

Zila

After World War I, the Austro-Hungarian Empire broke apart, and new borders were drawn. Many ethnic Slovenes who had lived for centuries in areas like Carinthia, Styria, and the Littoral suddenly found themselves living outside the new state of Slovenia (then part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes).

Because of this, Slovene communities remained in what are today Austria, Italy, and Hungary, where they became national minorities abroad, even though their families had always lived there.

Zila is a traditional song from the Slovene minority in Italy. The song expresses love and longing for one's homeland in the beautiful Zila Valley, where the clear Zila River flows. It reflects deep emotional ties to nature and the place of one's roots.

Where the clear Zila flows,
it pours beautifully through the valleys,
where my cradle rocked,
I will never forget this place.
My Slovenian mother gave birth to me,
nursed me at her breast,
sang Slovenian songs,
rocked me as a child.

N'mau čez izaro

N'mau čez izaro is another traditional song from the Slovene minority abroad. It's one of those quiet, heartfelt Carinthian folk songs that capture the sadness and beauty of life far from home. The song tells of a person who looks across the lake toward the homeland or the beloved left on the other side. It expresses longing, love, and nostalgia — feelings of being separated from home or loved ones by distance or borders.

We crossed the lake,
we crossed the meadow,
where my dear home with my cradle is.
Where my mother rocked me
and sang: Hajli, hajlo!
When I was still small,
I was very happy,
I sang many songs,
now it's all gone,
I won't sing anymore,
now my beloved, dear home is no more.
My father's house, my dear mother,
oh, if only I could see them both again,
oh, if only I could see her, my mother,
then I would sing again: Hajli, hajlo!

Kje so tiste stezica

The song reflects gentle nostalgia for the past — the singer wonders where the little paths once were, the ones they used to walk with a loved one. It's about remembering love, youth, and places that time has changed or taken away.

Where are those paths that used to be?

Now there are bushes and green grass growing.

I will cut down the bushes, mow the grass,

I will make the paths that used to be.

There are paths everywhere, the most beautiful one

is the one that leads me to the house where my mother is.

Dekle je po vodo šlo

In this traditional song from the Alpine region of Slovenia, the girl goes to fetch water and catches a small fish in the stream, but it slips away — sometimes with the help or teasing of a young man nearby. The scene is symbolic: the fish represents innocence, love, or a fleeting moment of youth that cannot be held on to. Even though it sounds like a simple folk story, it's really a poetic image of young love and the passing beauty of youth.

The girl went to fetch water

in the high mountains.

She drew water,

and caught a fish.

The fish begged her,

oh, let me live.

The girl was merciful,

she let the fish go.

The fish swam away,

splashed the girl.

Oblaki so rdeči

The song describes red clouds at sunset as a symbol of emotion, often tied to longing, love, or impending change. In Slovenian tradition, red clouds were often also a symbol of war and loss. It conveys deep feelings of passion, melancholy, and reflection on life, nature, and human emotions.

The clouds are red,

what do they mean?

That all the young men

will go to war.

Who will rake the leaves,

who will weed the ferns,

who will love my girl,

when I go to war?

I will rake the leaves myself,

I will weed the ferns myself,

I will love my girl myself,

when I come back.

Vsi s prihajali

The traditional song describes a joyful gathering where everyone from the village or community comes together. It celebrates social bonds, shared traditions, and the warmth of togetherness, often tied to festivals, dances, or communal work.

Everyone came, but he wasn't there,
if only he knew how hard it was for me.
The stars came out, the moon was
shining,
and I waited alone at home.
Others had handsome boys,
but I shed bitter tears.
Others held hands with boys,
but I shed bitter tears.
The boy will come and hold my hand.
My aching heart will soon be healed!

Oj božime

The song "Oj Božime" is a poignant Slovenian wedding folk song from the Benečija region, which is part of the larger Slovene-speaking area in Italy. The lyrics convey the pain of leaving one's home, family, and loved ones. The repetition of "Oj Božime" (Oh, Goodbye!) emphasizes the heartfelt plea and the emotional weight of the departure.

Goodbye, little valley.

how hard it is to leave you, how hard it is
to leave you behind.

Goodbye, my father and mother.

how hard it is to leave you, how hard it is
to leave you behind.

Goodbye, sisters and brothers.

how hard it is to leave you, how hard it is
to leave you behind.

Dekle daj mi rož rdečih

The song "Dekle, daj mi rož rdečih" is a classic Slovene folk song that expresses themes of youthful love and longing. The title translates to "Girl, give me red roses," and it is often associated with the Benečija region, a Slovene-speaking area in Italy. The lyrics convey a young man's plea to a girl to give him red roses, symbolizing love and affection. The repetition of "rožmarin" (rosemary) in the song adds depth to its meaning. In many cultures, rosemary is associated with remembrance and fidelity. In the context of this song, it may symbolize the desire for enduring love and the hope that the affection expressed will be remembered.

Girl, give me red roses,

girl, give me rosemary,

so I can dream of spring,

so my youth will still be mine!

You have no red roses for me,

nor any rosemary;

my heart is sad,

I am a sad boy.

What does a red rose mean,

what does rosemary mean?

A red rose is love,

rosemary is for remembrance.

Aj zelena je

The song describes lush, green mountains, blooming meadows, and the abundance of nature. It conveys joy, renewal, and admiration for the natural world, often tied to the rhythms of the seasons. It's a song that evokes spring or early summer, when nature comes back to life after winter, reflecting human delight in growth, fertility, and life cycles. It can be seen as more than just a description of scenery — it's a celebration of life, renewal, and the harmony between humans and nature, deeply rooted in Slavic worldview and tradition.

Oh, the whole mountain is green, it is green, oh, it is green.

Oh, inside it grows grass and clover, oh, inside it grows.

Oh, in spring a girl was reaping it, oh, she was reaping it.

Oh, with a golden sickle, with white hands, oh with a golden sickle.

Oh, the whole mountain is green, it is green, oh, it is green.