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THE CHOIR FESTIVAL
AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP THE MUSIC SKILLS
OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Choral singing is a form of artistic activity that is open to all ages, that is, from younger school children to seniors. It is also the most widespread musical activity in the world. The greatest boom of choral singing in Slovakia took place in the second half of the 20th century, when the state-supported choral singing as a part of art education. At that time, the number of choral compositions by Slovak composers also rose sharply. These were mainly modifications of folk songs or new compositions set to lyrics by Slovak poets. The peak of the boom was the 80s and 90s of the 20th century, during which the Educational Institute and subsequently the National Educational Center (Národné osvetové centrum) organized choir competitions and festivals. Conductors of amateur choirs had the opportunity to improve their conducting, courses were offered, new choral compositions were written and methodological choral singing materials were introduced.

After 1990, the system of state support for choral singing began to decrease and as a result of this, many choirs ceased to exist. One of the main problems is that there is insufficient funding needed for the existence and development of musical ensembles as well as the sustainability of cultural events, whether festivals, concerts or competitions. On the other hand, after 1989, many church choirs, whether children's, youth, or mixed ones, resumed, and sacred works also began to appear more and more in the choirs' repertoires. However, these choirs often worked without any financial support or financial compensation for the conductors.

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Further negative effects on the development of choral singing are seen in the prevalence of commercial art over true art, in a general low interest in classical music, in the technocratic nature of society, in the absence of singing in families and schools and finally the fact that active music cultivation is fading. Last but not least, the reason for low level music literacy and generally a low interest in classical music is the lack of music education in primary and secondary schools. Music education in Slovakia receives a minimum amount of time, while in secondary schools it is completely absent. The subject *Art and Culture* should be a substitute but its content depends largely on the abilities and skills of the teacher who teaches the subject and on what kind of art it tends to be. Unfortunately, the choir at primary or secondary schools in Slovakia is an exception rather than a rule.

One of the few events where youth choirs can participate are choir competitions. The best known and “oldest” in Slovakia is the national advancement competition, *Youth Singing*, whose main guarantor is the National Educational Center.¹ Similar events are organized by the Bratislava Music Agency, which regularly organizes: the international competition festival called *Slovakia Cantat*, *The International Youth Music Festival*, and *The International Festival of Advent and Christmas Music*. *The International Festival of Choral Art* and the competition *Voce Magna* are held in Žilina. All these events are of a competitive nature and are intended for choirs that already have some experience singing, a developed vocal technique and often are professional with a conductor.

Some questions arise regarding school choirs:

- are they just starting their “career”?
- do they have a different group of singers every year?
- which choirs are part of secondary schools where choral singing is reserved only as an external activity?
- do not have a conductor with a good musical education?
- do not want to compete, but still want to sing publicly and meet their peers who are also engaged in choral singing?

¹ The competition *Youth Singing* has been held since 1969. At first it was intended only for children’s choirs, but later it was also extended to include youth choirs. The competition for youth choirs takes place every other year, always in even years, and in odd years there is a competition for children’s choirs (*Mládež spieva*).

FESTIVALS

One of the possibilities available to a choir for a public concert is participation in a festival whose character may be competitive or non-competitive. The festivals are motivational in nature, contribute to the expansion of musical repertoire, increase the level of choral singing, support the formation and development of choirs, strengthen contacts and mutual exchanges of experiences among conductors, and offer space for establishing new enriching human relationships. Thus, social development is positively impacted both for individuals and choirs. Last but not least, choral festivals are an inspiration for composers because they offer opportunities for writing new compositions for choir (Sedlický and Pazúrik 4). Given the past, when choral festivals took place in many cities in Slovakia, we must now note the lack of events of this type (*Mládež spieva*). Presently, especially for youth choirs, such activities are largely absent.

FESTIVAL *CANTARE CHORALITER*

Since 2017, a festival of grammar school and high-school choirs called *Cantare Choraliter* has been held in Ružomberok. The organizers are staff and teachers of two institutions: Secondary Grammar School of St. Andrew in Ružomberok and the Department of Music, Faculty of Education, Catholic University in Ružomberok. The festival has a non-competitive character and is intended for choirs of secondary schools, focusing on and interpreting sacred music. The aim of the organizers was to initiate a gathering of choirs whose common focus is sacred music. Their goals were to experience the common joy of singing and music, to share and exchange experiences among the directors of the choirs, to make new friends, and to encourage art and beauty.

In particular, choirs that are part of church-affiliated secondary schools were invited to attend the festival.² The condition of participation was the presen-

² Participating high school choirs: Coro di san Andrea (Gymnázium sv. Andreja v Ružomberku)—2017, 2018, 2019; Goretti (Pedagogická a sociálna akadémia sv. Márie Goretti, Čadca)—2017, 2018, 2019; Javorčatá (Katolícke gymnázium Štefana Moyzesa, Banská Bystrica)—2017, 2018, 2019; Music Therapy, later renamed to Sonus Sante Edite (Gymnázium sv. Edity Steinovej, Košice)—2017, 2019; Corpo e anima (Gymnázium sv. Františka Assiského, Malacky)—2017, 2018, 2019; Piarissimo (Piaristické gymnázium J. Branckého, Trenčín)—2018; Rapsodia—Chór II Liceum Ogólnokształcącego w Chełmie (Poland)—2018, 2019; Pěvecký sbor Stojanova gymnázia Velehrad (Czech Republic)—2019.

tation of sacred compositions and songs. The festival takes place over two days. The opening of the festival is a Mass where the musical component is provided by one of the participating choirs. The joint rehearsal continues with first, only the choirs, and then the choirs with an orchestra. On the second day in the morning, individual choirs prepare three compositions, one of which must be at least a three-part arrangement. The festival cumulates in a final concert, for which each choir prepares two songs. At the end of the gala concert, all participants perform three choral compositions. The choirs are joined by a chamber orchestra that enhances the overall experience of the performance.

Due to the fact that choirs in secondary schools in Slovakia are neglected, many school choirs work in temporary or often tentative conditions. Their repertoire is mainly youth oriented, spiritual songs which most often are accompanied by a guitar or keyboard instruments. One of the main motives for organizing the *Cantare Choraliter* festival was the opportunity to expose high school choirs to the classical choral repertoire. This is often unattractive and too demanding for this type of choir. The conductors, who frequently teach multiple courses besides directing a choir, may not be able to undertake this difficult repertoire. To overcome these barriers, the organizers chose a method of active participation, i.e. that classical literature is sung by all the choirs together.³ This brings benefits from several points of view:

- The choir has greater psychological certainty because it is not alone in performance.
- As it is a joint performance at the final concert, the singers (and the conductor) are in a way “required” to study the composition.
- By practicing the composition, they create a closer relationship to it.
- It expands their musical skills and knowledge.
- It enriches their repertoire.
- It inspires further work and improvement in the field of choral singing.
- They gain experience working with other conductors as well as other singers and ensembles (e.g. orchestra, pianist, etc.).
- It shapes their personality traits, such as patience, thoughtfulness, concentration, discipline, respect etc.
- Last but not least, it enhances the inner experience of every singer (Mironov, Podstavková and Raninec 5-6).

³ The combined choirs sang these compositions in individual years of the festival:
2017: T. Gabriel: Te lucis ante terminum; A. Snyder: Ubi caritas; afro-american spiritual Light.
2018: V. M. Grau: Psallite; W. A. Mozart: Laudate Dominum; You Raise me up.
2019: F. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy: Da nobis pacem; spirituál Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho; hymna SDM Blahoslavení milosrdní.

RESEARCH

During the second year of the festival, a survey was conducted to examine the interest of high school students in choral singing and classical music. The questionnaire was distributed on April 13, 2018, during the *Cantare Choraliter* Festival.

The surveyed ensembles consisted of members of the participating choirs. Five choirs were from Slovakia: *Piarissimo* (Piarist Grammar School, Trenčín); *Goretti* (Pedagogical and Social Academy, Čadca); *Javorčatá* (Štefan Moyzes Catholic High School, Banská Bystrica); *Corpo e anima* (St. Francis of Assisi High School, Malacky); *Coro di san Andrea* (St. Andrej Gymnasium, Ružomberok) and one from Poland: *Rapsodia* (II Liceum Ogólnokształcące im. Gen. Gustawa Orlicz-Dreszera w Chełmie).

The questionnaire contained input identifying information, such as gender and age, name of the school at which the choir works and whether the respondent sings or plays a musical instrument with the choir. The core of the questionnaire consisted of 13 questions, 6 of which were close-ended and 7 which were semi opened-ended questions. The questions covered three areas: previous musical studies (1-2), choir activity (3-9), and the *Cantare Choraliter* festival (10-13). At the end, there was a “thank-you” for completing the questionnaire and space for comments, observations, and recommendations.

In the survey, we assumed that:

1. Students singing in the choir had studied music (either at primary art schools or privately).
2. In the choir, students prefer compositions accompanied by musical instruments.
3. In the future, students who sing in the choir want to pursue musical studies.
4. Participation at the Festival in Ružomberok was beneficial for the members of the choirs.

SURVEY EVALUATION

152 members of the choirs took part in the survey. Of these, 27 were boys (17.8%) and 123 were girls (80.9%). Two respondents did not report gender (1.3%).

Table 1. Gender of respondents

Gender of respondents	Quantity	
Boys	27	17.8 %
Girls	123	80.9 %
Not specified	2	1.3 %
<i>Total</i>	<i>152</i>	<i>100 %</i>

The initial questions looked at the gender and age of the respondents, as well as the name of the school at which the choirs are part of. We were also interested in whether the interviewee sang or played a musical instrument.

As they are members of grammar school and high school choirs, singers were between the ages of 12-19 years old, 3 persons were over 19 years old and one respondent did not indicate age.

Table 2. Age of respondents

Age of respondents	Quantity	
12	2	1.3 %
13	5	3.3 %
14	5	3.3 %
15	11	7.2 %
16	36	23.7 %
17	38	25 %
18	39	25.7 %
19	12	7.9 %
More than 19	3	1.9 %
Not specified	1	0.7 %
<i>Total</i>	<i>152</i>	<i>100 %</i>

The largest group consisted of singers aged 18 (39-25.7%), 17 (38-25%) and 16 (36-23.7%) years, followed by members aged 19 (12-7.9%), 15 (11-7.2%), 14 (5-3.3%) and 13 years (5-3.3%). Three respondents (1.9%) were older than 19 years of age, two respondents were 12 years old (1.3%). One respondent did not specify age (0.7%).

The largest number of singers involved in the survey were from St. Andrew Grammar School—21.7%, followed by members of the Piarissimo choir—19.1%, Javorčatá—17.8%, Goretta—16.4%, Rhapsody—15.8% and the lowest number of singers were from Corpo e anima—9.2%.

Table 3. Participating choirs

Name of the choir	Quantity	
Coro di san Andrea, Ružomberok	33	21.7 %
Corpo e anima, Malacky	14	9.2 %
Goretti, Čadca	25	16.4 %
Javorčatá, Banská Bystrica	27	17.8 %
Piarissimo, Trenčín	29	19.1 %
Rapsodia, Chelm (PL)	24	15.8 %
<i>Total</i>	<i>152</i>	<i>100 %</i>

Although singing is the main activity in the choir, some choir members also accompany the choir on musical instruments for selected compositions. There are also students who are just instrumentalists.

Table 4. Type of activity in the choir

Activity	Quantity	
Sing	130	85.5 %
Play an instrument	6	3.9 %
Sing and play	13	8.6 %
Not specified	3	2 %
<i>Total</i>	<i>152</i>	<i>100 %</i>

As shown in Table 4, 130 (85.5%) respondents in the choir sing, 6 (3.9%) only accompany singing on musical instruments. 13 (8.6%) respondents are singers who also accompany the choir, singing with their musical instrument and 3 (2%) respondents did not answer this question.

In the first question, we asked whether the respondent had attended a primary art school in the past. 110 respondents (72.4%) answered positively, 31 (20.4%) negatively, 11 respondents studied music privately (7.2%).

Table 5. Elementary art school attendance

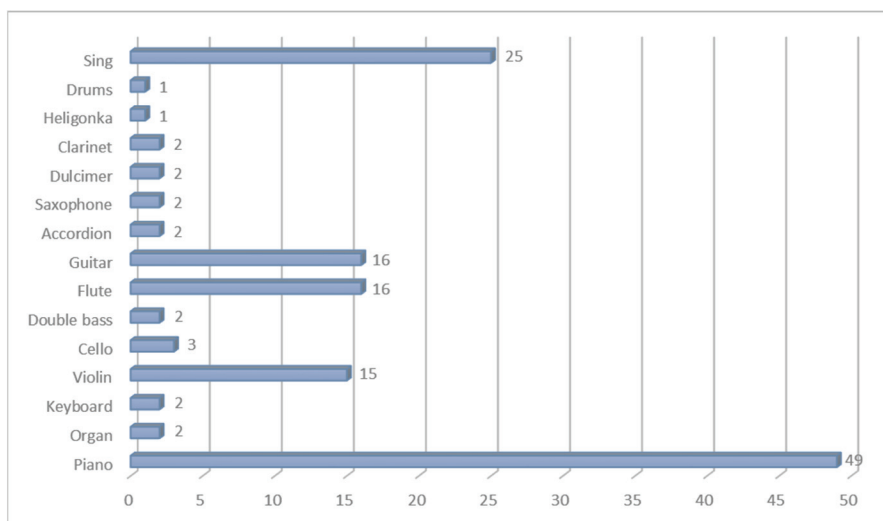
Music study (elementary art school)	Quantity	
Attended	110	72.4 %
Did not attended	31	20.4 %
Private study	11	7.2 %
<i>Total</i>	<i>152</i>	<i>100 %</i>

Out of the number of respondents (110) who attended elementary art school, 25 attended less than 5 years, 28 more than five years, 30 completed the first cycle and 27 continue to attend elementary schools also in the second cycle.⁴

Table 6. Duration of music education

Length of music study	Quantity	
Less than 5 years	25	22.7 %
More than 5 years	28	25.5 %
Completed the 1 st cycle	30	27.3 %
Continued in the 2 nd cycle	27	24.5 %
<i>Total</i>	<i>110</i>	<i>100 %</i>

If the respondents attended elementary school or graduated from private study, we were interested in which musical instruments they played.



Graph 1. Instruments played by students

Most respondents played the piano (49), were singers (25), played flute and guitar (16), and played the violin (15). Three of the interviewees studied cello,

⁴ In Slovakia, the basic study at the Primary Art School is divided into two stages (cycles): The first stage (cycle) is designed for children from the age of compulsory education (1st to 9th year of elementary school). The second. degree has a maximum of 4 years and is linked to the first degree. It is intended for secondary school students.

two studied clarinet, dulcimer, saxophone, accordion, double bass, keyboard and organ, one studied drums and one the heligonka (an accordion-like instrument). Many of them also used these skills in the choir, where they accompanied singing with musical instruments (most often piano, guitar, violin, flute, and saxophone), 33 respondents studied more than one musical instrument and besides playing an instrument they also sang.

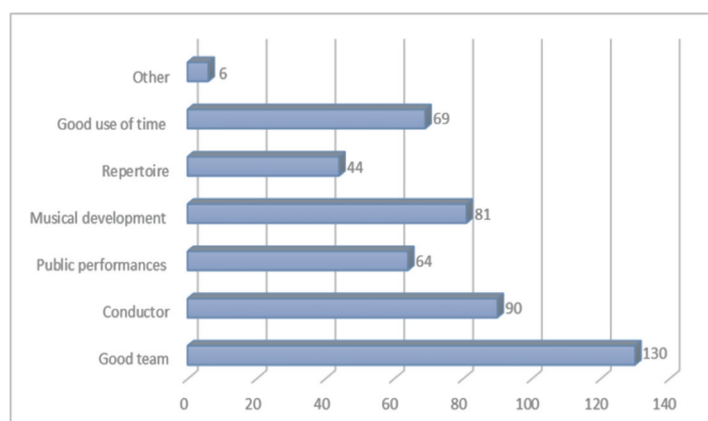
In question no. 3 we wanted to know how long they had been members of the current choir.

Table 7. Choir membership

Choir membership	Quantity	
Less than year	52	34.2 %
1 year	11	7.2 %
2 years	36	23.7 %
3 years	25	16.5 %
4 years	17	11.2 %
More than 4 years	11	7.2 %
<i>Total</i>	<i>152</i>	<i>100 %</i>

The largest group consisted of singers who were in the choir for less than one year (52). This was followed by a group of singers who have been with the choir for two years (36), three years (25) and four years (17). The smallest group were singers who sang in the choir for one year and for more than four years (11).

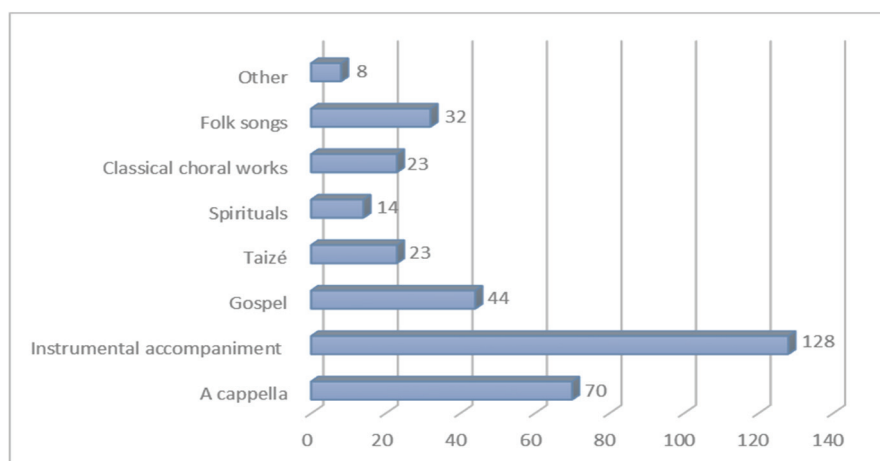
The fourth question (multiple-choice) was aimed at the positives of performing in a choir.



Graph 2. Advantages of choir membership

One of the reasons students attended choir is good teamwork and the atmosphere in the choir—30 respondents (85.5%) chose this answer. The conductor’s personality and attitude have great merit in the joy of choral singing. This was a high priority of 90 respondents (59.2%). Immediately behind this was the possibility of musical development of the singers—81 (53.2%). 69 respondents (45.4%) consider a good use of time in the choir and 64 (42.1%) singers also consider public performances to be useful. The choral repertoire was cited by 44 (28.9%) respondents. Six respondents (3.9%) also reported other answers, e.g. “I learned how to sing”, “mental development”, “missed school”, “I like to sing”, and “super-conductor”. One answer was marked without further comment.

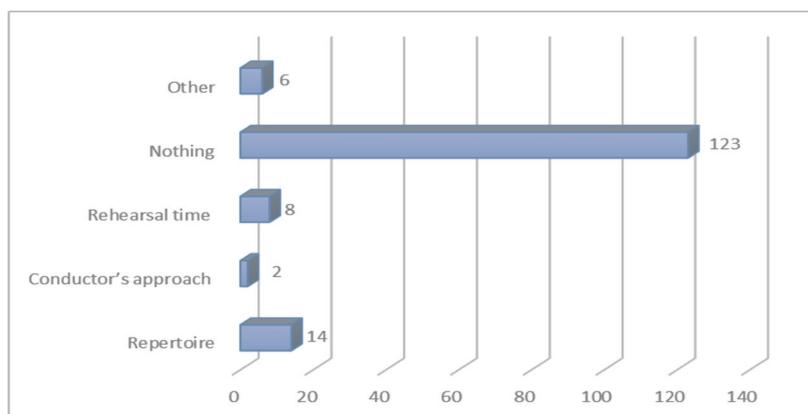
Question no. 6 (multiple-choice) was aimed at finding out the preference of the styles and types of compositions that make up the repertoire of the choirs.



Graph 3. Favourite repertoire

As expected, 128 respondents (84.2%), prefer instrumental accompaniment to a cappella work. 70 respondents (46.1%), prefer a cappella music. Of the choices offered, 44 respondents (28.9%) chose gospel music, 23 (15.1%) chose Taizé repertoire and classical choral works were chosen by 14 (9.2%) as their favourite kind of repertoire. It is interesting that 32 respondents (21.1%) prefer folk songs. The influence of folklore as such has certainly rebounded. 8 respondents chose the “other” option, with some specifying: “Jewish”, “modern compositions”, “with a modern touch”, or “energetic”.

In question no. 7 we asked respondents what they would change in the choir.



Graph 4. Possible Changes

The most respondents that is 123 (80.9%) would not change anything in the choir because they are satisfied. The repertoire would be changed by 14 respondents (9.2%), amount of rehearsal time by 8 (5.3%), the conductor's approach by 2 (1.3%). Six chose the "other" option with more precise answers: "to rehearse regularly", "more instruments in the songs", "more rehearsals", "less talk—more practice", "choir members relationships with others/leaders".

Since the survey included members of choirs working at grammar schools and secondary schools specializing in general education, we wondered whether in the future choir members would like to pursue music activities and what field they would like to pursue during their university studies.

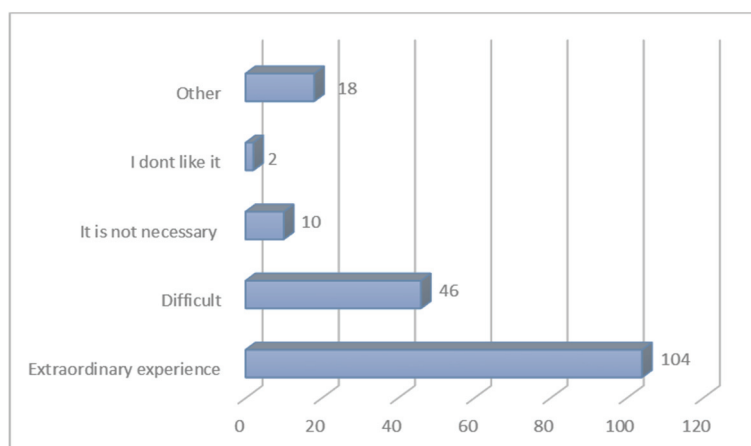
Table 8. Future participation in music activities

Interest in music in the future	Quantity	
Professionally	25	16.4 %
Free time	90	59.2 %
I don't know	24	15.8 %
No	13	8.6 %
<i>Total</i>	<i>152</i>	<i>100 %</i>

More than half of the respondents, 90 (59.2%), want to pursue music in some way in the future. 25 respondents (16.4%) are planning to have a professional career, and 24 said that in the future, dedication to music will depend on opportunities (15.8%). 13 respondents (8.6%) do not want to participate in musical activities in the future.

Next, 29 (19.1%) respondents will focus on music at the university level, 25 (16.4%) on art, 29 (19.1%) on education, 15 (9.9%) on IKT science, 20 (13.1%) will focus on natural sciences, 27 (17.8%) on medicine, 9 (5.9%) on law, 43 (28.3%) responded “other” (e.g., culturology, technology, forensics, humanities, journalism, mass media communication, pharmacy, emergency care, psychology, mathematics, English philology, economics, languages, management, history, and “I don’t know yet”). The wide range of fields of study corresponds to the general focus of secondary schools that the singers attend.

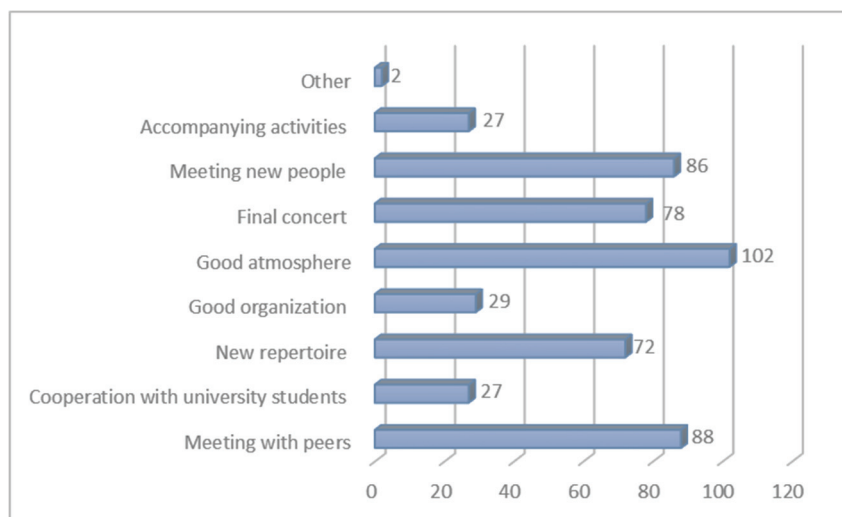
The third group of questions were directed to participation in the *Cantare Choraliter* festival. Of the respondents, 102 (67.1%) singers participated in the festival for the first time, 50 (32.9%) had already participated in the previous year. As part of the festival is a joint performance of all the participating choirs. We were interested in what the singers think.



Graph 5. Performance at the Festival

It was an extraordinary experience for 104 (68.4%) respondents, 46 (30.3%) respondents found it difficult. According to 10 (6.6%) it is not necessary to sing in a mass choir. 2 (1.3%) did not want the mass choir at all. 18 (11.8%) respondents marked “Other” (“might be nice”, “I don’t care”, “common songs are always great”, “it’s great, but not extraordinary”, “just normal”, “It’s great—because it serves as an introduction and for meeting new choirs”, “easy, easy”, “it’s fine”, “*You Raise Me Up* might not be Slovak”, “I don’t like songs”. 25 (16.4%) of respondents consider singing together as an extraordinary experience, but at the same time say that it is difficult.

In question no. 12 we asked about the positives of participation in this festival.



Graph 6. The advantages of the Festival

Cantare Choraliter sees the greatest number of respondents enjoy the good atmosphere: 102 (67.1%), next, meeting with peers 88 (57.9%), meeting new people 86 (56.6%), performing at the final concert 78 (51.3%), getting to know new repertoire 72 (47.4%), good organization of the festival 29 (19.1%), cooperation with university students 27 (17.8%), and accompanying activities 27 (17.8%). The option “other” was chosen by two respondents (1.3%).

In the last, 13th question, we gave room for suggestions to improve the festival; 59 (38.8%) respondents would welcome a choice of other compositions for joint singing, 37 (24.3%) would have more leisure time. 47 (30.9%) of the respondents chose the “other” item, while some specified that they would not change anything about the festival.

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

The survey was aimed at finding out the interest of high school youth in choral singing. The questionnaire was addressed to members of choirs working at secondary schools who attended the *Cantare Choraliter* festival. The survey involved not only members of Slovak churches, but also members from the Polish choir from Chelm. With the participation of a Polish and (in 2019) a Czech choir, this event was included among what would be classed as

international music activities. The respondents were 12-19 years old, which corresponds to the age of secondary school students. The lower age limit points to the fact that students in eight-year grammar schools are also members of choirs. Three members were more than 19 years old, proving that choir members can also be either former high school students or even teachers working at the school and this factor can have a motivating effect on younger choir members. Also, 80% of the respondents were girls, which corresponds to the general trend that more girls than boys sing in youth choirs.

In the introductory section of the questionnaire, we were interested in whether the choir members had studied music in the past. After completing the survey, we can assume that a child who attended an art school, will be more inclined to some kind of musical activity during high school studies. However, the survey results also show that students who have not studied singing or playing a musical instrument will find their way into the choir. The social atmosphere in the choir and interpersonal relationships play a big role in convincing students to devote their powers and spend their free time in the choir. Here we come to another no less important function of performing in the choir, which is the social function. Choral singing integrates children/students into the collective, thereby developing socializing, collectivist, communication, ethical and aesthetic functions. The atmosphere in the choir and the relationships between the choir members play a very important role, often influencing the time they will spend in the choir.

An important person in the choir is the conductor. In addition to artistic leadership from the conductor, the singers themselves also have a major impact on their own personal development. It is necessary for effective work in the choir, that the singers respect the conductor and that they are able to cooperate jointly. On the other hand, they must feel that the conductor is friendly, understanding, and accepting of them. The conductors are often seen by young people as their personal and professional role models, so this makes the conductors even more aware of the fact that their behaviours, attitudes and opinions largely shape the younger generation. At the same time, it should motivate the conductors to work constantly on their demeanour with the choir.

Another positive aspect of participation in the choir was the sensible use of time and the development of musical skills. In high school, a young person can already judge for themselves whether spending time on something is meaningful and how singing has an impact on their musical development. It is often the case that a child attending choir will have an interest in music in the future and will return to choral singing. This is all the more true of secondary

school students, who are already much more aware of the social function mentioned above. It is natural that they will return to choral singing as working-age people and are most often active in either a community or a church choir. In this case, we could call choral singing, with a great deal of expressivity, a kind of “positive drug” to which a person returns at various stages of their life.

The musical repertoire is an important motivating tool in choral singing. In the survey, we were also interested in which compositions the choir members prefer. With the choice between a cappella and instrumental accompaniment, most (80% of respondents) chose the second option. One of the reasons can be found in greater support of intonation, as well as in diversification of interpreted compositions. In order to sing a cappella repertoire, it is necessary to have considerable singing experience, the certainty of intonation, vocal control, and breath support, etc. Given that the research sample was composed of members of choirs focusing primarily on sacred music, we wanted to know what type or “kind” of this genre of music they tend towards. The most popular kind of repertoire is gospel music, followed by Taizé songs and classical choral works. One of the possibilities were folk songs, which surprisingly 21% of the respondents prefer. These responses are largely related to practical experience; classical-choral compositions were chosen by those singers who already have experience with them. The same applies to folk songs. Half of those asked and who preferred folk songs were from the Piarissimo choir. That particular choir has folk songs in their repertoire and are often a part of their concert performances.

In the survey, we also gave respondents the opportunity to express what they dislike and what they would change (it is worth repeating, that 80% of the respondents are completely satisfied, and would not change anything). Most choirs have two hours of rehearsal per week and some occasionally practice before a certain event or performance. It is certainly related to the fact that choral singing at secondary schools is realized in the form of elective education, i.e. that the school can organize activities for pupils outside the classroom, the content of which is focused on a pupil’s leisure, recreational, physical and social activities. It is recommended that rehearsal take place twice a week for one hour or once a week for two hours (Balogová). To some respondents, this number of hours seems insufficient and they would like to have more hours devoted to choir. This can be seen as positive information and shows the interest of secondary school students in this form of musical art. The skills and experiences they gain from their work in the high school choir often motivate them to pursue music later in life, either professionally or in their free time.

As mentioned above, the third area of the questionnaire is related to the *Cantare Choraliter* festival. One of the aims of the organizers was to offer the choirs repertoire consisting mainly of new sacred songs (youth songs) and classical choral repertoire. This aim was realized through a joint performance of all participating choirs. Each year, all the singers created one large choir, which sang three multi-choral works during the final concert. For some choirs, it was a matter of course, but for others, it was a big challenge. As part of their singing, one work was performed a cappella, and the others were accompanied by a piano and/or a chamber orchestra (moreover, being accompanied by an orchestra was a unique experience that motivated many participants even more). In the following years of the festival one could have observed the progress in the performance of particular choirs (getting on the stage, behaviour of the choirs on stage, uniformity of clothing, a gradual increase in the demands of the repertoire, etc.). It was also observed that the experience and inspiration of choirs influenced the behaviour of other choirs. And while some of the choirs identified the selected joint compositions and their interpretation as “challenging”, they also stated that it was an “extraordinary experience” for them. This confirms the view that challenges are needed and beneficial for a young person, and overcoming them leads to gradual improvement, building self-confidence and valuable life experiences. As the English composer John Rutter says: “You have to take into account what [amateur choirs] can sing, what their limits are. Sometimes you have to give them a small challenge, something that is maybe a bit beyond what they think they can handle” (Rutter).

The festival has been organized in cooperation with Secondary Grammar School of St. Andrew in Ružomberok. This school perceives participation in the festival as a valuable event that develops their musical skills, but at the same time has a pleasant and friendly atmosphere that helps to strengthen and enrich social relations. It would be desirable for activities of a similar nature to find support (both financial and material) in local government and in the Ministry of Education. In terms of education, it would be appropriate for the responsible institutions to organize courses and educational activities for conductors and choir directors, where they could improve their musical education and broaden their musical skills.

Also, choral festivals in individual regions of Slovakia should be organized regularly, even though compared to e.g. the Czech Republic we have only a tiny number of these musical ensembles. Inspiration can also come from the USA, where it is common that in high schools, in addition to the sports teams, there

are also choirs and/or orchestras, or the United Kingdom, where the choirs are at a very high level, although they are amateur ensembles. At the same time, it is necessary to raise awareness among the general public about the positive influences of choral singing. Not only is there a great influence for children or for the younger generation, but participation in a choir can enrich and improve the cultural and social life of different ages throughout the population.

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FESTIWAL CHÓRÓW JAKO OKAZJA DO ROZWOJU ZDOLNOŚCI MUZYCZNYCH UCZNIÓW SZKÓŁ ŚREDNICH

Streszczenie

Aktywny udział w chórze śpiewaczym ma ogromny wpływ na młodych ludzi: nie tylko na ich rozwój muzyczny, artystyczny i estetyczny, ale także na kształtowanie ich cech charakteru. Czy jednak młodzież jest dzisiaj zainteresowana tego rodzaju działalnością, szczególnie jeśli chodzi o prezentowanie dzieł muzyki sakralnej? Czy jest to dla nich atrakcyjne nawet w czasach, które są bardziej skoncentrowane na materializmie, osiągnięciach technicznych, konsumpcjonizmie lub prezentacji indywidualności? Prezentowany artykuł zawiera odpowiedzi na te pytania, sformułowane na podstawie wyników ankiety przeprowadzonej podczas II edycji festiwalu chórów licealnych *Cantare Choraliter*. Za pomocą kwestionariusza zbadano stosunek, jaki mają do muzyki (a szczególnie śpiewu chóralnego) członkowie chórów działających przy słowackich szkołach średnich.

Słowa kluczowe: festiwal chórów; śpiew chóralny; szkoły średnie; Festiwal Chóralny *Cantare Choraliter*.

THE CHOIR FESTIVAL AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP THE MUSIC SKILLS
OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Summary

Active participation in a choir exerts a great influence on young people. It is connected not only with their musical, artistic and aesthetic development but also with the formation of their personality and character. The question is are the young people of today interested in this kind of activity, especially when it comes to presenting sacred music? Is it attractive to them in a time that is more focused on materialism, technical achievements, consumerism and individual presentations? These questions are answered by this paper, which deals with the results of a survey conducted during the second year of the festival of high school choirs called *Cantare Choraliter*. Based on this questionnaire, we investigated the relationship to music, specifically to choral singing of the members of choirs working at secondary church schools in Slovakia.

Key words: choir festival; choral singing; secondary school; Cantare Choraliter festival.