**SINGING AND ITALIAN FOLK MUSIC**

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**INTRODUCTION**

A people, or ethnicity, is identified and distinguished from the others by two categories of characteristics: 1) Natural ones, such as place of birth, descent, biotype; 2) Cultural ones, such as language and literature, religion, cuisine, customs, values, clothing, dances, singing, music, among others

In this way I can say that I am of Italian ethnicity, for example, because I was born in Italy or am of Italian descent, I am white, I speak or understand Italian, I am Catholic, I eat Italian dishes, I drink wine, I pray at meals, I appreciate and participate in family gatherings, I enjoy singing, classical and popular music from Italy.

Here is an observation that I consider important: The extraordinary evolution of communication technologies has made possible the phenomenon of economic and cultural globalization. Regional cultures have suffered deep and broad impacts from globalization, as well as new visions or conceptions about the world and human beings. As a consequence of this, the function, the basic objective of cultural organizations such as ethnic groups, similar to the MTG (Gaucho Traditionalist Movement) is the preservation of traditions, cultural elements of the daily life of the past, which in many ways are no longer present in today's everyday life.

Google defines folklore as “a set of myths, beliefs, popular stories, legends, traditions and customs that are passed down from generation to generation and are part of popular culture”.

Folklore and popular culture are made up of everyday elements that were important in the social, economic and cultural context of a people's past. Elements of clothing, food (food and beverages), linguistic dialects, uses and customs (especially those related to romanticism), traditions, ethical values, practices and technologies, struggles carried out for causes considered important, noble. Let us think, for example, of gaucho folklore. Among the food and drinks, we have the barbecue and the puchero, the canha and the mate; among the garments, the bombacha, the neckerchief, the wide-brimmed hat, the gift dresses; the custom of riding horses, the practices and technologies with which cattle were dealt with, the taming of animals, just to name a few examples.

Folk songs celebrate, sing, extol these elements of the culture of a people's epoch.

The proposal, the objective of this text is to contribute to improve the understanding and appreciation of the rich and varied repertoire of popular songs that Italian immigrants and their descendants sang so much at festive meetings, in moments of leisure and fun.

This text is structured in four topics: Assumptions; singing as an expression of cultural elements; theme of regional songs and musical traditions.

**1 - ASSUMPTIONS**

Below are listed some statements that constitute presuppositions of what will be presented for the reader's consideration.

1.1. The subject, the human being, is constituted by nature and culture. Nature is objective and changes very slowly, through evolution. Culture is created by the human mind, it is subjective, it changes constantly. Today's Italian culture is very different from the culture of our immigrant ancestors. The Ijuí Regional Italian Cultural Center aims to preserve cultural traditions;

1.2. The main cause or factor of cultural change is knowledge and its practical application, technology. There is no way to resist technological advances for a long time.

1.3. Our life happens in everyday life: In our work, in food, in housing, in coexistence, in interpersonal relationships, in locomotion, in forms of leisure. Everyday life is in crisis: we don't work, we don't eat, we don't live, we don't communicate, we don't relate, we don't move around like our ancestors did, as many of us did in our childhood and youth.

1.4. As there are no more unquestionable truths, many values ​​have also become unstable, “liquid”.

**2 - SINGING AND MUSIC AS EXPRESSION OF IMMIGRANT CULTURE**

**2.1 - Expression of Culture**

Singing is a strong element in the construction and expression of a people's cultural identity. The songs express above all the emotions of a people.

As Mário Gardelin reports (apud Corradin, 1987),

“... in spite of everything, the colonization of Rio Grande do Sul was accomplished by singing. In São Sebastião do Caí, when the immigrants disembarked, the first voices sounded, on the way through the forest, towards Barracão (Nova Milano – currently Farroupilha). It was sung in the clearing of the forest, in the planting of corn and wheat, it was sung in the first harvests. It was sung in the “sagras” (festivals of religious patrons), in the “filós”, in the bodegas, on Sunday afternoons. It was sung at weddings, at festive meals. Often the valleys resounded with sonorous echoes while working in the gardens. It was sung in Italian and in different dialects, especially in the Venetian dialects. It was sung to celebrate and to forget. In religious worship meetings, to pray. The entire first generation, the heroic, who cut down the forests, opened paths and planted the seed of civilization, signaled their passing by singing. “How people sang at that time”, say the few nonagenarians who witnessed the emergence of this splendid colonization in Rio Grande do Sul with nostalgia.”

Another unknown author stated: “God sowed the firmament with stars and the earth with Italians. Wherever you are in a circle of friends, it may happen that a gringo appears, with an extroverted way, who, next to a table, pulls up a corner of the old colony. Not everyone remembers the lyrics and... the singing doesn't continue.

”There was a period, starting in 1943 and in the 1950s and 1960s, when both the language and the songs of the Italian colonizer were being forgotten. This was mainly due to two factors: 1) the ban on speaking in Italian imposed by the Government of Getúlio Vargas because Brazil had participated in the Great War fighting Italy; 2) the orality characteristic of the preservation and transmission of the Italian immigrant's culture. The immigrants had very little education, most were illiterate or only spelled some text. For this reason the lyrics of the songs were passed from memory and consequently largely forgotten or altered. Radio, disco and more recently TV have accentuated the process of breaking the present with the past.

**2.2 - Rescue Movement**

From the first half of the 1970s onwards, a movement to recover the history of immigration and the traditional culture of the Region of Italian Colonization (RCI) was consolidated.

With the activities to commemorate the Centenary of the arrival of the first wave of immigrants, a commemoration that took place in May 1975, the ECIRS Project (Cultural Elements of Italian Immigration in the Northeast of Rio Grande do Sul) was created together with the University of Caxias do Sul. ), who developed multiple anthropological and extension research activities on the traditional culture of immigrants, including singing. In Porto Alegre, a group of scholars, led by the Capuchin Friar Rovílio Costa, carried out an extensive and meticulous work to recover the history and culture of Italian immigration.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the ECIRS Project verified the existence and performance of numerous singing groups or choirs in the Region of Italian Colonization. In the municipality of Antônio Prado, for example, in 1985 there were eleven choirs or singing groups: 1) – Coro Linha Cândida do Travessão 30; 2) Silva Tavares Line Choir; 3) Camargo Line Choir; 4) São Roque Choir; 5) Virgínio Panozzo Choir; 6) Nova Treviso Choir; 7) Paranaguá Line Choir; 8) Coro Borgo Forte; 9) Saint Isidore Choir; 10) Santana Choir; 11) The Murialdins.

It is worth remembering that in many other places there were choirs that performed different songs, but that had numerous Italian songs in their repertoire.

In 1987, on the occasion of the I FENADI (National Fair of Diversified Cultures), at the Italian Regional Cultural Center, the following were formed: 1) two singing groups, with adult components: “Bona Gente” and “Vocal Cantare”; 2) two children's groups: "I Fratelli" and "Gira L'Amore".

“Bona Gente” was conducted and coordinated by Antônio José Grison.

The “Vocal Cantare” under the coordination of Miguel Poffo, had as founders: José Menegon and wife Ilga, Acimar Menegon and wife Romi, Jolmar Basso and wife Lenir, Leonor Menegon and wife Mari, Clovis Cervi and wife Lurdes, Miguel Poffo and wife Pink. “I Fratelli” was coordinated by Inez Tremea. “Gira L’Amore” had Iara Bogher as conductor and Denise Scarton Barichello as coordinator.

Currently, the Italian Regional Cultural Center has the “Bel Vivere” singing group, which for several years was under the coordination of Tenisa Sarreta, and formed a succession of the “Bona Gente” group.

A fundamentally important contribution to the recovery of Italian folk songs was the publication of the book “... E CANTAVAM”, the result of an enormous research and collection work carried out by a team of Carlist Fathers, under the coordination of Fr. Giuseppe Corradin.

The book contains around 170 songs with lyrics and sheet music. The first edition was published in 1972 with a circulation of 5,000 copies. In 1980, the second edition was published with a circulation of 3,000 copies. The third edition, with 2,000 copies, was published in 1987. These 10,000 copies evidently represented a decisive contribution to the recovery of the Italian immigration songbook.

The Bishop of Caxias do Sul, a region of the old colonies predominantly occupied by Italian immigrants, Dom José Barea, as a result of the ban on speaking Italian during the Second World War, translated several of the main Italian songs, such as El Sírio.

The religious songs were also translated and published by Editora São Miguel, of the Capuchins, under the title of “Sing to the Lord”.

**2.3 - Song Execution Style**

The usual way of singing or performing the songs was very simple. Four-voice singing was very rare, as was often the case among German immigrants. It was sung in one or two voices and without uniform, without the accompaniment of instruments such as guitar or harmonica.

Instrumental accompaniment and four-voice singing were improvements introduced with the rescue movement and the existence of a greater number of more qualified conductors and greater availability of instruments and musicians.

**3 - THE THEME OF THE SONGS**

The subject matter of Italian folk songs is very varied, covering all the main aspects of everyday life in bygone eras. Any classification or categorization presupposes a criterion. Here we adopt the thematic classification adopted in the book **“...E Cantavam”**

As will be seen below, the themes of Italian songs are quite varied, naturally covering the daily life of an era.

**3.1 – Homesickness**

Arriving in the new lands, they remembered their homeland and sang with nostalgia. The new homeland, however, despite the many challenges faced, wiped away tears from the deprivations they had experienced in their homeland and inspired them with new ways of singing their epic.

Examples of songs with this theme are: 1) Da L’Itália noi siamo partiti; Il Sirio; Mamma mia, dammi cento lire; Vostu vegnir Giulieta; Uei, paesano, de Nicola Paone; Mamma, son tanto Felice; Vá pensiero.

**3.2 – Songs of Military Life**

In Italy, wars or struggles between Provinces or Cities were relatively frequent. The military, especially young people, were entrenched for long months, facing the fire of death and being whipped by the most inclement weather, creating songs that remained in the memory of the people. There are numerous Italian folk songs that refer to military life and activities. Some examples: Monte Grappa; Monte Nero; Sento il Víschio del Vapore; Sul Cappello Che Noi Portiamo;Quanti Sospiri e Pianti; Il Capitan dela Compagnia.

**3.3 - Love and Youth**

Young people, who had fought long years in the trenches, were also animated by the desire to return to their loves. They created corners of rare beauty. The immigrants repeated them to cheer themselves up in the struggle to build their families, their love nests here. The vigor and spirit of young people and the charms of women have always been the inspiration for romantic songs. Songs in this category are much more numerous than those in the others. Declarations of affection and love are made very discreetly, sometimes with figurative words. Sometimes the lyrics are hilarious, as in La Verginella and Il Campanil l'È Alto.

Examples of this category of songs are: Bella bruneta (with 3 versions); Se Tu Fossi uma Regina; Quel Mazzolin di Fiori; Quell’uccelin dal bosc; La Montanara; Ho Girato L’Italia e il Tirol; Moretta Morettina; Sul la Cità di Montebello; Il Campanil l’è Alto; E la Mariana; Valsugana; Mi Stamattina Mi Son Levata; Che Belle Scapette Che Gá La Milanesa; O Angiolina Bella Angiolina; Ciareto Su Quel Monte; Il Cacciatore de Bosco; Mamma! Piero me Toca...; La Domênica; La Villanella.

**3.4 - Food, Drinks and Games**

The farmer who admires the beauties of creation is a poet and musician of his world. In the absence of leisure alternatives brought by the current electronic media, during their leisure time they would gather in family homes or in public places in the community such as bodegas and bocce courts, in “filós”, in birds, renewing their energies in simple entertainments. and cheerful, often telling stories and singing.

Examples of this category of songs are: songs that celebrate wine, such as Bevê, Bevê, Compare; Long live Noah; the traditional Bela Polenta celebrates one of the most important and traditional foods of Italian cuisine; The games are represented by the songs: E L’Allegria: Il Póvero Campagnolo; Il Merlo Há Perso il Becco; Se ‘l Paron nol Vol Che Cantemo ...; Quando Mal la Barca Va; O Barcarol de Brenta; Me Compare Giacometo; Le Putele Che Vien Su...; Dimmi Che tu Sei Bella; La Marianna la Va al Mercà; Sul Mare Luccica; La Marianna; La Me morosa Vecia; La Gigiota; El Vecio Trivelin.

**3.5 - Religious Songs**

Immigrants won the battles of clearing and started the process of development that is there, often sustained by religiosity. Religious services also played an important social role, bringing people together, providing them with the opportunity to meet and live together. It was always sung in the services, according to the saying that “he who sings, prays twice”. The litanies, the chants, the solemn masses were all religious culture transplanted from Italy. With the ban on speaking Italian, chants that were not in Latin were translated into Portuguese. The Bishop of Caxias do Sul, Dom José Barea, and Friar Exupério de la Compote, a Capuchin from France, participated in this task.

The chants, numbering 236, were organized according to liturgical themes: Advent, Christmas, Lent (Penance), Baptism and Renewal of Faith, Eucharist, Worship of Jesus, Veneration of Our Lady, Veneration of Saints, For the Blessing From the Most Holy.

They were published under the title “Cantai ao Senhor” by Editora São Miguel (dos Capuchinhos) and widely publicized mainly in southern Brazil.

An example is the song: “Vede este Povo” – Mira il tuo populo.. which the settlers sang with so much vibrancy, making the veins in their necks jump.

**3.6 - Children's Songs**

Children, from an early age, learned to sing, listening to lullabies from their mothers or older sisters. Several songs were also sung as a joke or in a circle, such as: Din, Don, Dan; La Musseta (A mulinha); Salto, ribalto...; Giro, giro; Andemo alla guerra.

**4 - REGIONAL MUSICAL TRADITIONS**

Italy, especially before unification, was divided into regions with very diverse political organizations and cultures. The differences were marked mainly between the north (Veneto, Lombardy, Tyrol...) and the south (Naples, Calabria and Sardinia).

These differences appear naturally also in popular singing and music. Southern music is characterized by a more dramatic style, the tarantella rhythm and singing in solo melody, while in the north softer rhythms are adopted and different voices are sung in groups. The elements of nature highlighted in the north are the mountains with their trails, castles and forests, in the south it is the sea, the sun, the boats.

Examples of southern songs are: Ó Sole mio; Torna Sorrento; La Caccavella; Marechiare; La Tarantella.

**FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization adopted, on October 20, 2005, the “Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions”, which was ratified by Brazil, by the Legislative Decree 485/2006.

This Convention affirms that “cultural diversity is an essential characteristic of humanity”, recalls that “cultural diversity, flourishing in an environment of democracy, tolerance, social justice and mutual respect between peoples and cultures, is indispensable for peace and security at the local, national and international level", highlights the "need to incorporate culture as a strategic element of national and international development policies".

IOV – The International Organization of Folk Art which is an International Folk Art organization has been accredited by UNESCO as a Center of Expertise in Intangible Cultural Heritage. It is present in 126 countries. IOV's mission is to protect, preserve and promote all forms of Folk Art and Popular Culture. IOV granted Ijuí the title of International Capital of the Ethnicities of the Americas.

In a message sent to UETI – União das Etnias de Ijuí, the Board of Directors of IOV Brasil stated that the “new management took over with a dream of making the Brazilian people and especially the youth of this country continue with the highest pride of their beliefs and traditions".

Ijuí, a territory colonized by fifty different ethnicities, thanks to the activities of the Italian Cultural Center and its other 12 Ethnic Cultural Centers, cultivates the diversity of cultural expressions and intangible heritage, especially popular and folkloric dances and songs, cuisine, typical clothing, languages, research, etc.

A deeper understanding of folklore and popular culture certainly helps more recent generations to value the culture of their ancestors and preserve such traditions.

Folk songs, due to their lyrics and musical style, constitute a rich and vigorous expression of such elements or cultural aspects.

For this reason, the singing and dancing groups of the ethnic cultural centers contribute decisively to the preservation of the culture of the ancestors and make the most recent generations proud of belonging to their ethnic group.

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