (national) repertoire that, in the opinion of numerous proponents of the archaic stratum of musical tradition, crowded out the original song repertoire. In Moravia there was no conscious effort to displace older traditional music ensembles, as could be inferred from the descriptions of many ethnographers, collectors and others interested in the musical folklore in the first half of the twentieth century. The reality was more complex, or rather the development of society brought about a change in both musical preferences and the conditions under which rural music bands operated. Organised bands used sheet music and brought a new repertoire to the countryside. It was in demand and in accordance with new musical preferences and the conditions of the time, and it reflected

¹⁰ In his treatise dealing mainly with contemporary popular music and its functioning, Lubomír Dorůžka writes: "At the end of the 1930s, a process begins that is the horror of the supporters of academic folksiness – electrification." (Dorůžka 1978: 54) Dorůžka thus reflects the exacerbated beliefs of the proponents of the discourse of authenticity, who considered many factors that improved the quality of life in the rural environment to be destructive to so-called traditional folk culture.

fashionable trends and constantly brought new and original compositions. Even so, in the Slovácko region the traditional local song repertoire was not marginalised. It was an integral part of traditional music and dance events (kermesses, carnivals, weddings), but when performed by wind ensembles it took on a new form that was accepted by the community and gradually became a new tradition – the long-drawn-out songs¹¹ were transformed into waltzes, and the songs associated with rotative folk dances in pairs (*vrtěná*, *skočná*, etc.) were interpreted as polkas. Sheet music with this type of repertoire is not available. It is likely that it did not exist, because the music was played by heart – as a local community repertoire that the musicians mastered perfectly because they often knew it from childhood. This adaptation of an older music layer and the association of wind music with local traditional dance events was mostly not reflected in the torrent of criticism of wind music production.¹²

Popular music was, and still is, an important source of repertoire for wind bands in rural areas. As the surviving sheet music archives of some wind bands show, these instrumental ensembles brought the music production of the time to the rural population, responding to the musical preferences of their audience at the time. We must reject the idea that rural wind bands were the primary cause of the decline of more archaic instrumental groupings, folk dances and songs, or even of the ability to sing in general. The cause can be attributed to the evolving musical and dance preferences of the population that responded to developments in the outside world, and to changes in people's economic and social position and cultural horizons.

Another unmistakable representative of modern production was the *lidovka*. The Czech musicologist Josef Kotek dates its emergence to the interwar 1920s and links it to the development of modern mass media. By means of radio broadcasts, gramophone records and cheap sheet music arrangements, this genre spread on a mass scale to all corners of the republic (Kotek 1998: 511). *Lidovka* included polkas, waltzes, marches, and, later, tangos, the sound of which was similar to that of folk songs and which represent one of the purest products of Czech musical culture. Kotek characterises *lidovka* as a conglomerate of easily accessible, widely popular and lyrically equipped compositions for marching, dancing and listening,

¹¹ Long-drawn-out songs (táhlé písně) are metro-rhythmically complex structured folk tunes characterized by parlando declamation with the prolongation of some notes, especially the initial or final (Holý 2007: 1042; Krekovičová [n.d.]).

¹² The complexity of this process in the Slovácko Kyjov area is comprehensively described by the Czech ethnomusicologist Karel Vetterl and the collector Milada Bimková (Vetterl – Bimková 1970).

but also for singing together, based on the professional re-stylisation of folk or semi-folk idioms (Kotek 1998: 97). This genre became immensely popular because it was comprehensible to everyone, as the melodies were written on the motifs of already well-known songs, and everyone could identify with the simple, sentimental lyrics – including the rural population, which demanded that this genre be performed by local wind bands. In the subsequent decades, *lidovka* received criticism from the community of experts. The criticism of the Czech musicologist Vladimír Karbusický from the 1960s was particularly significant: "In the music of our musical nation we have developed something which we all know only pretends to be folk music and is kitch (and the authors of *lidovka* compositions know this very well, too), but we tolerate it by force of habit." (Karbusický 1961: 903) *Lidovka* was a central part of the repertoire of wind bands because of its simplified melody and technical simplicity, which suited the general inflexibility of these bands (Karbusický 1961: 901).

The form of present-day wind music in the Moravian countryside was significantly influenced by the cultural policy after 1948 and the emergence of an organised platform, known as "people's artistic activities" which encompassed folk ensembles, wind and dance chamber orchestras, choirs, amateur theatre, dance groups, and other similar organisations. As Karbusický's comments on the inflexibility of the genre of wind music indicate, rural wind bands did not meet the required standards in terms of their quality. The prevailing sentimental *lidovka* repertoire of both town wind orchestras and rural bands was deemed incongruous with the image of the culture of the new socialist person. It was also criticised for its lack of progressiveness and the low level of interpretation (Bartoš 1956: 27–33).

While the forced collectivisation of the countryside disrupted local social ties and the previous way of life in the predominantly Catholic rural communities, it also brought with it more leisure time and the development of a cultural and social life that was both supported and controlled by the regime. In the rural environment, the most significant factor influencing the advancement of wind band interpretation was the systematic activity of music teachers, who taught their pupils on a range of music courses or directly in art schools (now primary art schools). There were numerous such teachers in Slovácko, the most prominent of whom were Josef Frýbort

¹³ The Soběslav Plan, promulgated by the then Minister of Culture Vladimír Kopecký, abolished the bandleader trade in 1950. "Decree No. 237 on the management of ensembles allowed only those musicians who were organised in local groups of folk musicians and whose ensembles were registered with the Central Musical and Artistic Office, which issued permits for the management of ensembles, to practise music as a sideline." (Šálek 1965: 214)

(1913–1998) in Kyjov, Pavel Janeček (1923–2002) in Hodonín and later Josef Ištvánek (b. 1944) in Šardice.

The late 1960s saw a change in the music production of Slovácko's rural wind bands. Young musicians who had completed music courses and had developed their playing technique were no longer satisfied with the simple pieces that constituted the older wind music repertoire and began to adapt them. Additionally, these young musicians initiated the formation of new bands. The first rural wind band of the new generation was established in Milotice in the Kyjov area in 1967 around the then twenty-year-old Antonín Pavluš (b. 1947). He himself had acquired his musical skills in the old way (outside the school system), as he had learnt to play the trumpet under the guidance of the Milotice wind band leader Bohumil Zbořil (1906-1997). From the mid-1960s onwards, Pavluš formed occasional wind bands with his contemporaries, many of whom had attended Frýbort's music courses or were dissatisfied with the way the bands of older generations played and functioned. In Frýbort's orchestra, they acquired the habit of rehearsing on a regular and responsible basis, and they observed that such practice brought progress. Older musicians rehearsed regularly only in exceptional cases; they usually only gathered for their public performances. However, it is not possible to describe their level of interpretation as low: for example, Zbořil's wind band in Milotice played a mostly local repertoire by ear, but often enough that its musical performances were of a good standard. 14 The generational difference was due to the musical environment in which the young musicians had grown up. In addition to live musical performances, they had access to radio and later television broadcasts as well as the opportunity to listen to gramophone recordings. Musical performances were improving in terms of playing technique, expanding in terms of genres, and becoming more accessible not only to audiences but also to composers and musicians. The new generation of musicians reflected these changes and wanted to incorporate them into their musical activities linked to local traditions.

This radical change was symbolised by Moravanka, a professional wind band from Brno, several of whose musicians came from the Slovácko countryside. At the end of 1971, the first recordings of arranged folk songs from Slovácko were made by Radio Brno, which heralded a radical change in wind music in Czechoslovakia and its meteoric rise in popularity. The folk songs were arranged by the then thirty-year-old trumpeter Jan Slabák

¹⁴ The musical film *Růže pro Moravanku* (A Rose for Moravanka) (1973, directed by Gustav Křivinka), in which Moravanka, Pavluš's band and Zbořil's wind band perform, shows an obviously different approach to interpretation by each band (see Křivinka 1973).

(b. 1941), a native of Kelčany near Kyjov, who, on the initiative of the music editor and musician Ladislav Kozderka (1913–1999), gathered a group of professional musicians and formed the Moravanka Wind Band, in which he became a soloist, band leader, arranger and composer. He had begun playing in a rural wind band in his home village and had learnt to play the trumpet at the art school in Kyjov. From there he moved to the Brno Conservatory and, at the age of nineteen, became a member of the Brno State Philharmonic Orchestra. Later, he studied at the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts, taking full advantage of all the opportunities offered by state-funded musical education.

For their radio recordings, Moravanka created a repertoire that was based on folk songs from Slabák's home Kyjov area. Their interpretation was characterised by excellent intonation and a faster tempo. Additionally, Slabák altered the instrumental configuration that was typical for melodyplaying instruments in wind bands, substituting flugelhorns with a broad and mellow sound with incisive trumpets. With regard to the accompanying instruments, he modified the preceding style of playing based on a simple chordal rhythmic accompaniment to the so-called swinging (with the accent placed on the weak beat), and the Moravanka interpretation began to be more varied in terms of melody and harmony. As a professional musician, Slabák was aware of the potential of each brass instrument, and thus he composed the instrumental line-up of the Moravanka band in such a way that it allowed for the fullest development of the harmonic sound. The clarinet playing was also developed, with a particular focus on its role as an ornamental instrument. Following this model, new generations of rural musicians began to arrange simple pieces from the older wind band repertoire.

The general public associates the Slovácko *lidovka* mainly with the repertoire of Moravanka. This professional (non-rural) band began with arrangements of folk songs from the Kyjov region, but the demand for their work was so great that it was necessary to find another repertoire that was reminiscent of the Slovácko folk songs in terms of melody and lyrics. Blahoslav Smišovský (1931–2011), ¹⁵ who spent most of his life in in Uherský Ostroh, became the renowned author of this music. He wrote lyrics and composed songs for Slovácko wind bands, which were gradually broadcast on the radio. In 1976, the Bojané Wind Band recorded his piece *Falešná frajárko*, which became immensely popular. Antonín Pavluš, the leader of the

¹⁵ Blahoslav Smišovský came from Dolní Cerekev (near Jihlava). He studied music education in Brno and then worked as a music teacher in Bzenec, Veselí nad Moravou and Uherský Ostroh, where he also resided. He arranged folk songs and wrote new compositions in their spirit for cimbalom and wind bands in the neighbouring areas (Pěnčík 1997: 109).

Mistříňanka band, remembers: "We performed the polka *Ty falešná frajárko*, arranged by František Kotásek, on a TV show and we thought it was a folk song. Lo and behold, it wasn't, and the author claimed his rights. It was Mr Blahoslav Smišovský." (Synek 2017: 95) The band started to cooperate with Smišovský and he contributed to their first albums (*V Mistříně na dolině*, 1980; *Ty falešná frajárko*, 1981).

In the 1980s, new authors from the environment of rural wind bands entered the Slovácko lidovka scene, the most prominent of whom played in Mistříňanka. Members of the band Zdeněk Gurský (b. 1954) and Miloslav Procházka (b. 1958) contributed to the 1982 album titled Pod Strážovským kopcem as arrangers of individual folk pieces. On the 1983 album titled Okolo Kyjova they were joined by the singer Zdeněk Baťka (b. 1960). The output of this new generation of musicians constituted a competitive challenge for Moravanka and also became extremely popular. In 1986 Mistříňanka released the album Melodie za volant, which included orchestral compositions by the aforementioned trumpeters Gurský and Procházka. The continually performed songs were no longer sufficient for musicians who were constantly improving their skills. As a result, original orchestral compositions began to appear as part of the Slovácko *lidovka* repertoire. ¹⁶ The precise musical technique of the Moravanka musicians and the difficulty of its orchestral compositions, although increasingly popular, clashed with interpretive skills of rural musicians. While Moravanka and Mistříňanka set the standard for technically proficient performance in accordance with musical notation, rural bands with amateur musicians were unable to match their level of proficiency and did not aspire to do so. Although the compositions were based on folk songs, they had lost their connection with occasions for performing in the countryside, which did not require such a technically proficient performance. In 1985, several musicians joined Vladimir Pfeffer (b. 1937) and left Moravanka to form a new band called Moravěnka (later renamed Brněnská Moravěnka to avoid confusion with Moravanka). These musicians wanted to play Slovácko lidovka, but not as precisely as Jan Slabák.¹⁷

Pfeffer devised a new concept that gave the musicians the space to present themselves in accordance with their individual preferences. Moravěnka experimented with the music during its performances, playing also with tempo, and the musicians extended notes, trying out different melodic ornaments. Their playing was relaxed, attractive to the listener and, above all,

¹⁶ Jan Slabák composed orchestral compositions for Moravanka as early as the

¹⁷ Some of those who left Moravanka were also motivated by personal reasons (see Graclík – Nekvapil 2023: 151–194).

closer to that of rural musicians. One member of Moravěnka at the beginning of its artistic activity was the trumpeter Bohumír Kameník (b. 1954), who arranged folk songs and composed new pieces for the ensemble. In 1990 he formed his own wind band called *Kameníkovi muzikanti* (Kameník's Musicians). It was a specific musical ensemble that interpreted his works (the lyrics were written by his wife, Jaroslava) and played with a high level of performance technique and also an exceptional interplay of musicians, who, like Moravěnka, had room to deviate from the musical notation while performing. They replaced the precise technique of interpretation, as demanded by Jan Slabák, with a freer style of playing, which afforded the musicians variations in the melodic line and in the rhythmic-harmonic accompaniment. However, despite this apparent freedom, the improvisation was not entirely unstructured; it was constrained by the rhythmic and harmonic understanding of the piece and required careful study of the musical work by all members of the band.

The popularity of the aforementioned bands undoubtedly contributed to the growing popularity of wind music among the general public, but above all to the emancipation of Slovácko *lidovka* as an independent musical genre. Wind bands began to abandon the repertoire of other genres of popular music and concentrated on their own compositions. Slovácko *lidovka*, as performed by Slovácko wind bands, strengthened the local identity of both the musicians and the audiences for this music, because these own works were based on the local or regional musical folklore traditions (which the musicians and singers also supported via their clothing – folk costumes or their stylized form). Thanks to these characteristics, the music also became very popular abroad as early as the 1980s. ¹⁸

The rural wind bands of the Slovácko region were constantly being joined by young musicians who had developed musical techniques and pushed the level of interpretation forward. The most prominent of these was Vlado Kumpán (b. 1972) from the Slovak village of Gbely, who, like many other musicians from the Slovak region of Záhorie, joined Slovácko wind bands to gain experience, as they had more opportunities to play than those on the Slovak side of the Morava river. In the 1990s, Kumpán played with the well-known bands Žadovjáci, Gloria, Moravěnka and Moravanka, which

¹⁸ This is evidenced by the discography of Moravanka, which already in the 1970s had begun to release recordings specifically intended for the foreign, namely German-speaking market, such as Bläserklänge aus Mähren (1977), Reiche Früchte, süsse Früchte (1982), Die größten Erfolge (1985), (Diskografie 2011), as well as by articles published in foreign journals, which the band leader Jan Slabák collected and which are available in his monograph Pan Moravanka (Mr Moravanka) (Graclík – Nekvapil 2023: 436–467).

also performed abroad. At that time, Kumpán was already a prominent soloist trumpet player, who was noticed by foreign audiences. In 1999 he recorded his first solo CD in Rajchman's studio under the title *Trompetenkönig* (Trumpet King) which was intended for the German market. Gradually he introduced his technical mastery to the interpretation of the Slovácko *lidovka* repertoire.



Figure 1 The Vlado Kumpán Wind Band at the BrnoBrassFest in July 2022. Photo taken by the author.

In 2001 he formed his own wind band called *Vlado Kumpán a jeho muzikanti* (Vlado Kumpán and his Musicians, also known as Kumpán's Musicians, and colloquially the Kumpáns; in German-speaking countries *Vlado Kumpan und seine Musikanten*) (Fig. 1). He set the trend for solo performances in high registers and at fast tempos, but this clashed with the limitations of the interpretative skills of most rural wind bands. He therefore began to tone down his interpretation and spread the playing among the other musicians in the band. The "high and fast" style, formerly based on the egoistic expression of an individual, was subsequently transformed into a new trend based on the principles of interpretation already established by Moravěnka in 1985.

Vlado Kumpán also gradually returned to this style of interpretation. On 4 January 2023, in a live radio show, 19 he described this interpretation thus: "We try to make our flugelhorns sing." This is a popular style of playing known as "mrdání" [oomph] (this slang term has no musical equivalent in standard language). The band strives together for a specific expression, called "mrd" (this slang term has no musical equivalent in standard language), which is not written down in musical notation, but is based on a shared feeling for a composition (typical for Moravěnka, Túfaranka and Legrúti). This tendency is also the reason why the interpretation of pieces performed by Slovácko wind bands today is calm and slower. It is based on excellent musical technique and a shared and deeply felt interpretation. However, as Moravian wind music is once again facing a shortage of musicians and there are only few bands that are coordinated in their playing, we still encounter interpretations based on the "high and fast" principle.



Figure 2 The Bílovčanka Wind Band in the Kermesse Procession in August 2022. Photo taken by the author.

¹⁹ The radio show "Czech Radio Brno's Evening with a Prominent Wind Music Person" was broadcast every month from 2022 to 2023.

In connection with today's interpretation, it is necessary to mention the growing number of musicians in Slovácko wind bands. Due to the fact that these ensembles perform very often and their repertoire is difficult, it is increasingly common to divide the interpretation among several players within one section, especially in the case of melodic flugelhorns (increasing the number from three to four) and accompanying instruments (increasing the number from two to three or four players). This trend is also motivated by the attempt to provide a more spectacular musical expression of the band. Since the formation of Moravěnka in the mid-1980s, the distinctive sound of the trombone has been gradually added to the section of accompanying instruments, appearing in Moravanka, Kameník's Musicians, and Zdeněk Gurský's Gloria; this trend was later followed by Túfaranka and Legrúti, and today the Miločanka wind band plays this way. Even Mistříňanka, which introduced two mellophones to its line-up, now includes two trombones.

New musical trends are also finding their way into the repertoire of Slovácko rural wind bands via social media. One example is the composition *Freaks* by the Australian music producer Timmy Trumpet. This piece has been performed by wind bands since 2014, and in the same year it went viral thanks to the video clip *When Mama Isn't Home*, in which a father plays the melody of the song on the trombone and his son accompanies him by slamming a steam oven door to the tune. Both wear sunglasses, which have become iconic for the interpretation of this composition. In 2015, *Freaks* was performed at the kermesse procession in the village of Tupesy by Roman Horáček's Slovácko Band and local young men dressed in folk costumes, who used a domestic waste container and a traffic sign for rhythmic accompaniment.²⁰

Conclusion

In the musical environment of the Czech Republic, wind music is associated with a specific controversy of opinions. This is based on the narratives of the discourse of authenticity on the one hand, and on musical preferences on the other. In this study, I have tried to describe the manner in which wind music has adapted to the aforementioned conditions in the rural environment of the Moravian sub-region of Slovácko. Already in the first half of the twentieth century we observe a process of emancipation of rural wind bands in the Moravian countryside, i.e., wind instrument ensembles with six to twelve members, specialising in the performance of

²⁰ The radio show "Czech Radio Brno's Evening with a Prominent Wind Music Person" was broadcast every month from 2022 to 2023.

contemporary repertoire (*lidovka*) and also popular music. Additionally, rural wind bands incorporated local musical folklore, including songs and instrumental pieces, into their repertoire, updating it in accordance with the preferences of the time. Wind bands played a significant role in the displacement of older instrumental groups as well as vocal and dance traditions. In Slovácko, wind music gradually became part of the local identity. It became a phenomenon precisely because of its multifaceted functional interweaving with the social life of the village (Turčanová 2021: 74) (Fig. 2).

This shift draws attention to the complex interrelationship between evolving musical and dance preferences and the safeguarding of selected elements of locally specific rural culture (so-called "traditional folk culture") that have been categorised as folklore by a particular, nationally oriented and conservative cohort of intellectuals, artists and ethnographers. In the mid-twentieth century, this view of folk traditions was perpetuated by the Communist Party's cultural policy, which modified it with its own specific requirements for folklore. The Slovácko wind bands did not align with the ideas of researchers-folklorists in relation to the "traditional folk music" of this region, nor did they meet the aesthetic criteria prescribed by the communist ideologues for "people's artistic activities". 21 Consequently, rural wind bands remained excluded from the mainstream of this mass platform, and their repertoire developed without significant external interferences and without any tendency to preserve archaic layers of folk music and stylise them for the stage (unlike folk ensembles and cimbalom bands). Paradoxically, their music production represents one of the few instances of cultural continuity amidst changing political circumstances and social norms.

The Communist regime in former Czechoslovakia affected not only the political, economic and social fabric of everyday life for the whole of society, it also left an indelible mark on cultural practices, including the field of local music education. Through a network of highly esteemed teachers and their pupils the position of wind music in Slovácko was reinforced. Close personal contacts, the transmission of musical skills within musicians' families, the connection of music productions with the cultural events in individual localities, and the strong tie to folk traditions, albeit residual and much transformed, all constituted a robust social capital that helped wind music to function in a society whose musical preferences were rapidly changing (Turčanová 2021: 85).

^{21 &}quot;People's artistic activities" was a Soviet-style mass base aimed at regime-controlled and directed creative activities of the so-called popular masses. It included amateur ensembles in the field of theatre (non-professional theatre groups), social (ballroom clubs) and folk dance (folk dance ensembles) and music of various genres. (Uhlíková 2018b: 58).

The study of wind music in the Moravian countryside thus presents a unique opportunity to explore the interplay between musical culture, local tradition and socio-political change. The wind bands of the Moravian countryside are not static relics of the bygone era, but dynamic entities responding to the demands of their audiences, who in the Slovácko countryside are still closely linked to the remnants of local folk tradition, as well as to the musical needs of musicians with developed musical technique and the development of popular music at a national and supranational level.

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