

BRASS BAND MUSIC IN THE SLOVÁCKO REGION AND ITS SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CAPITAL

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One of the basic starting points for the theme of the “music and capital” is the work of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002), who perceived society as “*a space of antagonistic positions occupied by individual agents. There is a constant symbolic struggle between agents for advantageous positions in social space*” (Růžička – Vašát 2011: 129). Through this prism, Bourdieu defined three fundamental concepts – social field, habitus, and capital – that in a certain way determine the behavior of individuals in society. In our case, the most important part of his work for this article entitled *The Forms of Capital* (Bourdieu 1986¹), where Bourdieu describes the concept of the capital in detail. According to him, the capital is a set of both intangible and tangible means that determine the position of the individual, the agent, in social space.

Bourdieu divides capital into three forms: 1) **economic capital**: material means of the individual; 2) **cultural capital**: assumptions acquired by the individuals or groups, which are necessary in order to achieve a certain social status; these assumptions are acquired by the individual in the process of socialisation, i.e., they are tied to a particular social space/social structure/society (Bourdieu also includes material cultural goods – paintings, books, musical instruments, etc. in the cultural capital, or academic degrees and certificates of professional qualifications; 3) **social capital**: acquaintances and social connections that are capable of forming an individual to acquire a certain social status.

Bourdieu applied his concept to the individual as a member of a particular community and culture. In the following paper, I will be applying this prism, especially of the cultural and social capital, to a particular cultural phenomenon, specifically brass band music,

1. Bourdieu wrote the mentioned text in 1983, but it was not published until 1986 as part of the *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*.

which has been part of the musical culture of a considerable part of Europe for several centuries.

In the context of Pierre Bourdieu's concept, it is possible to study the field of Moravian brass band music through its economic capital, i.e., the financial and material evaluation of the musicians presenting brass band music, as well as throughout its cultural and social capital. Such capital represents a certain power in the hands of individuals or collectives, which if grasped at the right time, can resonate in a particular locality, region, particular social class, or even in whole society. Cultural capital, in this studied case, playing on brass instruments, the knowledge of the new repertoire disseminated by the brass band music, alongside with the ability to meet the new needs and requirements of different social classes (sufficiently intense sound for the outdoors and ever larger dance halls), had at certain points in time intersected with current musical preferences, with the demands of the period, with the trend of new social events (trips, parades, outdoor presentations of physical education associations, festivals of various kinds) and enabled the bearers of this cultural capital to determine the social mood or influence the behavior of the collective, as we shall see in the example of the Moravian region of Slovácko.

The emergence of brass band music as a genre and as an instrumental ensemble in the territory of today's Czech Republic, but also in Slovakia, is related to the development of military musical bands from the 18th century onwards. These instrumental ensembles had primarily a utilitarian function – they assisted military garrisons in their lengthy transfers by performing marching compositions. In this form, we can hardly assume the social capital of the brass band music. It was available only to a specific social group of the population – the soldiers. Its musical-aesthetic and social potential had not been discovered at this stage of its development yet.

However especially from the 19th century onwards, based on their distinctive acoustic possibilities, these originally military orchestras became a part of cultural life in the towns and performed the compositions of various contemporary composers, resulting in making them very popular. As musicologist Pavel Kurfürst (2002: 770)

notes, from the 1870^s onwards, as part of the development of social life, the bourgeoisie started to use the phenomenon of brass band music to stimulate patriotic awareness. At this stage, brass band music begins to reach the highest peak of its social capital, which lays primarily in its popularity among the general public and interpretation of period-attractive repertoire. Many associations (clubs) also drew on its capital, setting up their own brass bands during this period. Thus, in addition to military bands, several types of brass bands were active at the time – sharpshooter’s, miner’s, and club’s bands – cavalry, veteran, *Sokol*² and others.³ At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, especially in the Czech lands, the *Sokol* brass bands were extremely popular. The most famous representative in this period was the City Music Band of Kolín under the leadership of the well-known Czech bandleader František Kmoch (1848-1912).

After the end of the First World War and the dissolution of Austria-Hungary, the economic capital that brass band music offered began to grow. This was mainly due to the popularity of the *šlágr*⁴ performed by the brass bands in particular and due to the establishment of the *Ochranný svaz autorský pro práva k dílům hudebním* – OSA (Authors’ Protective Association for Rights in Musical Works) in 1919, which was dedicated to copyright and the payment of financial remuneration. The Czech cabaret performer Jiří Voldán (1901-1985) described the situation in the mid-1930s as follows: “*It is indisputable that in the field of so-called light music, or more precisely, in the field of song and dance compositions, there has been an overproduction in recent times. Someone is writing songs, someone is writing lyrics. And that is why it is indisputable that junk, tastelessness and disgusting things have emerged in this production.*” (Voldán 1936: 7). “*Writing ‘šlágr’ makes money – this was the motive that led the miller, the baker, the teacher, the bar bandleader, the fiddler, the drill sergeant, the school student, the accordionist, the typographer, the headwaiter, the busboy,*

2. *Sokol* (Falcon) is a Czech physical education and patriotic organisation founded in 1862.

3. For more detailed information on these instrumental groupings and their function, see Kapusta 1974.

4. *Šlágr* – famous popular songs.

the machine-locker to compose a melody in the sweat of his face, an impossibly compiled lyric, and to go to the publisher or to the record company.” (Ibid: 12).

Throughout the historical period before the Second World War, the position of brass band music in Czechoslovakia had established itself at the top of popular music of the time, as evidenced by a survey of musical taste conducted in 1935 under the direction of musicologist Karel Vetterl on a sample of radio listeners from Moravia and Silesia (Vetterl 1938). This period also saw the emergence of a specific repertoire of brass bands (if we do not count the marching repertoire). According to musicologist Josef Kotek, since the 1920s it was represented by the so-called *lidovka*, which Kotek characterises as a conglomerate of easily accessible, widely popular and lyrically equipped compositions for marching, dancing and listening, but also for singing together, based on the professional re-stylisation of folk or semi-folk idioms. Thus, marches, polkas, waltzes, and later tangos are characteristic of *lidovka*, drawing on rural and amorous themes (Kotek 1998: 97).

In interwar Czechoslovakia, brass band music continued in its function of stimulating patriotic awareness and strengthened its position by interpreting socially extremely popular *lidovka*. Brass orchestras represented a new wave of trend and were associated with social prestige, so new orchestras and new compositions were constantly being created. The most famous Prague trio of *lidovka* composers, known as the “three Vs” – Valdauf,⁵ Vacek,⁶ Vejvoda⁷ – also originated from this period.

5. Karel Valdauf (1913-1982), musician and composer, author of compositions that are still part of the repertoire of brass bands in both urban and rural settings (the polka *Pod jednou střechou*, the waltz *Až nás cesty svedou*, the *Zahajovací* March, etc.). A festival of brass bands has been held in his home village of Trhové Sviny since 1999. Valdauf's musical activity is still continued by his brass band Valdaufinka (Koukal 2007: 156).
6. Karel Vacek (1902-1982), a composer whose most famous work, the tango *Cikánka*, became one of the first Czech popular music songs that “conquered the world” in the interwar period (Koukal 2007: 84). Other famous songs by Vacek include the polkas *Kdyby ty muziky nebyly* and *Přes dvě vesnice*.
7. Jaromír Vejvoda (1902-1988), composer, bandleader and author of probably the most famous Czech polka *Škoda lásky* (in English-speaking countries known as *Beer Barrel Polka*). Vejvoda, like Vacek, wrote dozens of Czech *lidovka* songs (Koukal 2007: 100).

When researching pre-Second World War brass band music, it is not necessary to specify the environment in which the individual bands performed. On the one hand there were brass orchestras associated with the military field, on the other hand urban or rural groups in the form of club and later company bands, whose function was primarily representational. Based on the large number of military returnees and rural musicians who were active in the orchestras mentioned above, brass band music slowly established itself in the rural environment as part of traditional culture from the mid-19th century onwards, and by the turn of the 19th century it was becoming a part of the traditional culture of the countryside. By the turn of the 20th century, the so-called *štrajch* (combinations of brass instruments with string instruments, woodwind and percussion instruments) had replaced older folk instrumental groups (bagpipes, string, and dulcimer bands) throughout Moravia. As in the urban environment, purely brass bands were mainly associated with association (club) activities. In some regions, for example in the Slovácko region (Podluží and Kyjov subregions) or in the Haná region, they became the central musical grouping within the local folk tradition during the second half of the 19th century. They became an integral part of traditional music and dance occasions, the main musical accompaniment of traditional customary and ceremonial festivals.

In the Slovácko region, brass band music became part of the local identity, which maximised its economic capital as well as the cultural capital of its bearers. It became a phenomenon precisely because of the many layers of functional connection with social life in the village: brass bands accompanied music and dance events (balls), family ceremonies (farewells to freedom, weddings, funerals, name celebrations), various local festivities associated with folk culture (feasts, carnivals, and other village celebrations), and church ceremonies.

With the change of political regime in 1948 came a change in cultural policy and the popularity of brass band music began to decline throughout society. The new cultural policy demanded an “engaged culture” in folk form but socialist within its content,

which brass bands in the rural environment did not fulfil. However, within the development of so-called leisure artistic activities, the cultivation of brass band music could present itself as a committed amateur interest activity. In the Slovácko region, where brass band music had been widespread since the first half of the 20th century, music courses began to be organised under the banner of ‘leisure artistic activities’, the aim of which was to educate new generations of musicians. In the year 1958, for example, music teacher Pavel Janeček (1923-2002) began to work in Dolní Bojanovice, where between 100 and 140 pupils from the region underwent a course of music education every year. On the basis of his activity, the Bojané brass band, one of the leading rural brass bands in Moravia, has been active here since 1958. In 1982 Janeček’s pupils also formed the Šohajka brass band under the direction of Vojtěch Ducháček, and in 1999 the Liduška brass band was founded. The town of Kyjov is connected with an equally strong musical personality – teacher Josef Frýbort (1913-2006), who during his time there in 1952-2006 educated several generations of musicians for bands in the wider area. It was through a network of prominent teachers and their pupils that the position of brass band music in the Slovácko region was consolidated, as was the social capital of individual musicians, often intertwined from childhood. Close personal contacts, transmission of musicianship within musical families, the connection of musicians’ activities to the cultural events of individual localities and their strong link to folk tradition, albeit residual and much transformed, all constitute strong social capital that helps brass band music to function within a society that currently had a significantly different preference in terms of musical tastes.

In 1971, under the leadership of Jan Slabák, a native of Kelčany in the Kyjov region, the Moravanka brass band was founded in Brno, which, also through the monopoly of mass media, had gained unimaginable popularity among the general public.⁸ Moravanka brought a new repertoire and a new way of interpretation to the environment of brass band music in Czechoslovakia. But in addition,

8. For more on the influence of Moravanka see Koukal 2007: 172-181.

especially in the 1980^s, it managed to establish itself abroad, not only in European countries, but also in the USA. The cultural capital of Moravanka, the social status it had acquired, dramatically increased the economic capital of brass band music as a musical genre. There is suddenly a new quality of performance (professional level of performance, new sound and way of presenting the repertoire) and above all a significant use of mass media. The influence of Moravanka, which mainly presented a repertoire based on Slovácko folk song, on other brass bands was enormous. At the end of the 1980s we were able to find brass bands in the Slovácko region whose repertoire consisted mainly of songs by the popular Moravanka. However, other period-attractive repertoire, such as hits from the popular music, became more frequent. The concert function in particular is accentuated in order to increase financial profit.⁹

After the year 1989, brass band music in the countryside began to be replaced by different musical genres, and Moravian brass bands, especially those from the Slovácko region, gained increasing popularity in Western European countries, especially in Austria, Germany, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. After opening of the borders in the early 1990^s, many rural brass bands began to establish cooperative relations with rural brass bands abroad. One example, the Stříbrňanka brass band established such cooperation in the year 1991 with the Trachtenkapelle from Euratsfeld near Amstetten in Lower Austria. They visited each other and organised various events for the locals, even exchanging children and young people for several days of holidays.¹⁰

While during the first decades of the 20th century the popularity of brass bands was based on the interpretation of a modern and contemporary musical genre – *lidovka*, in the 1990s brass bands were popular abroad thanks to their repertoire, which was based on

9. For more on this topic see Turčanová, Barbora 2019: *Funkcia dychovej hudby na slovensko-moravskom pomedzí v 20. storočí (na príklade lokalít Kúty, Brodské, Lanžhot a Tvrdonice)* [The Function of Brass Band Music on the Slovak-Moravian Border in the 20th Century (on the Example of the Localities of Kúty, Brodské, Lanžhot, and Tvrdonice)]. Diploma thesis. Brno: Ústav evropské etnologie Filozofické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity.

10. *Klub přátel dechovky* – February 1996, broadcast March 31, 2021 ČT3.

the interpretation of songs and instrumental compositions inspired by the folk music culture of the Slovácko region. A kind of symbol in this context became the composition *Vám, přátelé* [*For You, Friends*], whose music was composed by František Kotásek and the lyrics written by Stanislav Pěnčík. In 1986 it was sung in German by Mistrříňanka on German television and the song gradually gained enormous popularity in German-speaking countries and became an indispensable part of the foreign performances of the various Moravian brass bands in Western Europe.¹¹

Many musicians from the brass bands saw the potential for expanding their activities (concerts, recordings) abroad, through using the economic capital of the Slovácko region brass band music. Thus, Moravian brass bands aimed directly at the foreign market began to operate in the West. They consisted of professional excellently playing musicians. The important parts of their repertoire were arrangements of modern popular music. One such example is the Gloria brass band, which was created on the initiative of Zdeněk Gurský (*1954). This native of Vracov (near Kyjov) was a member of Mistrříňanka from 1973, with whom he toured Western Europe. During these tours he made contacts with various musicians, and in the year 1993 a significant part of the musicians from Mistrříňanka under his leadership founded Gloria, which is more popular abroad, rather than in the Czech Republic – in 2018 Gurský became the most played Czech composer abroad according to OSA (Formánková 2019).

Gurský began to write compositions that provided a space for solo expression of individual instruments, which also increased the cultural capital of some musicians. Vlado Kumpán (1972), a native of Gbely, Slovakia, became the most popular performer of Gurský's solo compositions. He left Gloria in 2001, and with him went other musicians, with whom he formed the *Kumpánovi muzikanti* brass band¹². It is the first brass band in the territory of the

11. *Klub přátel dechovky* – 1995, broadcast March 18, 2021 ČT3.

12. Kumpán's musicians, in German-speaking countries known as Vlado Kumpan und seine Musikanten. Author's interview with Zdeněk Gurský, Vracov, December 6, 2019.

former Czechoslovakia, which in its name features an individual musician. Vlado Kumpán is currently a renowned soloist in the field of brass band music in Europe, a trumpeter who has created a new performance technique based on the use of the jazz elements. The popularity of this technique is constantly spreading not only in Slovakia but also in the Czech Republic. This is a topic that deserves its own post.

Nowadays, the cultural capital of musicians associated with brass band music is no longer of the same value as it was a hundred years ago, when this musical genre was at the peak of musical preferences of broad sections of the population of the Czech lands. It occupies a strong social status for specific cultural and developmental reasons in the Slovácko region, where the brass band music is still linked to the local ethnocultural tradition, to the residue of folk customary and ceremonial culture. Since the 1990s, we have been observing the expansion of the Slovácko region brass band music beyond the country's borders: especially in Western Europe, where the cultural capital of Czech and Moravian brass bands is clearly much stronger than in its domestic environment. It is a question designed for further research, why is this so.

* This text is the output of the project *Musical Taste as an Object of Ethnological Research* within the program of specific research by the Department of European Ethnology at the Faculty of Arts at Masaryk University.

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Summary

Brass band music as an instrumental grouping and musical genre has been present in the culture of the Czech lands and Slovakia since the end of the 18th century. From the military milieu, where its function was primarily utilitarian, it spread to the countryside through urban promenades. There, brass music bands interpreted the period-attractive repertoire, which consequently became part of the folk music tradition. From the 19th century onwards, not only did brass band form, sound, repertoire, and function change, but so did the social and cultural capital of the related individual musicians and their groups. The paper focuses on the Moravian ethnographic region of Slovácko throughout the 20th century until the present, as the changes in the capital of brass band music have been most visible then. Gradually, the cultural capital of individuals (in this case, playing a wind instrument of the brass family) intersected with the demands of the period (new musical and dance repertoire, new playing opportunities), resulting in an increase of social capital and social value. During the second half of the 20th century, such value also became the accepted part of folk traditions. At the same time, the economic capital of Slovácko brass band music increased, especially abroad, where its uniqueness gained it a strong fan base. The links with foreign countries, the mass media and especially the Internet have constituted a strong pillar of the development of brass band music. Thanks to established connections and links with local performing opportunities, brass music in the Slovácko region still has strong social capital.

Key words: Brass band music in the Czech Republic; the Slovácko region; popular culture; changes of musical interpretation; social and cultural capital of musicians.

Přílohy / Appendices:



Dychová hudba Bojané pri hudobnom sprievode „krojového výletu“ v Lanžhote / The Bojané brass band accompanying a folk costume meeting at a barn dance in Lanžhot. Photo B. Turčanová, 11. 7. 2021



Dychová hudba Bilovčanka počas „zahrávání hodů“ v Lanžhote / The Bilovčanka brass band during the folk festivity „zahrávání hodů“ in Lanžhot. Photo B. Turčanová 26. 9. 2021



Dychová hudba Skaličané v sprievode počas hodovej nedele v Lanžhote / The Skaličané brass band in a parade during the feast Sunday in Lanžhot. Photo B. Turčanová 19. 9. 2021



Dychová hudba Legrúti počas hodovej nedele v Dolných Bojanoviciach / The Legrúti brass band during the feast Sunday in Dolní Bojanovice. Photo B. Turčanová 26. 9. 2021



Dychová hudba Podlužanka z Tvrdoníc akcentuje koncertnú funkciu / The Podlužanka brass band from Tvrdonice focuses on concert function. Photo B. Turčanová, Hodonín, 15. 7. 2020



Vlado Kumpán ako hosť Mladej muziky Šardice na koncerte v rámci folklórneho festivalu Slovácky rok v Kyjove / Vlado Kumpán as a guest of the Mladá muzika Šardice brass band at the concert within the folklore festival Slovácky rok in Kyjov. Photo B. Turčanová, 16. 8. 2019



Blaskapelle Blecharanka z Rakúska, venujúca sa interpretácii slováckeho dychovkového repertoáru, na festivalu dychových hudieb v Ratiškoviciach / The Blecharanka brass band from Austria, featuring the Slovácko region brass band music, at the International Festival of Brass Music Bands in Ratiškovice. Photo B. Turčanová, 11. 7. 2021



Moravanka Jana Slabáka na podujatí Nebe plné hviezd, Brno / The Moravanka brass band by Jan Slabák at the event Heaven Full of Stars, Brno. Photo B. Turčanová 30. 9. 2021