



Slovenian Singing Societies in Cleveland

Topic Guide for Chronicling America (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>)

Introduction

Cleveland's Slovenian singing groups are among the oldest and most well-known in the United States. More than forty have been founded in Cleveland since the late 19th century, most tied to a Roman Catholic parish or fraternal benefit society, reflecting the two ideological groups into which Slovenians have traditionally identified—conservative Roman Catholics and liberal, “free-thinking” socialists. Groups could also be associated with National Homes, which were neighborhood centers for Slovenian social and cultural life. Performances included concerts, operas and staged works in Slovenian and English. These singing groups also went on tour around the United States and even to Europe and allowed Slovenian immigrants and their descendants to celebrate and preserve their native culture.

Important Dates

- 1912: Lira Singing Society is established at St. Vitus, the Catholic parish serving the St. Clair area.
- 1916: Zarja (“The Dawn”) Singing Society established by local members of the Yugoslav Socialist Federation.
- 1920: Zarja adds its first female singer, Viki Poljsak.
- 1920: Jadran (“The Adriatic”) Singing Society established by Slovenian Workmen’s Home.
- 1919-1931: John Ivanusch, Slovenian immigrant, composer and music teacher, directs Zarja.
- 1924: Zarja performs at opening of Slovenian National Home on St. Clair Avenue.
- 1930: Samostojna Zarja (“The Independent Dawn”), an outgrowth of Zarja, forms, with John Ivanusch serving as director.
- 1931-1960: Czech Joseph V. Krabec is director of Zarja.
- 1940: Samostojna Zarja changes its name to Glasbena Matica (“The Music Society”).
- c. 1942-1949: Ivan Zorman, Slovenian immigrant, poet and composer, leads Glasbena Matica.

Suggested Search Strategies

- Try searching by name of the singing group or musical director as an “all” word search, proximity or phrase: Lira, Zarja, Jadran, Glasbena Matica, pevski zbor (singing group), singing club, chorus, Joseph Krabec, Ivan Zorman.
- Some results may be articles or brief notices written about members of singing societies.
- Use an online translation service to translate search terms and articles between Slovenian and English.

Sample Articles from Chronicling America

- [“Glasbena Matica Vabi” Enakopravnost](#) (Cleveland, OH), January 13, 1944, Image 1, col. 4.
- [“Koncert In Opereta \(ad\)” Enakopravnost](#) (Cleveland, OH), April 21, 1944, Image 3, col. 4-5.
- [“Slov. pevski zbor ‘Jadran’ ob 25-letnici” Enakopravnost](#) (Cleveland, OH), December 4, 1945, Image 3, col. 1-5.
- [“Voice of Glasbena Matica” Enakopravnost](#) (Cleveland, OH), March 22, 1946, Image 6, col. 1.
- [“‘Zarja’ Observes 30th Anniversary With Concert and Dance, Nov. 28” Enakopravnost](#) (Cleveland, OH), November 22, 1946, Image 6, col. 1-2.