

**RECORDINGS, ETHNOMUSICOLOGISTS, COLLABORATIVE ARCHIVING AND COSMOPOLITANISM:  
ONE HISTORICAL EXAMPLE AND ITS DIGITAL RESUMPTION**

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that recordings (that is, to the largest extent, recordings issued by record companies) make a substantial part of music practices in so many music cultures, scenes and communities, and that therefore the corporate complex of its production, circulation and consumption, both in the past and the present, should be taken accordingly, as an integral part of analysis into music cultures. Due to their methodological and epistemological footholds, as scholars interested in music in/as culture, in performance and social life, and committed to collaboration with grassroots communities, ethnomusicologists should not continue to neglect this indivisible facet of music cultures by privileging live (participatory) performances and representing them as an epitome of music as a whole, whenever and wherever. A historical case study in support of the argument pertains to Edison Bell Penkala (EBP), a record company established in 1926 in Zagreb, and active until the mid-1930s. Thanks to localization as a guiding business principle of the recording industry of the time, from one side, and independence from local cultural-political and scholarly ideology of nationally delimited folk music, the other side, the company solicited and produced a range of musics, and engaged musicians active in different music venues and belonging to different social classes and milieus. Its recording output set forth a local (version of) cosmopolitanism, the features of which will be examined in the paper. Equally, I shall follow the social life of EBP records (that is, also, musics forged on them) in the following decades, but especially their resumption in the digital environment thanks to do-it-yourself curators – prosumers – of historical recordings. Their enthusiastic work urges institutions and scholars, especially ethnomusicologists, to join in preserving, as Pekka Gronow (2014) claimed, “the world’s greatest sound archive”, the archive of 78 rpm records.

