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## **Uplifting the Home Front: Entertainment and Propaganda in Public Musical Performances in Sarajevo during the Great War**

In this paper, I will analyse the change, which the Great War brought about in conditions around civilian and military musicians, their music and performance contexts in Sarajevo. Furthermore, I will scrutinise the propagandist uses of ceremonials and music. My main sources consist of archive documents and the contemporary Sarajevo press.

Events connected with music played a vital role in the attempts of keeping up the spirits of the population in Sarajevo during the Great War. Various ceremonial occasions, manifestations and music provided a valuable supply of morale to the struggling and offered a platform for war propaganda. Broadly speaking, wartime public events with musical elements in Sarajevo comprised of entertainment events (e.g. concerts, stage productions, film showings and evenings of music and poetry and other similar events) and ritualistic ceremonials (e.g. imperial holiday celebrations, religious services and holidays, military tattoos and military parades). The latter were often invented traditions and could potentially contain components of patriotic and war propaganda.

### *Authorities and Civilian Musicians*

As always under such circumstances, the outbreak of the war brought about strict censorship, which covered not only the press but also musical performances, sheet music, gramophone records, the cinema and theatre plays as well. The authorities either altered, shortened or banned all suspicious material. Particularly, the censorship banned Serbian nationalist songs and Serbian Orthodox Saint Sava feasts, which had provided musical and other propaganda for Greater Serbia during the pre-war years.

A fortnight after the Sarajevo assassination, a Provincial Government decree decentralised the licence system for professional musicians and other performing artistes, permitting local authorities in Bosnia to administrate music licences. A drastic reduction in the amount of issued licences followed; consequently, the number of public musical performances diminished considerably. In addition, following the example of the *ernste Stimmung* (serious mood) in Vienna, Sarajevo authorities closed down selected cafés and restaurants and reduced the operating hours of the remaining ones to honour the soldiers in the front. The policy further tightened in the early 1915.

These measures severely diminished the working opportunities of professional musicians and the possibilities of the public to hear live music.

Because of the internment of the Serbian Roma musicians and the mobilisation of most Hungarian and Bosnian Roma and practically all non-Roma male musicians, mechanical musical instruments and gramophones could serve as substitutes for live music. As for live bands during the war, the most typical formation was the *Damenkapelle* or ladies' orchestra; such bands usually came to Sarajevo from Zagreb, Vienna, Budapest or Bohemia, and their repertoires consisted of, for instance, opera and operetta pieces, potpourris, Viennese songs, marches and waltzes.

In addition to cafés and restaurants, musicians could work at cinemas, where they accompanied silent films – either entertaining or propagandistic – and often gave popular concerts after screenings. The showings of the music film *Das Kriegspatenkind* (1915) by screenwriter Alfred Deutsch-German and director Emil Leyde at the Apollo Cinema in mid-February 1916 provide good examples of film propaganda, which contributed to the war effort by urging the public to purchase war bonds. The extended Apollo Salon Orchestra performed the film score by celebrated Viennese operetta composer Edmund Eysler (1874–1949).

### *Charity Concerts and Events*

The war and the *erste Stimmung* brought about substantial changes in the annual cycle of music in Sarajevo. During the peacetime, the annual Central-European style cycle of entertainment in emphasised the last and the first months of the year. Culminating with the *Silvester* (New Year's Eve), December opened the main annual entertainment season, which ended with masked balls of the *Fasching* (carnival season). During the Great War, all these celebrations were a far cry from the pre-war extravagance. In fact, celebration diminished into special music programmes at a few cafés and restaurants on the New Year's Eve and on Shrove Tuesday (Ger. *Faschinsdienstag*), and no balls were organised.

Charitable parties replaced the *Fasching* balls. Thus, for instance in 1916, the Foundation for the Widows and Orphans of Fallen Soldiers and the Foundation for Disabled Soldiers in Bosnia organised four wartime afternoon teas (*ratne čajne večeri*) with entertainment on four Sunday afternoons between mid-January and early March. The charity parties, which were under the patronage of Gisela von Sarkotić – the wife of the Provincial Governor (Ger. *Landeschef*) Stephan Freiherr Sarkotić von Lovćen – took place in the City Hall at the former chamber of the Bosnian Parliament. The musical programmes consisted of concerts by the garrison military and other bands. Unfortunately, newspaper reports do not describe the music programmes in detail.

Since music cafés and restaurants had lost a considerable number of male customers, they needed new business ideas; family tea evenings with music represented such a new form of entertainment. The cafés and restaurants often donating part of the profits to charity. Even cabaret and variety evenings tended to be of a benevolent nature. Similarly, benefit concerts and film showings with music for the local or the Bulgarian Red Cross, the Ottoman Red Crescent or war invalids were common. For example, the famous Viennese actress and cabaret artiste Mella Mars (1882–1919), who frequently volunteered as nurse for the Red Cross during the war, gave two shows of cabaret songs in consecutive evenings in February 1916 and donated a part of the profits to the Red Cross.

Overlapping the birthday of Empress Zita on 9 May, the theme week of the Foundation of Emperor and King Karl for the war relief in May 1918 demonstrated a large-scale benefit. The week began with a festive variety evening at the Sarajevo Association House (Ger. Vereinshaus, Srp.-Hr. Društveni dom; nowadays the National Theatre), and the evening is the only event of the festival, of which the press reported in detail. To name a few of the numbers, the programme began with *Overture to Orpheus in the Underworld* by Jacques Offenbach, after which opera singer Helena Andress performed a coloratura aria about spring and an aria from the opera *La Bohème* by Giacomo Puccini. Next, Jean von Berghoff performed magic tricks, and female dancer Do Leit gave a show of various solo dances – including an Orientalist ‘Indian’ choreography – in luxurious costumes. The show was one of the few public occasions, which contained dance in wartime Sarajevo, because social dancing was completely against the principles of the *ernste Stimmung*. The authorities tolerated solo dance shows and dance as an artistic component in stage works, however. The evening continued with all sorts of other numbers.

#### *The Garrison Military Band and Invented Traditions*

Military musicians did not suffer from the restrictions of the wartime. After the outbreak of the war, in addition to its duties of military nature, the garrison military band continued giving the customary café, cinema and symphony concerts, which often raised money for charity, but ceased to give weekly promenade concerts.

As prior to the war, the band performed in various contexts, accompanying military parades and performing military tattoos in the streets. For instance, to celebrate ‘the victorious news from the Italian front’, the authorities organised a special tattoo on the anniversary of Italy’s entrance in the war on 23 May 1916. That evening, the military band marched through Sarajevo, ‘playing merry marches and patriotic songs, and a crowd of people formed a procession. They frequently shouted

acclamations, which expressed the general cheerful mood, in honour of our brave soldiers and their glory-crowned commanders', as the government newspaper *Sarajevski list* described the occasion. The tenor of the news is unmistakably propagandist.

Interestingly, Christian religious processions with a military band remained similar to the pre-war years, but the Provincial Government superimposed invented traditions and music on more numerous Islamic holidays. Consequently, during *Lejlei miradž* (Turk. *Leylei Mirac*; the night of the Prophet's journey to heaven) in late May 1916, the military band of the Sarajevo garrison gave a concert in the courtyard of Hadži Sinan Mosque after the *salat* prayer and escorted Bosnian Muslim soldiers back to the barracks after the prayer. Apparently, the band mainly performed Ottoman or Central European Orientalist march music. Through providing brass band music also for lesser Islamic holidays, the government certainly aimed at demonstrating how it honoured Bosnian Islamic customs and traditions, thus trying to maintain Muslim loyalty to the Emperor and support for the war effort.

Imperial holidays constituted the core of the emperor cult, through which the Austro-Hungarian government had always sought to evoke patriotism and loyalty of the masses in the multinational Empire. The holidays were celebrated practically everywhere, even in schools, and these invented traditions with frequent occurring musical components were of a propagandist and beneficiary nature. Emperor's birthday was the most important of such celebrations, but other feasts included the accession anniversary and the Empress's birthday. The celebrations of Emperor's birthday included festive religious services, military parades, banquets, public festivals, charitable lotteries, choral and military music, military tattoos and cannon salutes and visual effects such as illuminations, torch-light processions and the decoration of the urban space. In the course of the war, the spectacularism of the celebrations abated as the authorities announced that they allocated a portion of the decoration and illumination costs to charity.

### *Conclusion*

As we have seen, the Great War, strict censorship and the *ernste Stimmung*, had a marked effect on music and musicians in Sarajevo. Venues for live music decreased considerably, as did the amount of professional musicians and the number of audiences. Furthermore, the serious mood of war led to the ban of social dancing, including masked balls. Cinemas, cafés, restaurants and concert halls could offer escapist entertainment, which the public needed to endure the gloomy everyday life. Simultaneously, the very same venues could offer artistically ambitious performances and interpretations.

Charitable parties, performances and concerts replaced most previous forms of musical and dance events, whilst the imperial holidays with their marked emphasis on patriotism remained immutable. Very often, such occasions tended to have propagandist elements; the authorities required unquestionable patriotism and full support for the war effort.