

# About Ladarke

Notes for the Mendocino Folklore Camp Benefit Workshop – 1 April 2006  
- prepared by Mark Forry, with thanks to Dick Crum  
(updated 27Mar06)

## ***About our arrangement***

“Ladarke” is a song cycle for mixed choir and tamburica ensemble, composed by Emil Cossetto. For this workshop, we are basing our arrangement on the one made by the composer for the Lado Ensemble, as recorded on “Lado – iz kajkavskih krajeva” (Jugoton LPY-S-695, 1972).

This arrangement consists of 3 songs:

- Ladarke ido v selo – The ladarke enter the village
- Pred starim majkama – Before the old mothers
- Ladarski ples (Ivanjska igra) – Ladarke's dance (St. John's Day dance)

The vocal arrangement is based on Cossetto’s 1957 score as taught in Los Angeles by former Lado Ensemble member Nena Sokčić, with the repeat structure from the recording. The instrumental arrangement is intended for string instruments, mainly tamburica – violins are also used in some Lado arrangements. In the recording, recorders are the instrumental accompaniment for the first song; in our arrangement, tamburica instruments play for all movements.

## **NOTE**

The arrangements posted to this website are provided for educational purposes only; please do not reproduce them for commercial distribution. If you are interested in a commercial performance of Mr. Cossetto’s works, please contact the Hrvatsko društvo skladatelja (Croatian Composers’ Society) at <http://www.hds.hr>.

## ***About Emil Cossetto***

Emil Cossetto (b.1918) is a Croatian composer and director. For many years, he directed the choral sections of the ensembles Joza Vlahović (later the Emil Cossetto Choir) and Moša Pijade (later the Lira Choir) in Zagreb, as well as the Zagreb Radio Mixed Choir and the Lado Ensemble for Folk Dances and Songs. For a short time, he also conducted the Symphony Orchestra of the former Yugoslav National Army in Beograd.

As a composer, he is best known for his compositions based on native musical folklore – especially Croatian and Jewish – as well as the musical folklore of other European countries. In addition to Ladarke and other vocal works on national themes, he has created numerous works in conventional classical genres, notably cantatas and concertos. In addition to vocal music, an affinity for the clarinet is prominent in his opus.

## ***About the composition***

Ladarke is perhaps Cossetto's best known and most often heard work. Originally conceived as a fragment of a larger vocal work entitled "Ivanjska balada" (St. John's Day Ballad), Cossetto established its current form as a song cycle for mixed choir, tamburica orchestra and three clarinets in 1950; it was first performed in Zagreb in 1951.

Cossetto's scores explicitly call for the parts to be sung in folk style. "It should be sung completely forte, in the chest register, without any kind of nuance, in the manner of clear and powerful folk songs." The commentary urges directors and singers to reproduce the "noble" and "spontaneous" sound that is essential to folk choral singing, which is "emotive, born on the unmarked boundaries of field and meadow, more free than academic music that is burdened with innumerable conventions of performance." He also reassured singers that such singing "doesn't harm the voice, but rather frees it, helping to develop the higher registers!"

Several versions of Ladarke have been published and recorded over the years. The 1957 vocal score lists four movements:

1. Ladarke ido v selo (the *ladarke* enter the village)
2. Ladarke koledaju starim majkama (the *ladarke* sing *koleda* songs to the old mothers)
3. Hvala vami stare majke (we thank you old mothers)
4. Ivanjska igra pred starim majkama (St. John's Day dance before the old mothers)

The 1964 score for mixed choir, tamburica orchestra and 3 clarinets lists three movements:

1. Ladarke ido v selo (the *ladarke* enter the village)
2. Pred starim majkama (before the old mothers)
3. Ladarski ples pred starim majkama (the *ladarke* dance before the old mothers)

In the third movement, a slower "somewhat religious" song is interpolated – "Dajte gospodare da pred nas doneso dar za koledu" (grant us, sir, that you bring before us a gift for carolling).

Later in the 1960s, a Lado recording was published that uses the same instrumentation, but without the slow song and with other structural changes. The 1972 recording replaces clarinets with recorders, who play parts similar to the vocal lines.

These changes in structure and instrumentation suggest that Cossetto was willing to adapt his composition to the needs the choreography and instrumental resources. In particular, Cossetto worked closely with Zvonimir Ljevaković, the principal choreographer for the Lado Ensemble who created the staged version of Ladarke. For this reason, several arrangements of Ladarke have been disseminated over the years through scores, recordings, and the teachings of Lado Ensemble members.

## ***About the Ivanjski dan ritual***

The Ladarke cycle is based in the Ivanjski dan (St. John's Day) ritual of northwestern Croatia. Devoted to St. John the Baptist (Sveti Ivan Krstitelj in Croatian), St. John's Day

– June 24<sup>th</sup> in the Catholic calendar, July 7<sup>th</sup> in the Orthodox – is one of the most important saint’s days throughout eastern Europe and is probably akin to Midsummer celebrations elsewhere in Europe. One of the most dramatic manifestations of St. John’s Day are the bonfires lit on the night before (in Croatia, *ivanjski krijes*), which people gather around to sing and socialize, and in former days, young men and women jumped through the fires.

The Ladarke cycle is based on another aspect of the ritual, called “*koledanje*” or “carolling”; that is, going from house to house in the village on holidays, singing and asking for gifts. Most carolling happened around the mid-winter ritual *koleda* (hence the name), and the words “*koleda*” and “*koledanje*” now suggest Christmas season and songs, but carolling also took place at other holidays in the spring and summer.

In program notes, the Lado Ensemble describes its staging of Ladarke: “Until relatively recently, it was the custom in central Croatia at the beginning of summer, on St. John’s Day, that a number of young girls – called ‘*ladarke*’ – were organized and practiced songs. They would then walk through the entire village, stopping before each house to ‘*ladale*’; that is, to sing ancient ritual songs wishing the householders successful crops and well-being.” In the songs, the word “*lado*” appears frequently. Hence, “*ladarke*” are girls who gather to sing “*lado*” songs throughout the village on St. John’s Day. In the Ladarke text, the girls are also called “*ivančice*” (that is, the girls who sing for Sv. Ivan, or St. John).

But who or what is “*lado*”? For many years, it was assumed that Lado referred to a pan-Slavic pagan love deity identified with Leda, the mother of Castor and Pollux in Greek mythology. However, the Croatian ethnologist Vitomir Belaj has shown that while songs containing the word “*lado*” have elements from pre-Christian summer ritual celebrations, they are not directed to a god or goddess named Lado. Rather, *lado* appears to be an exclamation whose exact meaning has been lost, although (in Lado Ensemble program notes) it is identified as “an ancient Slavic word frequently used as a refrain in old ceremonial songs from north-western Croatia, and is a synonym for words meaning ‘good’, ‘lovable’ and ‘dear’.”

Belaj does identify a character named Ivan or Ivo in most of the *lado* songs. However, it is clear that the songs are not about St. John the Baptist, since they describe a handsome young man who courts with young maidens. In the second song of the Ladarke cycle, the *ladarke* say they will “comb Ivo’s golden hair, Ivo’s hair is to his waist.” “Belaj concluded that in these songs the name of Ivan stands in place of the name of an older Slavic god who was venerated at summer festival which later, after the arrival of Christianity, became the festival of St. John the Baptist. Belaj identified this lost god as Jarilo, a major Slavic deity of vegetation, harvest and fertility” (Wikipedia article). Other figures celebrated in Croatian springtime ritual that possibly originate in Jarilo festivities are *Jurjevo* or *Zeleni Juraj* (Green George). The latter is associated with St. George; St. George’s Day is celebrated from the British Isles to the Caucasus, often with references to the “Green Man” or other elemental figures representing the natural world.

## **About the language of the text**

The language of the Ladarke song texts is the kajkavski dialect of Croatia. The three dialects of the Croatian-Bosnian-Serbian languages are distinguished by their words for “what” – “*šta*” or “*što*” in the štokavski dialect, “*ča*” in the čakavski dialect, and “*kaj*” in the kajkavski dialect. The štokavski dialect is the most common of the three; it is the basis for the modern Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian literary and broadcast languages. Kajkavski is spoken only in northwestern Croatia. In the Ladarke text, the kajkavski dialect is clearly shown in texts like “**kaj** nemate to ne dajte” (don’t give what you don’t have).

Other elements from the St. John’s day ritual are mentioned in the song texts:

- Asking the householders throughout the village for gifts:  
”Dajte stare majke mi moramo dalje iti” (Give to us old mothers, we must go on).
- Bringing wreaths and branches from the forests:  
”Zelen venčec z šipkovine” (green wreath of wild rosewood).
- Bringing apples, symbolizing health, love, and relationships:  
”Jaboke tri zlatne na njem” (three golden apples on it [the wreath]).
- Bringing special ritual food:  
”Kruha sira i pogačo bazlamačo” (bread, cheese, and *bazlamača* cake).
- Believing that giving to the *ladarke* will result in prosperity for the household:  
”Da nam žito gore hodi (so that our wheat will grow)  
sako zrno da se z množi (each seed will multiply)  
Pet vaganov žita dalo” (to yield five bushels of grain).

## **For more information**

- “Emil Cossetto” on the website of the Hrvatsko društvo skladatelja (Croatian Composers’ Society) – [http://www.hds.hr/pretrazivanje/clan\\_en.htm?CODE=359](http://www.hds.hr/pretrazivanje/clan_en.htm?CODE=359).
- “Emil Cossetto”, “Ladarke.” Leksikon jugoslavenske muzike, vol.1. Zagreb, 1984.
- “Emil Cossetto”, Wikipedija (Croatia) – <http://hr.wikipedia.org/>.
- “Lada and Lado”, “Jarilo.” Wikipedia – <http://en.wikipedia.org>.
- Program notes on Ladarke from the performance of the Lado Ensemble at the Splitsko Ljeto 2004 festival – [http://www.splitsko-ljeto.hr/50splitskoljeto/koncertni\\_program/lado/](http://www.splitsko-ljeto.hr/50splitskoljeto/koncertni_program/lado/).