

Bulbul pjeva – Bosnian Soul echoes from the Old Gramophone

Mr. Vesna Aleksandrović

National Library of Serbia, Skerlićeva 1, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia

E-mail: vesna.aleksandrovic@nb.rs

Abstract - National Library of Serbia's collection of old gramophone records includes some of Bosnian songs performed by Bosnian and Serbian performers. Precise determination of the date when these clips were made, in most cases is not possible, but there are some facts which indicate that the earliest were recorded in the first decade of the twentieth century. The youngest ones date from the mid-fifties of last century. His Master's Voice, Odeon, Jumbola, Edison Bell Record, Homocord, Jugoton and Gramophone Concert Record, are some of the most famous publishing houses of the first half of the twentieth century whom published pearls of Bosnian Sevdah. Launching the project Digitization of old gramophone records on 78 rpm five years ago, National Library of Serbia preserved and made accessible beautiful sounds of the old Bosnia. Some of them are already available on the website of the National Digital Library of Serbia, at <http://digital.nb.rs/scc/muzikalije.php>. We donate these recordings to Bosnian public and National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Keywords - *Digitization, Gramophone records, Sound Recordings, Sevdalinka Song*

1. PROJECT DIGITIZATION OF OLD 78 RPM GRAMOPHONE RECORDS

National Library of Serbia started project Digitization of Old 78 rpm Gramophone Records five years ago, to save, preserve and present old, fragile and damaged gramophone records. Collection comprises recordings of various music styles and genres, from classical and folk music to jazz and popular dances from the first half of the XX century, with small number of speech recordings. Collection constantly grows and today, there are 1500 gramophone records. The oldest one dates from 1902.

Complexity of converting analogue sound recording to its digital transcript requires numerous technical, mechanical and chemical means, different kind of skills and practice, appropriate software and time, as well. Our idea was to digitize all records regardless to which cultural, social or genre category they belong. Each of digitized objects is stored in two digital versions:

- original, raw sound recording transfer to digital format, without any kind of sound editing, for the purpose of making a room for some future, advanced sound restoration by upgraded software and techniques;
- edited copy, which imply numerous and various acts on recording, such as noise, click, hiss and many other reduction, optimization of sound level scale... This edited recording has optimized pseudo stereo and totally restored sub-version.

Exploring cultural heritage drives us to historical, social and cultural connectivity. At the beginning of XX century, major publishing houses sent their recordists to Belgrade, Sarajevo and Zagreb to scout around for recording famous performers. Thus, our collection is enriched with Bosnian and

Croatian musical performances and works. Professional and amateur artists, singers, newly founded vocal and instrumental groups, choirs and bands recorded music regardless on their origin. At that time, through open windows of Belgrade, Sarajevo or Zagreb apartments, one could hear sevdalinka song, old Serbian town song, opera, popular operettas, folk dances from Zagorje, foxtrot or jazz. Voices of Mijat, Arnost, Nazif, Sofka, Josip, Dajos, Andolija and many others, echoed in every corner of Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia. In taverns musicians were incessantly learning new songs and dances, transmitting the major mission of music, which is connecting people, souls, and nations with melody, rhythm, barely audible tamburitza chords, tenor vibrato or strong accordion sound.

Desire to connect on such manner is strong today. We shed covers, removed traces of dust, let turntable to spin and revealed regions without boundaries, landscapes of song, dance, and sounds from the past.

2. LOVE SONG... SEVDAH

Is there anything that is not written or told about sevdalinka, any description of this beautiful song which astonish listener by its melody, and most of all, by invisible but aloud atmosphere that evokes the past times? Weaves of melody threads refined by finest melisma, consisted of sensibility, feelings and descriptions of love as ašik, but also love for nature, people, world itself. Next few lines should give a precise and proper description and meaning of sevdah atmosphere, and its social, emotional and musical ambience:

„This world is so much voluptuous and even imagination on it is, as well. Beneath the stone of patriarchal taboo, it expressed itself as the purest fluid – sung by the ancient word one of the finest and most dramatic love lyrics of the world”

Skender Kulenović, about *sevdalinka* song

„*Sevdalinka* (love song) has a special role in culture of Bosnian Muslims. It is a folk song in who have been compendiously in musical-literal-lingual shape, said genuine folk soul of imminent ambience, emphatic sensuality and universal tragic of people.

...From the literate and historical point of view, researching on *sevdalinka* songs, shows that it arises, lives, change itself and enriches in Bosnian mahalas and cities, that it is expression of life, meaning and cognition of life and love. *Sevdalinka*'s focuses are heart of oriental, material and spiritual culture in Bosnia, Sarajevo first of all, and then other, smaller casabas all over the Bosnian land”

Dževad A. Jahić: *Bosnian Muslims Language, Sarajevo 1991.*

„*Sevdalinka* is an urban Bosnian love song, with the word “Bosnian” defining the geographical origin of *sevdalinka*, the word “urban” depicting its urban nature, and the word “love” denoting its content related theme.”

Omer Pobrić

3. THE BEGINNING OF SOUND RECORDING IN BOSNIA

One decade passed from the invention of phonograph (Edison) and first successful recording of human voice on wax cylinder, until the first gramophone and turntable (1878–1889). At the end of XIX century, an American, Emil Berliner broadens his industrial activity to Europe, by opening in Berlin *Deutsche Grammophon* (1898) and *The Gramophone Company* in London. The earliest records were acoustically recorded, which means that the vibrations from the sound source were dispatched directly on the needle which transformed them into and mechanical made groove on matrix. Electrical recording starts not until 1920.

Primary representation of sound recordings player happened in Bosnia in July of 1890, when Mr. Castle, an agent of Edison Phonograph Company (established in 1887) presented a phonograph in Sarajevo. Until 1902, citizens of Sarajevo had a chance to see and meet many similar machines. Gramophone machines could be bought via mail commission and local agents. Records came from Vienna, Budapest and Prague. The earliest known sellers were Stjepan P. Zelenika (first official Gramophone Company agent since 1907) and Muhamed Tosunović. Family Prcić, from Donja Tuzla, had a store engaged in selling Zonophone, Odeon

and Jumbo plates. Also, there were shops of gramophone merchandise in Derventa and Mostar. The thing which is really interesting is that a licence for public use and selling of gramophones and records was compulsory all over the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In Bosnia, it was given by Provincial Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

After 1900, Gramophone companies become aware that local music and performers recording could win marketplace, so they have sent recordists to expeditions all over the world. Therefore, Deutsche Grammophon decided to send well-known and expert recordist Franz Hampe to Bosnia. On his way to Sarajevo, he visited Budapest and Zagreb. While he was returning to Berlin, with around 1000 recordings on wax, he made some in Belgrade. Equipment, which Hampe unloaded when he arrived on Sarajevo train station, was weighty – rotating plate with bob (for enabling movement steadiness during recording), horn and large number of wax matrix.

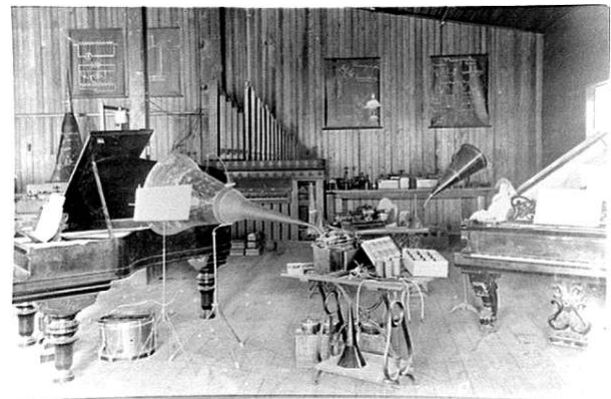


Fig. 1. Recording studio, Edison Bell

After he got special license for recording, he started search for musicians. Hampe asked gramophone accessory sellers, listened to live performances in restaurants and hotels (Europe, Central) and other places, revealed musicians and signed contracts for recording. Somewhere in Čemaluša Street (today Titova St.) Hampe had a chance to hear performance of Vasa Stanović - Andolija from Šabac, and his band. Truly overjoyed, he made 28 recording of talented, self-taught Andolija. At some city party he met Jewish tamburitza consort *La Gloria* and afterwards made 12 unique recordings. *La Gloria* orchestra was established in 1906, and cherished tradition of Spanish and Bosnian Sefards. Withal, these recordings belong to the earliest recordings of tamburitza orchestras, which were rather popular in XIX century in Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia and Vojvodina.

The Gramophone Company, as it was mentioned before, started market widening and so, the repertoire of published records has been adjusted for that purpose. Along with popular folk songs,

Hampe recorded also 10 records with epic songs performed by Rizvan Kardović, which are the oldest recordings of this kind of music. Along with mentioned performances, during this expedition, recordings of zurna were also made, playing the instrumental versions of sevdalinka.

Franz Hampe did in Sarajevo 150 matrix plates and sent them to Berlin for pressing in Deutsche Grammophone Manufactory. Later on, cheap edition of Gramophone Company, *Zonophone*, published them for Bosnian market. These records were included in Gramophone Company catalogue of gramophone records, for season 1908/1909.

Many of them were pressed later and we found information concerning re-issuing in Gramophone Concert catalogue for 1927. EMI Archive, later successor of The Gramophone Company and His Master's Voice, even today preserve some of these recordings

The second expedition occurred only one year later, when Max Hampe (Franz Hampe's brother) visited Sarajevo to make set of 99 recordings. At this occasion he worked also in Budapest, Zagreb, Mostar, Ljubljana, Skadar and Montenegro. Max recorded performances and voices of Nazif Mamišević's Band, Mehmed Tahirović, Stanoje V. Todorović, Nazif Ramić, Jelena and Anka Tumac etc. Just like it was the case on first expedition, the second one's repertoire comprises Serbian and Bosnian songs, Ottoman marches, folk songs from Herzegovina and Bosnian sevdalinkas.



Fig. 2. Max Hampe and William Sinkler Darby, Bombay, 1905

Recordings, which Hampe brothers made during these two expeditions in 1907 and 1908, were the only one pressed and sold, until 1902. Interesting fact is that none of musicians who were recorded in 1907 and 1908, never recorded after 1920, when the old, traditional manner of performing sevdalinka, begins to be replaced with the new, close-to-western harmony way.

Number of reissued Bosnian Gramophone Concert records until 1927 drops from 242 to 110. One of the possible reasons is appearance of *rival* publishing houses, with their own Bosnian cata-

logues – Odeon, Jumbo, Jumbola, Lyraphon and Metafon. Two decades later, first gramophone manufactory in Yugoslavia – Jugoton, published Bosnian music and songs sung by new singers who fascinated some new auditory.

3. BOSNIAN 78 RPM RECORDS IN NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SERBIA

Two of the earliest pearls of Bosnian folk songs records which National Library of Serbia treasures, dates from 1907/1908. These are Nit ja jedem, nit ja pijem along with Bećarac (performed by Nazif Memišević and his group, Gramophone Concert Record), and Što je sveta na svo četir strane followed by Hajduk Veljko song (Bosnian folk band and choir of Beća Arapović, Jumbola). Very important and huge amount of Bosnian records represents activity of the first Yugoslav publishing house Jugoton, founded after The Second World War in Zagreb. In our collection we preserve records published by Edison Bell Radio, Odeon, Jugoton, Homocord, His Master's Voice, ABC Grand Record and Elektroton.

Relate to famous Bosnian performers whose voices National Library of Serbia proudly store, we emphasize Safet Isović, Zaim Imamović, Ahmed Novalija, Himzo Polovina, Joza Kristić, Nadežda Cmiljić and Nada Mamula.

Several songs occur in various versions, performed by different singers and bands, which certainly shows how much they were popular in Bosnia and Serbia at the time. Let just mention songs Pošetala Ana pelivana, Kolika je Javorina planina, Moj dilbere.

Number of Serbian singers who performed Bosnian songs is a bit larger for the fact that our collection become and grew by Serbian citizen's donation and ransom. Also, this approves how the influence of music and performers, singers, bands and choirs, broadened outside geographic borders. Serbian singers used to visit Bosnia and Herzegovina, and broadcasted Bosnian folk songs to Serbia. In a while these songs became very popular and famous Serbian musicians started to record them on behalf of foreign publishing houses. Bora Janić, Mijat Mijatović, Sofka Nikolić and Milan Tomić are just quite a few most familiar and most common Serbian singers who performed sevdalinka.

One of the primary postulate of the present time and freedom concerns information accessibility, knowledge and craft interchange, along with deepening sense that cultural heritage of one nation, country or group, represents legacy of foregone generations to the whole world. Embodiment of this idea is cognizable in our act to bring out treasures we cherish, and make them available to the whole world, via portal Digital National Library of Serbia (<http://digital.nb.rs/eng/index.php>).

National Library of Serbia, therefore, has honour to present conjoined Bosnian musical treasure from its collection to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This gift represents act of connectivity, understanding and good will. It is presented as collection of Bosnian digitized gramophone records, followed by pictures of labels and gramophone publishing houses catalogues. We truly believe that this gesture will bring two institutions and countries deeply connected, and reinforce strong and profound resurrection of connection on the level of ordinary and natural life and living.

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