

## MUSIC AT WEDDINGS IN ZAGREB

This research is concerned with music at weddings in Zagreb and directs its interest primarily towards three predominant and defining aspects: the aspect of music labour (i.e. economically-driven music-making), the role of music at the wedding as a key ritual of transition, and the aspect of community dynamics (internal and towards other communities). It aims to provide an in-depth insight into the current prevailing musical practice connected to the weddings concerning the questions of differences in repertoire, music style and the factors affecting it (such as wedding venue), as well as the criteria for choosing the wedding band (or other type of ensemble, lately DJ-s), etc.

It appears that orientation to the Zagreb area could provide comprehensive insight into the latest and stylistically the most diverse wedding music practices. Namely, Zagreb as the capital and the largest city in Croatia, located in the northwest of the country, inhabits approximately a quarter of a total population of Croatia. Thus, the population of Zagreb urban agglomeration (Zagreb County) is slightly above 1.1 million inhabitants with its number continually growing, which seems suitable to provide a comprehensive insight into the various communities in an urban environment.

Music scholars have often directed their focus to the wedding customs and rituals as well as musical practices connected to the wedding traditions in Croatia, but mainly in a manner of overview. There are few relevant studies addressing this topic, the most recent being the ethnological study of Croatian wedding customs by Zorica Vitez (Vitez 2003). Based on the existing literature and her own ethnographic research, the author provides a comprehensive insight into the Croatian wedding customs, understanding the wedding primarily as a personal, the most important event in the life of an individual, but also as a family, cultural and social event. On the other hand, Croatian ethnomusicologists have only sporadically dealt with this topic, directing their focus primarily towards the vocal forms and music repertoire at the weddings in specific regional areas (Ceribašić 1991, 1993; Marošević 1986).

Wedding is almost universal social, cultural and ceremonial family event and at the same time its specific form is shaped and developed in very different ways within individual cultures, regions and ethno-national groups. This depends upon the significance and value placed on the wedding in each community, which in turn determines the general procedure of the wedding and its musical repertoire (Elscheková and Fujie 1997:31). Weddings have always been complex events formed around the ritual of transition. The most recent wedding traditions in Zagreb area manifest this rituality in a variety of ways and through different channels, while it is possible to notice that the prevailing practice is characterized by compressing the ritual events resulting in the reduction of customary and ritual moments. Furthermore, due to the influence of mass media, many couples (primarily brides) want a perfect wedding according to media models and they are ready to pay a great amount of money (even to indebt themselves) to achieve that. This is why weddings have more than ever become the most important events on the market of photography, music, halls, flowers, etc., which makes it impossible to observe any of its aspects separated from the context of

economy, but also a threat to the culture bringing about tendencies of commercialisation. In addition, it is important to mention that, considering the reduced music market after the breakup of Yugoslavia, weddings became an important market niche for some of the established musicians from the popular music domain.

The wedding is a condensed picture of culture, the relationship between traditional and contemporary values and the ways of forming and confirming identities. It is usually consisted of two parts: ceremonial and celebratory (Ceribašić 1993). First, ceremonial part includes optional registration of marriage and the church ceremony which can take place separately, before or after the wedding being rather an act of confirmation and consecration of the marriage (Rüütel 2002). The other, celebratory part usually follows, and often prolongs until early morning. Here music plays a big part: different kinds of music ensembles are initiators of actions and events during the celebration. Thus, while organizing a wedding event, couples pay a lot of attention to choosing a music ensemble. Lately the DJ-s are more and more hired, but usually that is a popular music band. In this context my interest is directed towards the prevailing structures of the bands addressing above all the questions of hierarchy and gender inequality (Buscatto 2007), but also their connectedness to the engagement process and style of music played (i.e., music genre). Also, the questions of motivation and emotion (primarily affection) in music-making will be thoroughly considered. The external factors of motivation, such as financial profit, are often accentuated and as a consequence we have witnessed a professionalization of wedding bands. In this context, the aspect of music labour arises: since the music market is fairly comparable to some dominant areas and is legally poorly regulated, we are witnessing a whole spectrum of ways the musicians are working, primarily in a precarious and honorary mode. To clearly outline the current trends in hiring musicians for the weddings, the emphasis will be put on mechanisms of converting music into money, i.e. music considered as a commodity in the context of economy and market. Observing musicians through the prism of their professional life will seek to provide a detailed insight into the ways and conditions in which they live and work, as well as some of the main factors influencing them (for example, lack of sleep due to playing at a wedding all night). Related to this economic aspect, I will investigate relationship between the professionalism and amateurism among the musicians involved in the wedding music activities.

I will attempt to approach the subject of music at weddings from the holistic point of view to enable understanding of music and its role in different contexts within culture focusing on individuals, social relationships and music as a social practice and process. Thus, the above mentioned aspects of the musical practices will also be studied considering different modalities of collective experience, primarily music's generative role in social processes. Since music is a primary way of articulating the collective identities that are fundamental to forming and sustaining social groups, attention to the concept of communities and community dynamics (i.e., music's role in community formation) will provide an opportunity to explore musical transmission and performance as an integral part of processes and ways in which the new collectivities arise, as well as the varying manners in which they seek to affirm common causes or to articulate deeply felt differences (Kaufman Shelemay 2011:379).

In order to provide a framework for defining and understanding the role of musicians and characteristics of music they make, perform and consume in a specific local and ritual-ceremonial context while shaping their social relationships, besides available Croatian and foreign literature connected with this topic, this research will rely on primary sources: collected ethnographic data derived from observation and participation in wedding events and interviews with selected individuals (Cohen 1993). Such an approach to research will provide insight into the current wedding traditions in the context of its geographic positioning and defining factors, namely the musicians, the music repertoire, the spaces in which weddings are held, etc. Since weddings are rather private events, it will be necessary to reveal my role as a researcher to the participants. I will always participate in wedding events with a wedding couple's permission, and reveal my role to the members of music ensemble since I plan on interviewing some of them. Whenever necessary, I will announce my arrival to the owner or a business manager of a wedding hall, which will especially be the case while tracking the weddings in specific halls chosen by the criteria of different price range and diverse locality which would, as it seems, provide the most diverse insight.

Since this research is for above mentioned reasons localised in Zagreb, it adheres to the tradition of research "at home" conditioned by the shift in research paradigm in the 1990s (Cooley and Barz 2008:13; Cohen 1993:125). Wedding musicians are known for their social and physical mobility, so whenever necessary, my field research will be expanded to cover other neighbouring cities and towns following the routes of the researched musicians. Relying on well-known models of semi-structured, qualitative and in-depth interviews, the research will seek to include a representative selection of musicians considering some of the aspects that will during the research be shown as the defining ones. Particular attention will be given to covering all diversity in relation to the supposed cultural, economic and social capital (Bourdieu 1984). Thus, the selection of musicians whose wedding engagements I intend to follow and observe, will be based on criteria concerning the facets of music education, type of employment and type of ensemble regarding represented instruments, gender ratio, price and level of popularity (i. e., mass media exposure).

A large amount of fieldwork will be based right on following a few chosen bands on their wedding gigs as well as choosing a few wedding halls in which the weddings will be observed. In these two contexts I will observe performed music directing my focus primarily to music repertoire and its structure along with musical features. Important part of my research will be investigating the criteria by which the music for the wedding in different contexts is chosen, primarily regarding the style and musical genre, danceability (since the dance is integral part of wedding celebrations), affectivity, shaping of different kinds of identity and sometimes strongly accentuated ethnical/regional background. It is known that majority of the music repertoire constitutes popular, mass-mediated music, but considering the multidimensional and complex structure of the wedding which includes a large number of participants with different "roles", I presume that there is no single or unified music repertoire (Elscheková and Fujie 1997) as well as that it is largely defined by the concept of fun, i.e. entertainment.

Considering that the research envisaged in this project is based on fieldwork that involves a complex interaction with informants, it will be conducted in accordance with

relevant national and international regulations on ethics of research. At all stages of the implementation of this project, I will adhere to the highest ethical standards in the field of humanities and social sciences which are prescribed by appropriate associations and institutions at the national as well as international level. By acting within a clear ethical framework, the security, rights and dignity of all participants will be ensured involving, among other things, informing them about their role, the goals and scope of the research, the use of its results and its possible consequences (Slobin 1993).

The bulk of research based on interviews, participant observation and audio-visual documentation will provide rich primary sources, and in this way the collected data will be analysed and used as one of the main tools in shaping the framework for accessing key points for understanding all of the above mentioned aspects of wedding music.

### **Selected bibliography:**

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London, New York: Routledge.

Buscatto, Maria. 2007. "Women in Artistic Professions. An Emblematic Paradigm for Gender Studies". *Social Cohesion and Development* 2/1:69-77.

Ceribašić, Naila. 1991. "Svadbene obredne i običajne pjesme u Rakitovici (Slavonska Podravina)". *Narodna umjetnost* 28/1:87-141.

Ceribašić, Naila. 1993. "Glazbeni repertoar na svadbama u Slavonskoj Podravini (Istočna Hrvatska) prije i poslije političkih promjena u Hrvatskoj 1990. godine". *Arti musices* 24/2:223-28.

Cohen, Sara. 1993. "Ethnography and Popular Music Studies". *Popular Music* 12/2:123-138.

Cooley, Timothy J. and Gregory Barz. 2008. "Casting Shadows: Fieldwork is Dead! Long Live Fieldwork!: Introduction". In *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*. [second edition]. Gregory Barz and Timothy J. Cooley, ed. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 3-24.

Elscheková, Alica and Linda Fujie. 1997. "Functions and Transformational Processes of Central European Wedding Songs". *The World of Music* 39/3:31-50.

Grozdana Marošević. 1986. "Kontinuitet i promjene u glazbenom repertoaru u svadbenim običajima Karlovačkog Pokuplja". In: Zbornik od 31. kongres na Sojuzot na združenijata na folkloristite na Jugoslavia (1984, Radoviš). Skopje, 345-349.

Hesmondhalgh, David and Sarah Baker. 2008. *Creative labour: Media Work in Three Cultural Industries*. London, New York: Routledge.

Kaufman Shelemay, Kay. 2011. "Musical Communities: Rethinking the Collective in Music". *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64/2:349-390.

Rüütel, Ingrid. 2002. "Wedding Songs and Ceremonies of the Kihnu Island in Estonia". *The World of Music* 44/3:131-151.

Slobin, Mark. 1993. "Ethical Issues". In *Ethnomusicology: An Introduction*. Helen Myers, ed. New York: Norton, 329-336.

Vitez, Zorica. 2003. *Hrvatski svadbeni običaji*. Zagreb: Golden marketing – Tehnička knjiga.