

Women and Sexuality in the Interwar Croatian Popular Music through the Lens of Early Record Industry

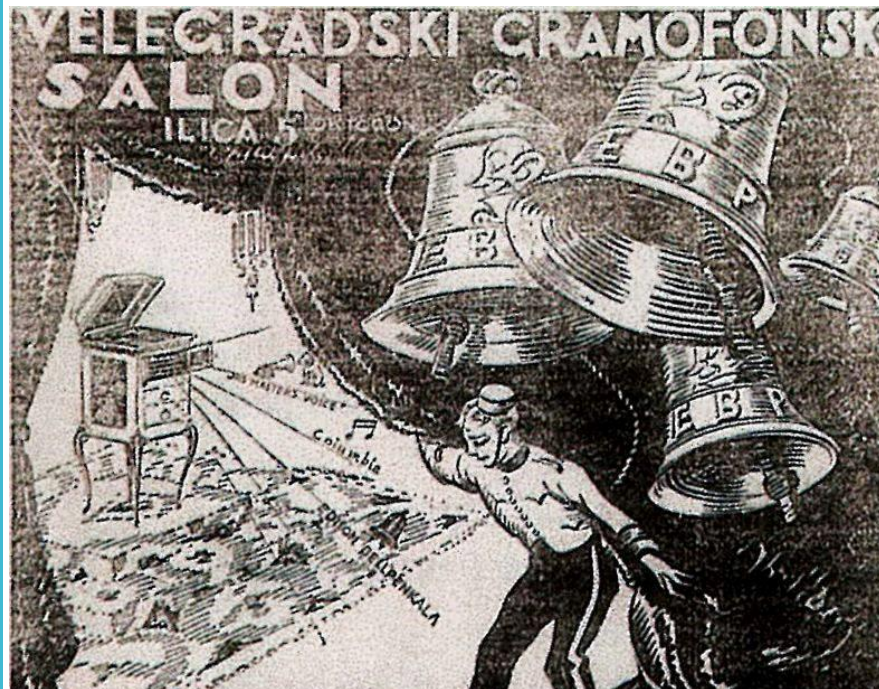
Jelka Vukobratović, PhD, Music Academy Zagreb

Early record production for private purposes

- Private and domestic use
- Limited possibilities of loudspeakers
- 78 rpm shellac records
- First Zagreb record factory
- Edison Bell Penkala (1927-1938)
- Harlem night life broadcasts
- From „sweet syncopation“ to „real wicked ditties“ (ditty - “an especially simple and unaffected song”) (Shane Vogel: *The Scene of Harlem Cabaret*, 2009)



„Spicy“
recordings and
the record
label warnings



JURAJ DEVIĆ, član hrv. zem. kazališta, Zagreb.

Velike ploče (25 cm.) Znak ploče „Odeon“ Ciena K 4.—

Izvolite samo
po ovom broju
naručbu učiniti.

Pikantne snimke (samo za gospodu)

- 70495 Tako se radi u braku.
Prvo uštreanje.
- 70496 Gore i dole.
Sprieda i straga.
- 70497 Izpovjed mlade djevojke.
Tajna njene pikse.
- 70498 U postelji.
Kod zubara.
- 70499 Prodika plebanuša poslije fašnika, I. dio.
Prodika plebanuša poslije fašnika, II. dio.

Three points of departure:

- 1. social and political position of women in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and their image in the popular culture of the time
- 2. poetics and politics of the Yugoslavian cabarets in the global context
- 3. usage of couplet songs in both within and outside of the context of cabarets



1. social and political position of women in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and their image in popular culture

- First women organisations
- Branislav Nušić: Women's right to vote (performed by Žanka Stokić)
- Young women employment and *Girlkultur*
- Günter Berghaus: „Feminism, Americanism and Popular Entertainment in Weimar Germany“, *Journal of Design History*, 1988.
- Croatian popular press girl-image („Svijet“ and „Kulisa“ magazines)

„Girls“

1. social and political position of women in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and their image in popular culture



Vlaho Paljetak: Više vrijedi jedna žena nego djeve sve

Edison Bell Penkala Z 1056

1. social and political position
of women in the Kingdom of
Yugoslavia and their image in
popular culture





Vlaho Paljetak: Više vrijedi jedna žena nego djeve sve

- A woman is more worth than all the maidens,
- That is not very hard to guess, is it?
- A maiden only thinks of marriage right away
- But a woman, without begging, knows immediately what you like
- And throws herself into your arms right away

Cabarets as places of social critique

2. poetics and politics of the
Yugoslavian interwar
cabarets

- Peter Jelavich: *Berlin Cabaret. Studies in Cultural History* (1996)
- “cabaret was something of a tease: it simultaneously satirized and sustained the erotic energy of the day” (Jelavich p. 5)
- Weimar-era Berlin cabaret dealt with issues of sex most of all and politics least of all (Jelavich p. 2)
- John Warren in *Interwar Vienna: Culture Between Tradition and Modernity* (2009)
- Igor Mrduljaš: *Zagrebački kabaret. Slika jednog rubnog kazališta.* (1984)
- Political satire in Zagreb „Dverce” cabaret

Aca Binički:
Joan of Arc's
Panties

2. poetics and politics of the
Yugoslavian interwar
cabarets



Couplet as parodic popular genre with erotic content

3. usage of couplet songs in
both within and outside of
the context of cabarets

- Juan Pablo González: „Das Couplet und die Konstruktion urbaner populärer Musik in Lateinamerika“. *Song and Popular Culture* , 2008.
- Famous women performers
- Questionable representativity of recorded couplets
- Insight into the reception of Edison Bell Penkala's couplet records

conclusions

- Gender equality in capitalism and economic crises
- “play a particularly important role in guiding consumers towards particular meanings (...) that commonly involve reference to well-established gender stereotypes or assumptions, and that reinforce inequalities between men and women” (Sarah Cohen in *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender*, 1997. p. 29)

conclusions

Record label of a couplet song „Marica receives her first injection“ by Juraj Dević and Olga Jankova with a scratched label hiding the ambiguous title





Thank you!