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Music as a means of statecraft: the example of ceremonial sessions of the National Assembly

Glasba kot element državištva: primer slavnostnih sej Državnega zbora

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IZVLEČEK

Članek analizira položaj in funkcije glasbe na slavnostnih sejah Državnega zbora Republike Slovenije. Avtor v članku ugotovi sledeče: (a) slavnostne seje Državnega zbora vedno vključujejo glasbene točke; (b) glasba na slavnostnih sejah je namenjena predvsem podpiranju slovesnosti, ni pa pomembna njena estetska funkcija; (c) v Državnem zboru obstaja posvetovalno telo predsednika Državnega zbora, ki 'izbira' glasbene izvajalce, izbor glasbe pa je prepuščen potem izvajalcem. Na podlagi povedanega avtor zaključí, da glasba na slavnostnih sejah Državnega zbora nima funkcije krepitev državištva, ampak se (z)oži v zabavno funkcijo.

ABSTRACT

The article analyses the role and position of music at ceremonial sessions of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia. It outlines three main findings: (a) ceremonial sessions of the National Assembly are largely accompanied by a musical programme; (b) music is used at ceremonial sessions of the National Assembly in some sort of supporting (cultural) role; (c) the group in charge of events, which is the chief advisor to the parliamentary speaker on the choice of music for ceremonial sessions, mainly chooses the performers, while the choice of programme is greatly left to the musicians themselves. Based on these findings, the article concludes that music is not used in the National Assembly as a means of strengthening statecraft, but above all in its function of entertainment.

Introduction

It is extremely hard to say something new about the role of music in everyday life, particularly if we try to conceptualise it using the ten functions¹ that – at least theoretically – set the framework of understanding and discussing music. However, if we wish to explore the relationship between music and statecraft (or its broader component, politics), we often encounter two facts that cannot be neglected. First, the examination of the relationship between music and statecraft is branded by some sort of inherent fear of sacrilege, as the subject of the relationship between music and statecraft/politics quickly brings out associations with Nazi Germany, where music was an important supporting pillar of the regime. But the second fact is even more troubling: most statesmen and politicians are unaware or not aware enough of the significance and power of music, that is the power that Cooke² describes as the power of emotions. Because political decision makers are unaware of this, they leave the choice of music to others, apolitical decision makers, who then decide on their own – of course within their own limitations – what music will be performed at a particular state ceremony, which is supposed to be intended above all for strengthening statecraft.

From all this, we can see that music has a great mobilising power, but it also has a high identification and identity potential. This raises questions whether political decision makers (a) realise the power of music, (b) wish to use this potential to increase their power, and (c) whether they are consistent in the use music for their political goals, meaning that music should always be chosen to reflect the statecraft messages that they or the state they rule project on the inside (for their citizens) and on the outside (for the international community).³ These three points set the framework for the discussion in this article.

However, this article does not wish to discuss the relationship between music and statecraft only theoretically, but also to test the findings in practice. To this end, we chose to analyse three past ceremonial sessions of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia: the session held on 23 June 2015 to mark Statehood Day, the session of 23 December 2015 marking Independence and Unity Day, and the session celebrating the 25th anniversary of the proclamation of independence / Statehood Day that was held on 24 June 2016. All three sessions are among the “most important” ceremonial sessions, since they were held to celebrate the two most important holidays related to Slovenia’s independence. This is also the main reason they were chosen for this analysis. The reason for choosing ceremonial sessions over state ceremonies⁴ was that the latter get more attention and are often (critically?) analysed, while ceremonial sessions of the National Assembly are rarely assessed or analysed. Considering that the National Assembly is the highest democratically and directly elected body, we think the choice of music here should also be strongly related to strengthening statecraft.

1 Alan P. Merriam, *Antropologija glasbe* (Ljubljana: Znanstveno in publicistično središče, 2000), 167.

2 Deryck Cooke, *The Language of Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), x.

3 The idea that music cannot be state-bordered is elaborated in Matjaž Barbo, “Referential contexts of early Slovenian symphonic music,” *Muzikološki zbornik* 49, 2 (2013): 33–39.

4 For an analysis of the role of music at state ceremonies, see Leon Stefanija, “Music and state ceremonies in Slovenia after 1991,” in *Music identities on paper and screen*, Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman, ed. (Belgrade: Faculty of Music, 2014), 341–347.

The article attempts to test the following two hypotheses:

- H1: Decisions about music at ceremonial sessions are not made by deputies or the speaker of the National Assembly, but rather by other National Assembly staff.
H2: The choice of music is made in line with the script for the event. The choice of musicians thus comes after an initial draft scenario.

If the first hypothesis is confirmed, this proves that political decision makers (within the framework of the National Assembly) do not see music as a means of strengthening statecraft and that only its function as entertainment is in focus. Similarly, the second hypothesis tests whether priority in planning ceremonial sessions is given to all other cultural aspects, and music is only an addition.

The research questions and hypotheses will be explored by analysing primary and secondary sources, and the conclusions will be supplemented with semi-structured in-depth interviews (with the National Assembly speaker and staff). The information from the interviews will be used to shed light on some of the issues that may not be accessible or evident in primary and secondary sources.

The article consists of two parts. The first part presents a theoretical framework for examining the relationship between statecraft and music, and the second part analyses the three selected ceremonial sessions. It closes with a discussion and a conclusion summarising the key findings, evaluating the hypotheses and outlining the directions of possible further research.

The theoretical framework: Music as a means of statecraft

The relationship between music and statecraft depends on the methodological approach to analysing this relationship. Udovič⁵ determines three methodological approaches relating music to statecraft. The first approach sees both activities as completely discrete, the second defines them as a dependent and independent variable, and the third – the most relevant one for this analysis – regards music as a tool for developing, practicing and strengthening statecraft. In this relationship, music is merely a tool used by political decision makers for reaching their political goals. Music itself has *no meaning* here, what is important are its functions⁶ or rather its use for achieving a particular result. However, to be able to determine how music can be used as a means of statecraft, we must first define statecraft.

One of the simplest definitions of statecraft is that it is the skilful management of state affairs⁷. It is therefore a process of political players affecting, through their actions, the forming, performing and functioning of state policy. Anderson⁸ expands this perspective, highlighting that the key to understanding the concept of statecraft is that political decision makers perform an activity that requires skills, techniques and appropriate

5 Boštjan Udovič, *Glasba in državništvo: metodološki pristopi* (Sečovelje: draft, 2016a).

6 Alan P. Merriam, *Antropologija glasbe* (Ljubljana: Znanstveno in publicistično središče, 2000).

7 *Oxfordov slovar angleškega jezika* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

8 Charles W. Anderson, *Statecraft: Introduction to Political Choice and Judgement* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1977), vii.

judgement, all of which leads to the desired goal (i.e. greater power). Anderson's definition was further developed by Baldwin⁹, who believes that the developing and management of statecraft is particularly important in foreign policy. This means that by practicing and strengthening statecraft political decision makers are sending messages to the domestic and foreign public. For the domestic public, statecraft is important for enhancing cohesion among citizens, while it is used on the outside to reaffirm a particular image of a particular country to improve its position in the international community. Statecraft is thus a sort of softened policy of prestige, which has developed through centuries and comes with a certain amount of inherent superiority,¹⁰ or sometimes even has a negative connotation. But unlike policy of prestige, statecraft carries a positive connotation. Instead of superiority, maybe even nationalism, it aims at patriotism, and the key to defining it is the state (not necessarily the nation!)¹¹, which today is the basis for entering international relations. As such, statecraft is defined by soft power¹².

And exactly here we can see another dividing line between statecraft and policy of prestige. While statecraft is based on soft power, policy of prestige combines both soft and hard power¹³. Since statecraft is a result of a positive approach to enhancing a country's reputation, it cannot be pursued using relational power or coercion (as in the case of policy of prestige; cf. Belgium's policies in Congo or similar examples), but rather through structural power or activities that create a favourable environment for improving one's reputation at home and in the international community.

The above indicates that statecraft is not set up and upheld through direct influence, but above all by shaping the environment in which a country functions. This means that the main source for strengthening statecraft is the ideology or the value system of the state and its citizens¹⁴. The more this value system corresponds with the value system of political decision makers, the greater the potential reach of statecraft. And vice-versa, the more the value system of the state and its citizens diverges from the value system of political decision makers, the lower their chances of strengthening their position. All of this highlights two crucial conditions for using music to strengthen statecraft: first, that political decision makers are aware of the potential of music for developing and strengthening statecraft; and second, that this awareness is accompanied by willingness for action, which means that political decision makers actually decide they wish to use music to develop and strengthen political statecraft. If any of the two elements is missing, the conditions will not be met for music to be used as a means of developing and strengthening political statecraft (see Figure 1).

9 David Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 8.

10 Examples can be seen in some of the names nations use for themselves, like the French *mission civilisatrice*, the English *empire on which the sun never sets*, the German *die Kultur*, the Croatian *Bog i Hrvati*, the Serbian *Nebeski narod*, etc.

11 Ludim L. Pedrosa, "The Joropo in Venezuela's Musical Modernity: Cultural Capital in Jose Clemente Laya's Sonata Venezolana," *Muzikološki zbornik* 52, 2 (2016): 55.

12 Joseph S. Nye, *Soft power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004); Joseph S. Nye, *The powers to lead* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Ana Bojinović Fenko, ed., *Mehka moč v zunanji politiki in mednarodnih odnosih: študije aktualnih primerov* (Ljubljana: Založba Fakultete za družbene vede, 2014); Anja Fabiani, *Mehka moč in voditeljstvo* (Ljubljana: Založba Fakultete za družbene vede, 2015).

13 David Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Gordon Craig and Alexander George, *Force and statecraft: diplomatic problems of our time* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

14 Karmen Salmić Kovačič, "Svobodi naproti Demetrija Žebreta v presečišču socialističnega realizma in zmernega modernizma," *Muzikološki zbornik* 50, 1 (2014): 43–45.

Figure 1: The relationship between music, awareness of its potency and its use. (Source: Based on Boštjan Udovič, *Glasba kot sredstvo državištva* (Sečovelje: Draft, 2016b).

The model presented above has one deficiency. It assumes that a conscious decision to use music as a means of political statecraft is enough for political decision makers to also achieve the desired effect that is development of statecraft and their positioning within it. But this assumption is inaccurate. To achieve the desired goals, one further step is needed, working proactively not only with awareness of the role of music but also by choosing music that can strengthen statecraft and the position of political decision makers within it. In other words, not every music is appropriate for pursuing and strengthening statecraft, and its applicability for this purpose depends on the social and political circumstances, as well as whether a particular music/song has an ideological stigma or not¹⁵.

Below, we take a look at three examples of music that would not be appropriate for pursuing and strengthening statecraft in Slovenia.

The song *Moja domovina* (My Homeland) was published in 1943 in a collection titled *Domovini* (To the Homeland). The lyrics are explicitly patriotic. However, because it came out in 1943 in this particular collection (along with four other (Home Guard) marching tunes), but especially because it was regularly sung by members of the Home Guard (anti-Partisan militia), it was considered a Home Guard anthem. In

15 Leon Stefanija, "La nationalité en musique: la 'Slovénité' de la musique slovène et son domaine," in *Création musicale et nationalismes dans le Sud-Est européen*, ed. Georges Kokkonis (Paris: Association Pierre Belon: De Boccard, 2007a); Jernej Weiss, "Tomčeva Stara pravda in spor s političnimi oblastmi," in *Radovan Gobec (1909–1995)*, ed. Darja Koter (Ljubljana: Akademija za glasbo, 2010a); Gregor Pompe, "Ideologija v glasbi in ideologija o glasbi," in *Ideologije v slovenskem jeziku, literaturi in kulturi: zbornik predavanj*, ed. Aleksander Bjelčević (Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete, 2012).

this context, the author of this article has been informed¹⁶ of an event from the late 1990s when a choir in the Primorska Region (W and SW Slovenia) rebelled against the conductor, who wanted them to sing this song at a local ceremony. The chorists refused to sing a song that would “glorify the collaborators of the occupier”. The song is informally still considered an “anthem of the Home Guard”. This means that using it at state ceremonies, even if the song itself bears no ideological content and is merely patriotic, would surely raise strong disapproval and would be considered ideological.¹⁷

*Example no. 1: Moja domovina.*¹⁸

On the occasion of Slovenia's public holiday Resistance Day (27 April) in 2013, the “Pinko Tomažič” Partisan Choir from Trieste staged a concert in the Stožice sports arena in Ljubljana. The choir sang songs of resistance and revolution, but the most controversial point was when the prime minister of the time, Alenka Bratušek, was caught on camera singing along with the song *Bandiera rossa* (Red Flag). Political adversaries reproached her with glorifying Communism by singing the song and straying away from the values of the European Union. Some media even inflated the story to the extent that the prime minister was said to have been called by Brussels to answer questions about the event. Which of course was not true.¹⁹ Nevertheless, we can conclude that this song would also bring out certain negative feelings with a particular group of Slovenian citizens, which makes it inappropriate for strengthening statecraft.

*Example no. 2: Bandiera rossa.*²⁰

¹⁶ More information about this can be obtained from the author.

¹⁷ It is also evident that the song is connected to the Slovenian political right from the fact that it is most often performed at ceremonies organised by the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS). A recent such example was a rally held in the square opposite from the parliament building in Ljubljana on 2 April 2016.

¹⁸ We can see that the post-WWII authorities had no real issue with the song *Moja domovina*, who quotes a letter by Pavle Kalan, the secretary of the Slovenian Composers Association, to the Commission for Recognition of Artist Status at the Council for Culture and Education, which says the following about Alojzij Mav (and the song *Moja domovina*): “We cannot give more specific information about the life and activities of Mav during the last war, and we think it would be best to leave this question to the relevant authorities. However, as far as we know, Mav was never an active member of the white guard. The song ‘*Moja domovina*’ was composed a few years before the war in Belgrade to Serbian lyrics, and this version is supposedly still being performed. During the war, Mav only added Slovenian lyrics, which – to our judgement – has no specific political or propaganda edge. As far as we know, members of the Home Guard would sing it in the streets, just as they sang many other, especially Slovenian folk songs. [...] Regarding the 5 songs in the collection *Domovini*, we could similarly say that – with the exception of only one [the song *Domobranci* – author’s note] – they do not carry any specific mark of a political agenda or propaganda [...] Nevertheless, we certainly cannot ignore the fact that the said collection emerged during the occupation, when all positive elements in our cultural circles kept silent [as part of a Communist resistance-ordered boycott of all cultural activity that started in December 1941 – author’s note], so the emergence of such collections cannot be condoned.” (Leon Stefanija, “Totalitarnost režima in glasba: iz arhiva Društva slovenskih skladateljev v petdesetih letih 20. stoletja,” in *Muzikološke razprave: in memoriam Danilo Pokorn*, ed. Nataša Cigoj Krstulović, ed. Tomaž Faganel, ed. Metoda Kokole (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC SAZU 2004), 142.

¹⁹ As is evident from the personal correspondence of the author with Alenka Bratušek’s public relations advisor Danaja Kek, available with the author.

²⁰ The song that is now known as *Bandiera rossa* or sometimes *Avanti popolo* was originally actually not a revolutionary song. The original text was drawn up in the 1870s and comes from the Italian republican movement. Before their march on Rome, Italian republicans used a red flag as their symbol for the unification of Italy. Hence the title *Bandiera rossa*, which means a red flag. Originally, the song glorified republicanism, which can also be seen from the lyrics: “*Avanti popolo con la riscossa, bandiera rossa, bandiera rossa, avanti popolo con la riscossa, bandiera rossa, bandiera rossa. Bandiera rossa la trionferà,*

Almost anyone who grew up in Slovenia knows the song *Tam, kjer murke cveto* (Where Nigritellas Blossom) by the Avsenik Brothers Ensemble (written by Ferdinand Souvan – Ferry), one of the most famous Slovenian Oberkrainer songs, which was played on the national radio almost every Sunday at lunch time up until the 1990s. However, only after Slovenia declared independence in 1991 did people start wondering more what was meant by one of the verses: “Ti dolina zelena, s krvjo prepojena, predraga” (You, my dearest green valley, soaked with blood). Some interpreted it as symbolism for those who died for freedom, others said it was about the civil war between the WWII Partisan resistance and the Home Guard militia. None of this has ever been formally confirmed. But despite the song’s continuing popularity, using it for the highest state ceremonies would stir divisions, and particularly it would not strengthen statecraft.

*Example no. 3: Tam, kjer murke cveto.*²¹

The selected examples show how many aspects can affect whether a particular song/music is appropriate for strengthening statecraft or not. Even if there is nothing “wrong” with all three presented songs themselves, their historical/ideological or text-based connotation means they would lead to divisions instead of unity (and strengthening statecraft). This makes them inappropriate for use at important state events/ceremonies.

The structure of ceremonial sessions of the National Assembly²²

Ceremonial sessions of the National Assembly have two particular characteristics: they are “less exposed” because they take place in the National Assembly (the grand

viva la repubblica, viva la repubblica, bandiera rossa la trionferà, viva la repubblica, la libertà.” The melody is a combination of two (humorous) folk love songs that were catchy and quickly merged to form a new song with new lyrics. The currently known lyrics of the song only came in 1908, when the lyrics to the two melodies were rewritten by Carlo Tuzzi. But the newer version of the lyrics was not used for long. Already with the outbreak of World War I, a new version of the lyrics to *Bandiera rossa* arose stressing that Italians would conquer all others. This “new” song, which started in Trieste and Trento, was taught in Milanese schools as soon as 1915. The lyrics went: “*Abbasso l’Austria e la Germania, e la Turchia in compagnia, abbasso i vili che fan la spia, in favore degli oppressor. Viva l’Italia e le cento città, Trento e Trieste si raggiungerà. L’eroico Belgio col nobil russo, frenato ha l’impeto di Barbarossa or tutto è sorto il mondo civile e Attila vile si schiaccerà. E tutto il mondo intero allor godrà l’amor, la pace e la libertà.*” After the war, Fascists sang their own lyrics to the melody of *Bandiera rossa* while marching on Rome: “*Avanti popolo alla riscossa, ai comunisti si rompe l’ossa.*” In the 1960s, neo-fascists used the following lyrics: “*Avanti popolo alla riscossa, dei comunisti vogliam le ossa, dei socialisti vogliam la pelle, per far salsicce e mortadelle.*” Another version came in the 1970s when it was sung by workers at a washing machine timer factory staging a strike against their director (Cesare Bermari, “La lunga storia di un inno popolare, di origine repubblicana e garibaldina,” accessed May 23, 2016, http://www.brianzapopolare.it/sezioni/cultura/20030515_bandiera_rossa_storia.htm).

21 The Avsenik Brothers Ensemble first performed the song in 1956. The locals of their home village Begunje believe the verse “*ti dolina zelena, s krvjo prepojena*” refers to the events that happened in this part of the Gorenjska Region during the German occupation in WWII. “*According to what has been published so far, Germans jailed and tortured Slovenian patriots in this [...] infamous prison [the Katzenstein castle – author’s note] and shot many of them as hostages in the nearby park and at the mouth of the Draga valley [...]. A total of 849 prisoners were killed, and six hostages were only sixteen years old.*” (Biserka Karneža Cerjak, “Zgodba o Avsenikovi pesmi Tam, kjer murke cveto,” *Reporter*, July 20, 2015, 47–49).

22 The main sources for this part of the analysis were interviews with Katarina Ratoša, the chief of staff of the National Assembly speaker, and the speaker’s undersecretary Ana Jesenko, and access to the scripts for ceremonial sessions in 2015 and 2016. The interviews were conducted on 28 May 2016.

hall) and are only televised on the parliamentary channel of the public broadcaster RTV Slovenia, while they are also greatly limited both in terms of duration and budget. The limited duration is a result of the fact that they are held one hour to one hour and a half before state ceremonies,²³ and the limited budget comes from the principle of doing the most with as little money as possible. On average, such a session costs (performers' fees, short buffet, etc.) between 1,000 EUR and 2,000 EUR.²⁴ As is evident already from the sums, ceremonial sessions are very economical. Ceremonial sessions usually follow the same framework.

The invited guests begin to assemble half an hour before the session. Seats in the hall are reserved for deputies, members of the European Parliament and the Government, while other invited guests get seats on the balcony.²⁵ Fifteen minutes before the start of the session, flagbearers enter the hall.²⁶ While deputies and invited guests assemble, the Supreme Court president, the Constitutional Court president, the president of the National Council, the prime minister and the president of the republic enter the National Assembly.²⁷ Both court presidents and president of the National Council are, in accordance with protocol, escorted into the hall, while the prime minister and the president of the republic are escorted to the office of the National Assembly speaker.²⁸ Two minutes before the ceremonial session starts, the seats for those presiding are taken by the deputy speakers of the National Assembly and the secretary general. A gong sound calls the invited guests to quiet down and take their seats. At the exact time of the start, the president, the speaker and the prime minister are accompanied into the hall by the state protocol service. The president and the prime minister take their seats next to the already seated presidents of the Constitutional and Supreme Court and the National Council, while the speaker takes his or her own regular chair and begins chairing the ceremonial session.

When the speaker of the National Assembly takes his or her place, the ceremony starts with (a) a salute by flagbearers and then the anthem of the Republic of Slovenia in June, or (b) the anthem of the Republic of Slovenia in December, in both cases without introduction. After the anthem,²⁹ the speaker of the National Assembly officially opens the ceremonial session, greets all the attendees³⁰ and invites the honorary

23 This means the ceremonial session can only last up to around 35 minutes, so that the attendees can also attend the state ceremony that follows.

24 In the past, ceremonial sessions had bigger budgets, but the 2008 economic crisis has also left a mark in this area.

25 The balcony has 106 seats, and some additional seats may be installed in the lobby of the balcony.

26 Flagbearers only attend the ceremonial session marking Statehood Day. They were first invited to attend a ceremonial session in June 2012.

27 They are seated in the front row of the hall on special seats, designed by architect Jože Plečnik, which are only put there for ceremonial sessions or other ceremonies, e.g. condolence sessions.

28 It is a common misconception that the priority line means the president comes first, then the prime minister and only then the speaker. This is false. According to the Slovenian Constitution and the rules of protocol, the line of protocol is as follows: president of the republic, National Assembly speaker, prime minister, National Council president, Constitutional Court president, Supreme Court president and former president(s) of the republic (Article 2 of the Decision laying down protocol rules; Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia 23/2012).

29 According to Article 20 of the Act Regulating the Coat-of-Arms, Flag and Anthem of the Republic of Slovenia and the Flag of the Slovene Nation, the anthem may be performed instrumentally, sung or both (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia 67/94).

30 Each speaker can decide on their own form of opening greetings, but the National Assembly speaker always greets the guests seated in the special chairs by naming them and others in a more general way.

speaker³¹ to address the session. The address is followed by a cultural programme, consisting of either only musical pieces or a combination of musical and literary/theatrical performances. After the cultural programme, the speaker of the National Assembly thanks the performers and the attendees. The ceremonial session is thereby concluded, and this is followed by a photo opportunity for the highest state figures in the lobby of the grand hall of the National Assembly.

Analysis of the cultural programmes of ceremonial sessions³²

As outlined in the introduction, this part of the article brings an analysis of the cultural programmes of three ceremonial sessions of the National Assembly on the occasions of: Statehood Day (24 June 2015), Independence and Unity Day (23 December 2015) and the 25th anniversary of the proclamation of independence / Statehood Day (24 June 2016).

At the ceremonial session in June 2015, the cultural programme consisted of two parts: the musical part and the theatrical and literary one. The musical part was provided by the Mixed Youth Choir Nauportus Musica³³ from Vrhnika, led by composer and conductor Jaka Jerina. The theatrical and literary part was prepared by 3rd year theatre students at the Ljubljana Secondary School for Preschool Education and Gymnasium, and their mentors Mojca Dimec and Barbara Žefran.³⁴ Apart from the national anthem, the choir Nauportus Musica performed the following two songs: *Da lipa ma ke bej na je*³⁵ and *Dajte, dajte*.³⁶

The cultural programme at the December 2015 ceremonial session only consisted of music. The National Assembly invited the RTV Slovenia Children's Choir.³⁷ After the national anthem, the choir, led by Anka Jazbec and accompanied on the piano by Klemen Golner, sang three more songs: *Kaj delajo palčki pozimi*,³⁸ *Vse naše pravljice*³⁹ and *Bratovščina sinjega galeba*.⁴⁰

This year's June ceremonial session was more festive than in the previous years, which can be attributed to the fact that Slovenia celebrated the 25th anniversary of its independence. Music had an exceptionally important position throughout the programme, starting with the arrival of guests, who entered the National Assembly

31 The honorary speaker can be the speaker or deputy speakers of the National Assembly. If the address is delivered by the speaker him or herself, there is of course no invitation to address the session, only an introduction.

32 The analysis is mostly based on interviews because the available minutes only state the decisions that were taken.

33 The choir Nauportus Musica is a young choir, established in 2014 on the initiative of Jaka Jerina. According to his own explanation, the choir brings together individuals with a desire to sing. It covers a diverse programme, from Slovenian folk songs, to artistic compositions and Negro spirituals.

34 The students performed a theatrical rendition of the poem *Stoli* (Chairs) by Ervin Fritz.

35 This is a Slovenian folk song from the valley of Resia, Italy, arranged by Ambrož Copi, the winner of this year's Prešeren Prize, the most prestigious award in culture in Slovenia.

36 *Dajte, dajte* is a Slovenian folk song from Istria that is heard very often on stages in Slovenia. The choir Nauportus Musica performed one of the most popular arrangements, by Aldo Kumar.

37 The children's choir of the national broadcaster RTV Slovenia was established in 1957 on the initiative of Janez Bitenc.

38 Composed by Tomaž Habe to a text by Neža Maurer.

39 Composed by Jani Golob to a text by Dušan Velkaverh.

40 Composed by Marijan Vodopivec to a text by Tone Pavček, and arranged by Patrik Greblo.

building to the tunes played by the Marching Band of the Ivan Kaučič Culture Association from Ljutomer. The orchestra was placed on the balcony of the grand salon, overlooking Republic Square (above the main gate of the parliament building). However, the orchestra did not only play at the arrival of guests to the National Assembly, but also performed two pieces in the hall before the official opening of the session, and they also played when the guests were leaving the National Assembly for Congress Square, where the state ceremony honouring the 25th anniversary of the proclamation of independence took place. But the marching band was not the only musical part of the ceremonial session.

For this year's ceremonial session, the National Assembly invited representatives of Slovenian associations in all four neighbouring countries.⁴¹ First, all the guest performers sang the national anthem together, conducted by Matjaž Barbo, after which each group presented its own programme. Pupils from the Slovenian music school in Trieste and the Emil Komel Slovenian Centre for Musical Education in Gorizia (Italy) performed the song *Mili kraj*.⁴² Members of the Raba Region Youth Association (Hungary) performed two folk songs on the accordion, *Micika v püngradi* and *Kauli stola*, and recited the poem *Pesem Porabju* (To the Raba Region). Members of the Triglav Culture Association from Split, Croatia, did not perform a musical piece, but a short scene from a fairy tale by Gianni Rodari *About a grandfather who could not tell fairy tales*. The Youth Choir JAMzi of the ICS ZMAJ Culture Association from Klagenfurt, Austria, conducted by Eduard Oraže, presented a "Medley of three valleys" in the dialects of the valleys Rož (Rosental), Zilja (Gailtal) and Podjuna (Jaunstein). The medley consisted of the songs *To ja naščir kann vi*, *Miedvad sə je tresu* and *V Plibərci, v jormaci*.

After the four performances, the speaker of the National Assembly, who also held the address at the session, invited the guests to the lobby of the grand hall for a photo opportunity and a buffet.

Above, we have seen that musicians of different profiles were invited to form the cultural programme, and the music they performed at the ceremonial sessions was also diverse. Apart from what has been said, an analysis of the three ceremonial sessions shows a certain absence of music that would serve state-building purposes and would speak to all citizens, or music that would serve as a basis for pursuing and strengthening statecraft. A review of the programmes of other events in the National Assembly (that are not part of this analysis)⁴³ also reveals that musicians of completely different profiles performed at these events, and that the musical genres also vary greatly. The only common feature of all the events in the National Assembly is that the performing musicians are mostly choirs.⁴⁴

41 According to the interviewees, a group of the National Assembly speaker's staff discussing the ceremonial session came up with an idea to invite younger representatives of the Slovenian minority from the four neighbouring countries (Austria, Croatia, Italy and Hungary). The idea was first brought before the event organisation group for approval and then presented to the speaker, who was thrilled with it. As he told the author of the article, he finds it very important symbolically to include Slovenians living abroad into the preparation of ceremonial sessions of the National Assembly.

42 A composition for high voices, flute, violin and cello, composed by Patrick Quaggiato to a text by Andrej Praprotnik.

43 E.g. ceremonies marking culture holidays, Reformation Day and International Women's Day, or exhibition openings accompanied by musical programmes.

44 An exception to this rule was, for example, the condolence session for France Bučar, the first National Assembly speaker, which featured a brass quintet of the Slovenian Police Orchestra. Interviewees explained that one of the reasons for the decision

Who decides on the music

The first question for the interviewees was who decides who to invite to perform at a ceremony. The interviewees explained that normally the speaker of the National Assembly was the one to decide on all events of protocol in the National Assembly. Nevertheless, the speaker is supported by a (working) Group for Events, which on average meets every two months to discuss all the requests for exhibitions and events. Here, the interviewees explained that the group only has a consultative role, and that the final decision is always taken by the speaker, while the implementation is up to the speaker's chief of staff.

With respect to performers at the ceremonial sessions, the interviewees explained that the National Assembly has certain limitations that need to be taken into account. The first such limitation is space. Ceremonial sessions take place in the grand hall of the National Assembly. Performers usually stand on the right side (from the perspective of the speaker). This area has enough space for around 30 people. The second limitation are the expenses. The National Assembly tries to be economical in organising its sessions and ceremonies. The third limitation is the question of acoustics. Internal documents of the National Assembly indicate that the question of acoustics limits the choice of musical performances the most. As audio-video technicians of the National Assembly stress,⁴⁵ it is “easiest” to hold a ceremonial session when the music is performed by singers / a choir, and harder (and more expensive) if the music is instrumental, also because of live television and radio transmissions.

The standard procedure of choosing music and musicians

The process of choosing who will perform starts with a list of possible “candidates”. The interviewees said that the National Assembly often receives proposals and suggestions for different musicians, while some are proposed by members of the expert group. All of these are listed as possible “candidates” for performing at ceremonial sessions. The event group then discusses the candidates. When they agree on a shortlist of potential candidates, they contact them to check if they are ready, available and able to perform under the limitations (explained above). Along with the talks on whether the group is ready to perform, the musical programme is also discussed. Here, the interviewees stressed that the only “limitation” for the programme is that the songs, if sung, must be in Slovenian.⁴⁶ According to the interviewees, this is because it would be inappropriate for the National Assembly as the highest democratically elected body to have songs performed in a foreign language. This is the only limitation with regard to the programme and is presented to all candidates in advance. Apart from the language

to mostly invite choirs and not soloists was that the speaker of the National Assembly had been criticised for poor soloist performances of the national anthem and that it should not have been performed by a soloist in the first place, etc. Moreover, soloist performances have proven to be problematic for live transmissions from ceremonial sessions due to audio and video limitations.

⁴⁵ The information comes from documents obtained from the office of the National Assembly speaker.

⁴⁶ It is due to acoustic conditions that ceremonial sessions have been accompanied mainly by vocal music for years.

limitation, there are, however, two additional informal recommendations. The first one is that the song/composition should be appropriate for a celebration and should thus have a “merry character” (rather than being a sad song), while the second one is that the song/composition should not be too long.⁴⁷ Musicians are meanwhile usually free to choose the musical genre and propose the songs/music they wish to perform.

At this point, I wished to see to what extent they were in fact free to choose. I reminded the interviewees of the *controversy* from June 2013 regarding the song *Očenaš hlapca Jerneja* (The Bailiff Yerney's Prayer).⁴⁸ The media wrote at the time that the “song choice was censored because they wanted a lighter genre”, and the conductor of the KGBL choir that performed at the session even said:⁴⁹

[As an artist, I] find it a bigger problem than the prayer or the servant [in the title] being unacceptable for the National Assembly that they expect from us a “lighter genre” at an important holiday to make their celebration more entertaining. It seems they cannot judge and recognise artistic value. They close the door to works that rank in the very top of choral music in terms of quality both with the text and the music. They push away content, the essence – here is where I see the problem in this rejection.

The interviewees stressed that there was no censorship, and that when the programme that the KGBL choir was to sing was presented they only suggested that the choir may want to choose a song that would be more suitable for the holiday, which is supposed to be a happy occasion. Furthermore, they pointed out that no one in the National Assembly ever denied the artistic value of the song, and that it was only a well-intended suggestion. One of the reasons for this suggestion was also that the National Assembly had been subject to criticism before that the songs performed at ceremonial sessions were too artistic and therefore “unlistenable” and inappropriate for such a ceremony.⁵⁰

Since the groups performing at the three analysed ceremonial sessions were different, the interviewees were asked whether there were any criteria when they choose adult performers, children or youth groups. The answer was that there is no special criterion, but they try to vary among different kinds of groups at different ceremonial sessions, so that the same type of group does not perform twice in a row. This practice

47 This is purely pragmatic, since the ceremonial session of the National Assembly is followed by a state ceremony to which all the attendees of the ceremonial session are also invited. Because the guests must be able to say goodbye and reach Congress Square (in June) or the Cankarjev dom culture and congress centre (in December) on time, the goal is for the ceremonial session of the National Assembly to be short enough not to delay the state ceremony.

48 Composed by Karol Pahor to a text by Ivan Cankar.

49 Ksenija Hočevar, “Oče naš hlapca Jerneja je ogledalo časa,” *Družina*, July 7, 2013, accessed June 26, 2016, <https://www.druzina.si/ICD/spletnastran.nsf/clanek/%C2%BBocenashlapca-jerneja-je-ogledalo-casa%C2%AB>.

50 This example clearly shows how problematic the relationship between the aesthetics of music and its functional use can be. If the most important factor is the aesthetics of music, it is clear that the performer should be completely free in the choice of programme or musical pieces to be performed. But on the other hand, if we consider that the use of music is intended for its function of entertainment or for validating a particular social and economic situation, then it is understandable that whoever orders the music will also have certain “rights” in its selection, and of course certain “duties” as well. Likewise, there are certain “rights” and “duties” for the performer, who must assume that already the invitation to perform expresses a certain level of respect and desire for a reciprocal relationship.

has formed through the years, since some criticism had also come about the same type of group being invited for two consecutive sessions (e.g. adult choirs or children's choirs). In this respect, I also asked them whether there was any preference for any particular type of choir (mixed, men's or women's). They quoted the technical staff in the audio-video department of the National Assembly saying that male voice choirs are most preferable with respect to acoustic aspects, followed by mixed choirs. Female voice choirs are rarely invited, especially because of the high pitch (in combination with the acoustics in the hall), since their performance would not sound as good on TV as in real life – due to no fault of theirs, but because of structural limitations. And this would be unjust to them.

When asked who makes the final decision on the programme that is performed at ceremonial sessions, the interviewees said it was the speaker or the speaker's office with his or her consent. No decision is taken without the approval of the speaker, who can also change any proposal made by the event group, since the purpose of all proposals is only to serve as a basis to help the speaker decide and only gain legitimacy if he or she decides so. Nevertheless, the interviewees explained that it has not happened recently that the speaker would change, wish to change or argue with a proposal made by the event group.

This piece of information was also important so that I could inquire directly with the current Speaker of the National Assembly, Milan Brglez, about the importance of music and his personal view on the selection of music and its value added at ceremonial sessions.⁵¹ He told me he was aware of the significance and power of music, but that he was also aware of the external structural limitations. He added that the event group had advised him extremely well so far, so he had not objected to their decisions. However, it is sometimes a problem if the event group is not familiar with a particular musical group either or if a particular group does not live up to the trust of the event group or his own trust. He further noted that there had been another group, apart from the known case of *Očenaš hlapca Jerneja*, that informally claimed they had been censored because his office (with his approval) suggested they change one song that may not have been appropriate for a festive event like a ceremonial session marking Statehood Day or Independence and Unity Day.

According to the speaker, ceremonial sessions should lead to unity not divisions,⁵² so they should stress what people have in common rather than their differences. Consequently, music performed at ceremonial sessions should also unite all people regardless of their different worldviews. He added that he therefore thinks that the music at such events should bear some sort of enthusiasm or pride, so he personally prefers more "joyous" songs – also because of the national character that tends to see things as gloomier than they really are. Moreover, he said that ceremonial sessions and state ceremonies should be happy events that fill people with pride, but above all they should unite and highlight the positive character of what is being celebrated. Here, he stressed

51 The conversation took place on 13 June 2016.

52 This view means that the speaker understands the music at ceremonial sessions in the function of a contribution to the continuity and stability of culture, which also partly corresponds with the function of social integration (cf. Alan P. Merriam, *Antropologija glasbe* (Ljubljana: Znanstveno in publicistično središče, 2000), 179).

it was important for music to underline "Slovenianness",⁵³ which he believes is the factor that can bring together all citizens.

Discussion and conclusion

The analysis of the selected ceremonial sessions of the National Assembly has shown four key findings. First, political decision makers in the National Assembly are hardly aware, if at all, of the potential of music for bringing forward a message. At ceremonial sessions, music mostly plays the role of entertainment, and it is not used in the function of symbolic representation, the function of enforcing conformity to social norms, or the function of validation of social institutions⁵⁴. The lack of awareness of the potential of music as a means of strengthening a political position or statecraft is also reflected in the fact that political decision makers – in this concrete case the National Assembly speaker at a given time – mostly leave the selection of music and musicians to the event group, which is designed as a consultative body. Such a context in fact transforms the event group from a consultative into a decision-making body. On the other hand, the speaker, who is implicitly entrusted the power to decide on the content of ceremonial sessions independently, *de facto* becomes a function that (merely) approves the decisions of the event group. With such an attitude, the speaker gives up the opportunity to use music as a means of developing, practicing and strengthening statecraft.

The second finding shows that in the entire context of ceremonial sessions music is seen as a means of making the event livelier and is reduced to its entertainment function, while its other functions are less prominent. This can be seen from different factors, including the disagreements about *The Bailiff Yerney's Prayer*, as well as the interviewees stressing how they suggest to performers to sing "happy songs" or songs with a "positive message". Music at ceremonial sessions is thus used to evoke positive emotions. In this sense, it has a very clear function, but this has little to do with strengthening the image of the state, statehood or statecraft.

53 He interpreted "Slovenianness" here as music that highlights the diversity of Slovenian regions, as well as music that highlights love for the homeland. For the importance of the *national* in music, cf. Matjaž Barbo, "Glasba kot tržno-tvorni del slovenske družbe," *Muzikološki zbornik* 27 (1991): 77–85; Matjaž Barbo, "'Slovenski duh' kot poetska kategorija," *Muzikološki zbornik* 29 (1993): 33–38; Matjaž Barbo, "Referential contexts of early Slovenian symphonic music," *Muzikološki zbornik* 49, 2 (2013): 33–39; Nataša Cigoj Krstulović, "'Glasba za rabo' kot družbenozgodovinski pojav v drugi polovici 19. stoletja na Slovenskem," *De musica disserenda* III, 1 (2007): 65–76; Nataša Cigoj Krstulović, "Nacionalni in transnacionalni vidiki glasbe: študija primera zgodnje recepcije Dvořákovih del na Slovenskem," *Muzikološki zbornik* 51/1 (2015): 97–114; Stane Granda, "Glasba in narodna zavest," *De musica disserenda* III, 1 (2007): 47–54; Ivan Klemenčič, "Slovenska glasbena identiteta znotraj srednjeevropske," *Muzikološki zbornik* 46, 2 (2010): 25–36; Tatjana Marković, "Narrations of a nation: Montenegrin self-representation through (re) construction of cultural memory," *Muzikološki zbornik* 51, 2 (2015): 139–148; Aleš Nagode, "Prokrustova postelja nacionalizma in nove poti do razumevanja glasbene preteklosti Slovenije," *Muzikološki zbornik* 51, 1 (2015): 9–20; Gregor Pompe, "Ideologija v glasbi in ideologija o glasbi," in *Ideologije v slovenskem jeziku, literaturi in kulturi: zbornik predavanj*, ed. Aleksander Bjelčević (Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete, 2012), 77–82; Eva Sedak, "Sudbina nacionalnih historiografij u globalnom kontekstu," *De musica disserenda* VIII, 2 (2012): 7–19; Leon Stefanija, "Relativna avtonomija glasbe: Primer Ljubljanskega dnevnika 1951–1961," *De musica disserenda* III, 1 (2007b): 87–100; Leon Stefanija, "Music and state ceremonies in Slovenia after 1991," in *Music identities on paper and screen*, ed. Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman (Belgrade: Faculty of Music, 2014), 341–347; Jernej Weiss, "Hans Gerstner in koncept nacionalne glasbene kulture," *De musica disserenda* VI/2 (2010b): 55–70; Act Regulating the Coat-of-Arms, Flag and Anthem of the Republic of Slovenia and the Flag of the Slovene Nation, Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia 67/94.

54 Alan P. Merriam, *Antropologija glasbe* (Ljubljana: Znanstveno in publicistično središče, 2000), 178–179.

The third finding of the analysis is that the consultative body, the event group, first chooses the musicians and only then deals with the musical programme. Further questions as to how the selection of the musical programme is made once again confirmed that the main objective of decision makers is to look for “positive emotions”, while they focus less on the concrete musical pieces. We can summarise that the key to the selection who will perform at a ceremonial session are the musicians not the music. And musicians are chosen based on prior “good experience of others” or a “good performance at other events”, after which they are almost completely free to choose the actual musical pieces to be performed. The only criterion musicians need to meet is that the music should have certain “Slovenian characteristics” (the language must be Slovenian, but it can be in dialect if a song is from a particular region) and must be “positive”.⁵⁵

The fourth finding about the music and musical groups is that the event group chooses who will perform based on structural limitations of the grand hall of the National Assembly. According to the interviewees, the hall has two limitations that always need to be considered: the space available for the musicians and the acoustics. The space is limited to “up to 30 people”, but the issue of acoustics is much more limiting, putting preference on vocal music, while the conditions are less favourable for instrumental music.

All of the above indicates that music has a “subordinate role” at ceremonial sessions of the National Assembly, in the sense that it is only there to support the script, in which the central role is reserved for the honorary speaker addressing the attendees and viewers. Music therefore brings no value added in itself. Nevertheless, a review of available scripts for ceremonial sessions confirms that music is still an important part of ceremonial sessions. As previously noted, it is used at all ceremonial sessions, while other forms of art like poetry recitals are more of an exception. Therefore, we can reject our second hypothesis that the choice of music is a result of a clearly defined script, since the exact opposite is true. Musicians are chosen first and then the music, and only then the script is formed. This is why it is extremely hard to speak of a clear and consistent approach to script preparation, since every script is different because they depend on what is the centrepiece of a particular ceremonial session.

Summing up the key findings, we can ascertain that the awareness about the potential of music for strengthening statecraft among political decision makers in the National Assembly – the speaker and others who may influence the speaker’s decision – is absolutely too low. This is reflected particularly in the fact that the selection of music and musicians is left to the event group, and that political decision makers almost never disagree with the group’s decisions. The analysis shows more than clearly that there is no deliberate decision on using music for developing, practicing and strengthening statecraft. There are certain structural obstacles, but they could be overcome if the approach were clear and consistent. But since it is none of these things, the system simply runs on empty. What should be done to move from this standstill? Not much. A strategy would need to be devised, changing the way decisions are made. Political decision makers (all of them, not just the speaker) should determine the fundamental

55 Here, we must stress that the genre (popular, folk, choir composition, etc.) is irrelevant.

messages they want convey to their fellow citizens through ceremonial sessions. And these should then be backed with appropriate music. But this would require decision makers who are aware and understand that today a country's prestige is increased mainly by using soft power. And music, which can serve as an effective tool of statecraft, is more than appropriate for such tasks.

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POVZETEK

Članek analizira pomen, položaj in funkcijo/e glasbe na političnih prireditvah. Avtor v analizo vzame slavnostne seje Državnega zbora, ker meni, da so te seje izjemno pomembne za oblikovanje političnega državištva. V tej analizi avtor ugotavlja tri zadeve. Prvič, kdo odloča o izboru glasbe na slavnostnih sejah Državnega zbora; drugič, kako se glasba izbira ter kateri so ključni parametri, ki morajo biti upoštevani, da je določena glasba izbrana; in tretjič, kakšno funkcijo vrši glasba znotraj slavnostnih sej Državnega zbora. Ugotovitve, do katerih avtor pride, so naslednje: glasbo (uradno) izbira predsednik Državnega zbora, se pa na tem zanaša na predloge skupine za dogodke. Ta skupina predloge oblikuje ne na podlagi glasbe, ampak

na podlagi izvajalcev. Najprej se tako izbere izvajalec, šele nato se odločevalci in svetovalci pogovarjajo o glasbi, ki naj bi se izvajala na slavnostnih sejah. Iz tega izhaja, da je funkcija glasbe na slavnostnih sejah podpornega značaja, kar pomeni, da »popetri« slavnostno sejo, nima pa znotraj nje osrednje pozicije. V tem kontekstu se avtor sprašuje, kako to vpliva na oblikovanje državištva, sploh glede na to, da je na slavnostnih sejah prisoten diplomatski zbor. Ugotovitev, s katero avtor članek zaključuje, je, da je na podlagi analize nemogoče trditi, da je glasba uporabljena kot sredstvo krepitev državištva. Te njene funkcije se (tako) premalo zavedajo tako politični odločevalci, kar posledično vodi do tega, da je glasba izjemno zanemarjena v izgradnji političnega prestiža v Sloveniji.