

ZAGREB, LONDON, BERLIN, NEW YORK: THE ORIGINS OF THE RECORD INDUSTRY IN CROATIA (1902-1939)

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Abstract

The record industry grew rapidly between 1900 and 1914. Although record production was concentrated in the largest industrialised countries, companies set out to create a global market by recording songs in all major languages. Typically, they sent their engineers on expeditions which took them to major European cities. They made recordings with local artists selected by the company's local representatives. The recording masters were shipped to a factory to be processed, and the finished pressings sent back to local retailers. The paper will discuss in detail the activities of the Gramophone Company (UK), which made at least 500 recordings in Zagreb and Osijek between 1902 and 1913. The company had several competitors, including the German Lindström group (Odeon, Beka, Parlophon) and Pathé in France, and their activities will also be considered. The Great War caused a break in recording, but after the war the companies returned. Gramophone was back in Zagreb in 1924, and

the Germans followed. A new peak in global record sales was reached in 1929.

Meanwhile, American record companies, especially Victor and Columbia, created large catalogues of »foreign-language« records for immigrants, including Croatian-Americans. They also issued material recorded by their European associates, such as Gramophone Co., for the American market. The early record industry had been dominated by a small number of multi-national companies which held the basic patents on recording technology. After World War I, local enterprises also entered the market, as independent record companies were started in smaller countries such as Sweden (Sonora), Latvia (Bellaccord), Czechoslovakia (Esta) and Yugoslavia (Edison Bell Penkala).

Keywords: Croatia; music; record industry; history; immigrants

Ključne riječi: Hrvatska; glazba; diskografska industrija; povijest; imigranti

To the memory of Milan Milovanović, a friend who was truly knowledgeable in the field of Balkan discography.

Like moving pictures, electric light and automobiles, sound recording was one of the inventions of the late nineteenth century that quickly caught the imagination of the general public. At first, people paid money to listen to »talking machines« which could repeat speech and music. Around the turn of the century, sound recordings and record players were increasingly marketed for home use; the record industry was born. By the First World War, global record sales were already approaching a hundred million records.¹ In this paper, we shall observe the introduction of gramophone records in the first decades in the region today known as Croatia.

The production of sound recordings on an industrial scale was a demanding process which required access to patented technology and an expert workforce. At first, the industry was concentrated in the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany. In the United States, the Victor Talking Machine Company and the Columbia Phonograph Company pooled their patents in 1903. Although competing with each other, they were able to prevent other companies from entering the disc record market and dominated the field for almost two decades.² In Europe, the Gramophone Company was the leading record company before the First World War. It was founded in 1898, with head offices in London. The company's first record plants were in Germany and the United Kingdom, but it soon built additional factories in Russia, France, Italy, Austria-Hungary, Spain and India.³

Although record manufacturing was concentrated in the largest industrial countries, the company's directors realised that in order to sell records on a global scale, they had to take into account local tastes. Customers wanted records in their own languages by artists known to them. The Gramophone Company built a successful business model which combined mass production with a large variety of products for different audiences. The company employed a small group of sound engineers or »recording experts«, who used portable recording equipment and travelled around the world to make recordings in temporary studios. Local retailers, who were familiar with the tastes of their customers, selected the artists and repertoire in advance. The performances were recorded on wax discs which were then sent to the nearest factory for processing and duplication, and the finished products shipped back to the retailers. A colourful account of the work of these »recording experts« can be found in the memoirs of Frederick Gaisberg (1873–

¹ Pekka GRONOW – Ilpo SAUNIO: *An International History of the Recording Industry*, London: Cassell, 1999, *passim*; Pekka GRONOW: *The Record Industry: The Growth of a Mass Medium*, *Popular Music*, 3 (1983), 53-76.

² Allan SUTTON – Kurt NAUCK: *American Record Labels and Companies: An Encyclopedia (1891–1943)*, Denver, CO: Mainspring Press, 2000, xl.

³ P. GRONOW: *The Record Industry*, 53-65.

1951), who discovered many of the best-known recording artists of the first decades of the century.⁴

Much of the history of the early record industry is lost, but thanks to the work of Alan Kelly we have an almost complete documentation of the recordings of the Gramophone Company from 1898 to 1931, when the company became part of Electric & Musical Industries Ltd. (EMI).⁵ The company had a complicated system of keeping track of its production, which enables us to follow the number of recordings in each country. Each recording engineer had a numerical series based on the size of the matrix and the order in which they were made. Franz Hampe was one of the »experts« working for the company from 1902. His first recordings, numbered 1 to 70, were made in Munich in 1902. Subsequently, his work took him to Zagreb, Prague, St Petersburg and Warsaw, always under the guidance of local agents. In 1903, he continued his work in Istanbul, Alexandria, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Vienna, Budapest and several German cities. By 1915, when the Great War forced him to discontinue his recording trips, he had made about 24,000 recordings in most European and Asian countries.

Presumably, the 61 recordings Franz Hampe made in the Hotel Royal in Zagreb in 1902 were the first commercially issued recordings of Croatian music. Consisting predominantly of local opera singers, comedians and a military band, the recorded repertoire resembled the ones which the company had made in other European countries at that time. The special Croatian characteristic, however, was the tamburitza orchestra. To mention a few examples of the 1902 recording artists, Italian-born opera singer Ernesto Cammarota, who had a long engagement at the Croatian national opera in Zagreb, recorded Gounod's »Ave Maria« and an aria from *Cavalleria rusticana* in Croatian. Arnošt Grund was a popular actor who had migrated from Bohemia to Croatia-Slavonia; his recordings included a song from the then-popular English musical comedy *Geisha* and the comic song »Gramofoniraj kod kuće« (Play the gramophone at home). The military band Vojnička Glasba Zagrebačke VII. hrvatsko-slavensko domobranske (Band of the Seventh Croatian-Slavonian Home Guard in Zagreb) recorded marches, patriotic songs and dance pieces.⁶ Lastly, Tamburaški zbor hrvatskih slijepih radnika (Croatian Blind Workers' Tamburitza Group) recorded mostly nationalist pieces, such as »Oj Hrvati, oj junaci« (Oh Croats, oh heroes) and the Croatian national hymn »Lijepa naša domovina« (Our beautiful fatherland).

⁴ F. W. GAISBERG: *The Music Goes Round: An Autobiography of Frederick Gaisberg*, New York: Macmillan, 1942.

⁵ All data on the Gramophone Company's recording activities are from Alan KELLY: *Kelly On-line Database*, <<https://www.kellydatabase.org/Entry.aspx>> (access 12 December 2021).

⁶ Actually Glazbeni zbor VII. domobranskog okružja u Zagrebu (Band of the Seventh Home Guard District in Zagreb); see Velimir KRAKER – Ivan MIRNIK: *Zvučni zapisi vojne glazbe u Hrvatskoj*, in: Vijoleta Herman Kaurić (ed.): *1914. – Prva godina rata u Trojnoj Kraljevini i Austro-Ugarskoj Monarhiji: Zbornik radova*, Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 2018, 388.

Between 1902 and 1913, the Gramophone Company organised a total of nine recording sessions in Croatia-Slavonia, usually in Zagreb but once in Osijek, Eastern Slavonia. During this period, the company recorded more than 700 titles (see Table 1). The sessions were always made in connection with longer expeditions which also took the experts to other large cities in the region. Most Osijek recordings of 1911 were by the Serbian-born tenor Dušan Mitrović, who had been engaged at the National Theatre there since 1909.⁷ Mitrović was a favourite of the Gramophone, which recorded him solo or as an ensemble member both in Belgrade (1903, 1907, 1910, 1911) and Zagreb (1908, 1909, 1912). From Osijek, the recording engineer George Dillnutt moved further to Zagreb and, finally before returning to Germany, to Drama/Dirama and Salonika in Ottoman Macedonia.

Table 1: Gramophone Company recording sessions in Croatia-Slavonia, 1902-1913.

Date	Location and engineer	Matrix numbers 7-inch	Matrix numbers 10-inch	Number of titles
1902	Zagreb, F. Hampe	75k-110k/C	50-79L	66
1907	Zagreb, F. Hampe	2874k-2905k	5478L-5661L	216
1908	Zagreb, M. Hampe		4285r-4385r	101
1909	Zagreb, M. Hampe		5900r-6000r	101
1910	Zagreb, M. Hampe		10758r-10810r	53
1911	Osijek, G. Dillnutt		73ak-105ak	33
1911	Zagreb, G. Dillnutt		106ak-192ak	87
1912	Zagreb, F. Hampe		14437L-14494L	58
1913	Zagreb, W. C. Hancox		5891ab-5918ab	28
1902-1913				743

Over the years, the Gramophone Company may have also recorded other Croatian artists at locations outside Croatia. In 1913, for instance, the company recorded two sides with opera singer Tošo Lesić in Novi Sad, southern Hungary. Most other recordings of this session were Serbian; within the scope of this paper, we have not been able to investigate these titles in full.

The Gramophone Company's Competitors

The Gramophone Company was the leading record company in Europe and Asia before the First World War. In many countries its influence was so overwhelming that the company's name became generic, and all record players were colloquially called »gramophones«. Nevertheless, the company had several influential competitors. Having agents in most European countries, including the Bal-

⁷ Krešimir KOVAČEVIĆ (ed.): Mitrović, Dušan, *Leksikon jugoslavenske muzike*, vol. 2, Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod »Miroslav Krleža«, 1984, 24.

kans, the French Pathé company was a major rival. It made recordings in Belgrade in 1910,⁸ and also some Croatian recordings are known to collectors, but we have not yet found any details of Pathé in Croatia-Slavonia. A search of advertisements in contemporary newspapers might shed light on the question.

Gramophone's strongest competitors, however, were the German companies with similar global ambitions. Before the First World War, more than a dozen active record companies in Germany exported records abroad. They included Beka, Favorite, Lyrophon, Dacapo, Homophon, Anker and the International Talking Machine Company. Some were short-lived, but several were able to expand their businesses on a global scale.⁹

Founded in Berlin-Weißensee in 1903, the International Talking Machine Company (ITMC) was one of the Gramophone Company's most serious rivals in Europe before the Great War.¹⁰ Its principal record label was Odeon, and the company's trademark was based on the cupola of the Odéon Theatre in Paris, but the firm also issued records on the cheaper Jumbo and Jumbola labels. Judging by the number of copies in the collection of the National Library of Zagreb, the ITMC had an extensive recording programme in Croatia – as it did in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The ITMC quickly expanded its business in the footsteps of the Gramophone Company to most countries in Europe, Asia and South America.¹¹ A news item in the Austro-German trade periodical *Der Phonograph* in 1907 lists agencies in many parts of the Dual Monarchy. The agent for Croatia, Slavonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina was Schiff i drug at Gundulićeva ulica 8 in Zagreb (see Figure 1).¹² The business model of both the ITMC and the Gramophone Company was the same: establish agencies in all important markets, send technicians to record local artists and press discs at centrally located record plants. Unfortunately, the ITMC archives are lost, but on the basis of news items in the contemporary trade press, catalogues, surviving discs and other sources, it is possible to establish a rough chronology of the records. The number of copies preserved is still too small to create a full picture, but several commercial trade catalogues of Odeon records from 1907–1912 list a considerable number of Croatian items. It seems fair to say that the ITMC must have recorded several hundred titles in Croatia, but only a fraction of them is available today in public archives and libraries.

⁸ ***: Nova serija ploča, *Mali žurnal*, 24 October 1910, 3.

⁹ For a survey of German record companies, see Rainer LOTZ – Michael GUNREM – Stephan PUILLE: International Talking Machine Co., *Bilderlexikon der deutschen Schellack-Schallplatten*, vol. 2, 2019, Holste-Oldendorf: Bear Family Records.

¹⁰ See Risto Pekka PENNANEN: Filling the Gaps of Bosnian Discography: Central European Labels before the Great War, *ARSC Journal*, 47 (2016) 2, 163.

¹¹ R. LOTZ – M. GUNREM – S. PUILLE: International Talking Machine Co., *Bilderlexikon der deutschen Schellack-Schallplatten*, vol. 2, 442-476.

¹² ***: Advertisement of Odeon, *Der Phonograph: Beiblatt zur Kinematographische Rundschau*, 13 (1907), 12.

Zahjevajte popis
Odeon-snimaka za Novu godinu



Najljepši dar za Novu godinu !

Gramofoni najmodernije i najbolje konstrukcije od K 27.-- do K 600.

Dvostrane Odeon-ploče.
Najveći izbor internacionalnih glazbotvornina. — Popis ploča na zahtjev badava.

Gramofonski automati.
Stare ploče uzimamo uz osobito povoljne uvjete u zamjenu. — Strukovna popravilaonica gramofona svih sustava.

Lučne svjetiljke i žarulje.
Najveća tvornica električnog ugljena u monarhiji.

Lusteri za električnu razsvjetu.
Cjenici i troškovnici badava.

Preprodavaocima znatn p.pust.

SCHIFF i DRUG
ZAGREB, Gmnašuličeva ulica 8.

Figure 1: Schiff i drug of Zagreb advertised the Odeon record catalogue and other ITMC products as New Year gifts on New Year's Day 1908.¹³

In 1912, the ITMC was sold to the Carl Lindström Company, a major manufacturer of gramophones and equipment, which had already purchased several smaller German record companies. Lindström took over the ITMC with its large catalogue and a global network of agencies, but the name of the ITMC was omitted from all products. Odeon became one of Lindström's principal record labels. Between the world wars, the name was in use in most European countries, including Yugoslavia (see below).

Several other companies are also known to have issued Croatian records before the Great War. They include Beka, Favorite, Lyrophon, Dacapo and Kalliope in Germany, ABC Grand Record in Austria and Premier in Hungary. **Favorite** was founded in Hanover in 1903. As the global record business was expanding, the company enjoyed several successful years, making recordings in countries as far away as China and Ecuador.¹⁴ An Austrian Favorite catalogue, dated 1912, lists about 50 Croatian records, but it is not known where they were recorded and how many of them survive today.¹⁵ Favorite's visiting technician waxed approximately

¹³ ***: Advertisement of Schiff i drug for Odeon products, *Glasonoša*, Karlovac, 1 January 1908, 6.

¹⁴ R. LOTZ – M. GUNREM – S. PUILLE: Favorite, *Bilderlexikon der deutschen Schellack-Schallplatten*, vol. 2, 107-139.

¹⁵ *** *Favorite Hauptkatalog 1912 über doppelseitige Favorite-Schallplatten 25 cm Durchmesser*, Vienna: Favorite, 74-76.

the same number of Slovenian titles during a single week in Ljubljana in 1910, and the company never returned.¹⁶ Favorite was not as successful as the ITMC, and its efforts proved short-lived in many regions. The company expanded its business too fast and was thus forced to sell out to the Lindström Company in 1913.

Even less is known about two other German companies, **Lyrophon** and **Dacapo**. Lyrophon was founded in 1904.¹⁷ For a while, it managed to create a network almost as wide as the ITMC, extending to numerous countries in Europe, Asia and South America. A news item in the Austrian trade journal *Der Sprechmaschinenhändler* in 1908 mentions that the company had recently recorded »an extensive repertoire« in Lemberg (Lviv), Prag (Prague), Brünn (Brno), Wien (Vienna), Laibach (Ljubljana), Agram (Zagreb) and Budapest, but we have not been able to find any catalogues of these recordings.¹⁸ In the following year, the same publication reported that, in addition to an extensive Austrian repertoire, the Austrian branch of Dacapo-Record-Co. m. b. H. was about to publish a new catalogue containing many records in Polish, Yiddish, Hebrew, Croatian and Serbian.¹⁹ Dacapo was founded in Berlin in 1907. Both Lyrophon and Dacapo were sold to the Lindström concern in 1913.²⁰

Kalliope records were published by Kalliope-Musikwerke in Leipzig from 1905 to 1914.²¹ A catalogue dated 1910 lists about fifty Croatian and Serbian songs (sic).²² We have not been able to locate any of these recordings; for the time being, the details of this company's activities in Croatia remain clouded in mystery.

Active in many regions in South-Eastern Europe and Turkey, **Premier Record** was one of the trademarks of the Első Magyar Hanglemezygár company, founded in Budapest in 1908.²³ A few Croatian issues are known – for example by Ernesto Cammarota – but the total number could have been much larger. The same applies to **ABC Grand Record**, a company that was active in Vienna in the 1910s.²⁴

¹⁶ Drago KUNEJ: Slovenian Recordings Made by the Favorite Company in Ljubljana in 1910, in: Pekka Gronow – Christiane Hofer (eds.): *The Lindström Project: Contributions to the History of the Record Industry*, vol. 4, Vienna: Gesellschaft für Historische Tonträger, 2012, 48.

¹⁷ Risto Pekka PENNANEN: Filling the Gaps, 175; R. LOTZ – M. GUNREM – S. PUILLE: Lyrophon, *Bilderlexikon der deutschen Schellack-Schallplatten*, vol. 3, 196-220.

¹⁸ ***: Neuaufnahmen der Lyrophonwerke, *Der Sprechmaschinenhändler: Beiblatt zur Österreichische Nähmaschinen- und Fahrrad-Zeitung*, 45 (1908), 27.

¹⁹ ***: Dacapo-Record-Co. m. b. H., *Der Sprechmaschinenhändler: Beiblatt zur Österreichische Nähmaschinen- und Fahrrad-Zeitung*, 61 (1909), 38.

²⁰ R. LOTZ – M. GUNREM – S. PUILLE: Dacapo, *Bilderlexikon der deutschen Schellack-Schallplatten*, vol. 1, 418-424.

²¹ R. LOTZ – M. GUNREM – S. PUILLE: Kalliope, *Bilderlexikon der deutschen Schellack-Schallplatten*, vol. 3, 49-50.

²² ***: *Kalliope Schallplatten, Haupt-Katalog 1910–1911*, Vienna: Grammophon-Import-House Johann Arlett, 1910, 42-43.

²³ Gyula MARTON – Klára BAJNAI: *Első Magyar Hanglemezygár – Premier Record*, Budapest: Jazz Oktási, 2008, xi-xvi.

²⁴ Risto Pekka PENNANEN: Filling the Gaps, 179.

The mysterious **Drucker Sokol** label of Mavro Drucker's »First Arts and Crafts Hall of Zagreb« (Prva zagrebačka umjetno-obrtna dvorana) has created confusion among discographers. Strangely enough, the company advertised sewing machines, bicycles, sleighs and other such items in newspapers but apparently offered talking machines, cylinders, discs and orchestrions solely through catalogues. A few Drucker Sokol discs have survived, but the undated (c. late 1910) supplemental record catalogue of M. Drucker includes, along with discs by prominent companies such as Odeon and Gramophone, a relatively long listing of the Sokol product range.²⁵ Judging from the identical titles and couplings of opera baritone Žiga Rogач's recordings in the respective catalogues of Kalliope and Drucker Sokol, very probably the lion's share of the Sokol records were customised Kalliope products.²⁶ We can therefore conclude that Sokol was a so-called »custom« label; many smaller German record companies were willing to publish special editions of their products using a specific retailer's trademark.

Altogether, we can state that several companies recorded more than a thousand titles of Croatian music in total before the First World War, at the time when Croatia-Slavonia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The earliest records were single-sided, with only one title on each record. Around 1908, »double-sided« records, with two titles on a record became the standard, and often older single-sided pressings were reissued combining two titles on one record, but our calculations are based on titles. Only a fraction of these can be found today in public archives and collections, but additional copies can be found in private collections. More information on records which have not yet been located today can be found in surviving dealers' catalogues and newspaper advertisements.

During the first decades of the industry, only a few international celebrities such as Caruso had exclusive contracts with record companies. It was common that locally known performers made recordings for several firms, often recording the same titles several times. One of the most frequently recorded Croatian male singers was opera baritone Bogdan Vulaković who waxed cylinders for Pathé and discs for the Gramophone Company, the ITMC (Odeon) and Favorite. For the Gramophone, he recorded in Zagreb in 1902, 1907 and 1908 and in Vienna in 1905. As Vulaković had many engagements outside Croatia-Slavonia, several other recording sessions took place elsewhere, for example, for Pathé possibly in Prague or Brno, and for the ITMC in 1905 or 1906 in Vienna. It seems, however, that Vulaković recorded for Favorite in Zagreb both as a soloist and with Arnošt Grund.²⁷

²⁵ ***: M. Drucker, *Nastavak k glavnom popisu ploča*, Zagreb: M. Drucker, 1910(?).

²⁶ Cf. ***: *Kalliope Schallplatten, Haupt-Katalog 1910–1911*, 42–43.

²⁷ For Vulaković, see Krešimir KOVAČEVIĆ (ed.): Vulaković, Bogdan, *Leksikon jugoslavenske muzike*, vol. 2, Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod »Miroslav Krleža«, 1984, 527.

The Interwar Years

The First World War caused huge problems for the record industry, and recording expeditions were discontinued for several years. After the war, new borders were drawn, and re-establishing businesses took a while. Gradually record sales improved as the global economy grew, and in 1929 global record sales reached an all-time high.²⁸

Although the Gramophone Company lost an important market in Russia, it was probably still the most important record company in Europe after the war. The »His Master's Voice« (HMV) label now replaced »Gramophone«. In many regions, the company was at first satisfied to continue selling old recordings made before the war. In Finland, for instance, which had become independent in 1917, no new recordings were made until 1925. As sales began to improve, annual recording sessions were again organised in Helsinki.²⁹

Croatia had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but now it joined the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which subsequently became Yugoslavia. The Gramophone Company's old factory in Aussig an der Elbe/Ústí nad Labem in Habsburg Bohemia was now in the new republic of Czechoslovakia. A new His Master's Voice catalogue series with an »AM« prefix, pressed in Czechoslovakia, was introduced for Croatian and Serbian recordings. We have not been able to trace new recording sessions in Zagreb in the 1920s, but Croatian artists were recorded in Vienna in 1929. Long recording sessions were arranged in Belgrade in 1925, 1927 and 1929, and they included a few Croatian pieces.³⁰ As evident from the labels of records in private collections, Croatian HMV records were now pressed in Czechoslovakia. Documentation and archival copies of these recordings are possibly preserved at the EMI Music Archives in Hayes.

In 1931, Gramophone merged with Columbia to form Electric & Musical Industries, but the labels continued to market their products separately.³¹ Before the Great War, Columbia had been an important label in many European countries, including the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but to the best of our knowledge, before the fusion it made only a small number of Croatian recordings. After the war, the company seems to have entered Yugoslavia, and both Croatian and Serbian recordings exist, but we have little information on them.

In Germany, the Carl Lindström concern had acquired most of its smaller competitors, and now channelled its output to the Odeon and Parlophon labels. In

²⁸ Pekka GRONOW: *The Record Industry*, 62.

²⁹ Rainer STRÖMMER: *Suomalaisten 78 kierroksen äänilevyjen luettelo 1901–1961*, Helsinki: Suomen äänitearkisto, 2012, vi.

³⁰ Alan KELLY: *Kelly On-line Database*.

³¹ Peter MARTLAND: *Recording History: The British Record Industry 1888–1931*, London – Toronto – Plymouth: The Scarecrow Press, 2013, 296.

Belgrade, the music shop of Ilić and Andrejević had been selling Odeon records since the early 1920s, and according to Milan Milovanović, they seem to have become official representatives of the Carl Lindström company in Yugoslavia, initiating the regular production of Serbian records on the Odeon label in 1927.³² The cooperation lasted until the outbreak of the Second World War. Yugoslavian recordings were made both in Belgrad and in Berlin, where Yugoslavian artists recorded at the Lindström studios in Schlesische Straße.³³ In addition, a separate Croatian OH series and a Croatian Parlophone series exist, but the extent of these series and their local representatives are not known.

Homocord, a smaller German firm, also issued some Croatian recordings, but now our focus shifts to Edison Bell. Judging by available catalogues and the number of surviving records at the National Library of Croatia, Edison Bell was the most successful record company in Croatia in the 1920s and 1930s.³⁴ Edison Bell Penkala's Main Catalogue from 1927 lists several hundred records, »domestic and foreign«, in several price classes.³⁵ The range of items is classified, among others, into sections for operas and operettas, Yugoslav folk songs, Bosnian *sevdalinka* songs, tamburitza orchestras, as well as Czech, Hungarian, Romanian and English music. The largest section, however, is devoted to »modern dances« (*moderni plesovi*). As other scholars will no doubt be better equipped to study the company's repertoire, we shall attempt to add some background on the company's international activities.

Edison Bell was one of the medium-sized European record labels which competed successfully with the major international record companies and traded profitably for three decades. The company had originally initiated the production of phonograph cylinders in Britain in c. 1901; the name was an obvious attempt to cash in on the fame of the established Edison company. In 1909, the ownership of the company passed to J. E. Hough, Ltd, and it began issuing disc recordings on the Edison Bell Winner label. Over the years, the company went through several changes of ownership and issued records on a number of different labels, including Little Champion, Winner (1912-), Edison Bell Electron (1927-1930) and Edison Bell Radio (1928-1932). In 1932, as the global record business declined, the firm was sold to the recently established Decca Record Co. Ltd. Decca continued to carry on the Edison Bell business for some years, until it was wound down in the mid-1930s.³⁶

³² Milan MILOVANOVIĆ: Distribution of Carl Lindström Products in Serbia, in: Pekka Gronow – Christiane Hofer (eds.): *The Lindström Project: Contributions to the History of the Record Industry*, vol. 1, 2nd ed., Vienna: Gesellschaft für Historische Tonträger, 2011, 59-60.

³³ Milan MILOVANOVIĆ: Distribution of Carl Lindström Products in Serbia, 60.

³⁴ See also Naila CERIBAŠIĆ: Music as Recording, Music in Culture, and the Study of Early Recording Industry in Ethnomusicology: A Take on Edison Bell Penkala, *IRASM*, 52 (2021) 2, 323-354.

³⁵ ***: *Edison Bell Penkala, Glavni katalog domaćih i stranih ploča, studeni 1927*, Zagreb: EPB, 1927.

³⁶ Peter MARTLAND: *Recording History*, 244-247; Guy MARCO – Frank ANDREWS (eds.): *Encyclopedia of Recorded Sound in the United States*, New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1993, 230-231.

Although the principal market of Edison Bell was in Britain, the company made several attempts to expand. In October 1928, it established Edison Bell International Ltd., a subsidiary company which managed its international business. It is known to have made over 200 recordings in Budapest in 1928. Bill Dean-Myatt notes that Edison Bell Radio and Edison Bell Electron records have been found with recordings made in Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, France, Italy, Switzerland and Greece. The firm recorded artists from the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) in Amsterdam or London, and even a brief Finnish series was recorded in London in 1934, when the company was already a subsidiary of Decca Records.³⁷

According to Dario Bulić, in summer 1926 Edison Bell's representative Abraham B. Goodman established a cooperation with the Croatian Penkala pencil factory, which already had production facilities for gramophone records. Consequently, the Edison Bell Penkala (EBP) company was registered in Zagreb in early 1927, with branches in Belgrade and Skopje. In addition to Yugoslavia, the registration papers defined the new firm's area of responsibility as Austria, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Albania, Greece, Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine.³⁸ The first EBP main catalogue from November 1927 indeed contains a few recordings in Turkish, Greek and Ladino. According to *čalgija* violinist Mesrur Said, the Skopje *čalgija* group of his father, violinist Redžep (Recep) Said, with Sephardic Jewish singer Stela Aškenazi (Stella Eskenazi) from Thessaloniki, Greece, recorded 'about twenty sides' in Zagreb in 1925.³⁹ Although Mesrur Said failed to mention it, the group recorded for EBP. Nonetheless, no EBP catalogues in languages other than Serbo-Croatian have surfaced, nor did the company advertise in, for example, the Czechoslovakian or Austrian press. However, in a letter to the editor of *The Gramophone* in 1940, the industry veteran Paul Voigt mentioned that he had been making recordings for Edison Bell in Budapest in 1928, and thus he was most likely the technician who was responsible for the recordings in Zagreb at the same time.⁴⁰ At first, EBP advertised imported Edison Bell gramophones and discs, but the first EBP main catalogue, issued in November for the Christmas

³⁷ Bill DEAN-MYATT: Edison Bell Record Company, in: Pekka Gronow – Christiane Hofer – Mathias Böhm (eds.): *The Lindström Project: Contributions to the History of the Record Industry*, vol. 9, Vienna: Gesellschaft für Historische Tonträger, 2017, 33-44.

³⁸ Dario BULIĆ: *Diskografija u Jugoslaviji od 1918. do 1941.*, MA thesis, Music Academy at the University of Zagreb, 1980, 19-21.

³⁹ Borivoje DŽIMREVSKI: *Čalgiskata tradicija vo Makedonija*, Skopje: Makedonska kniga, 1985, 36-37. The group consisted of Recep Said, Mamut (Mahmud, surname unknown; *ud lute*), Ustref (Hüsref) Said (*kanun* zither) and possibly Nace (Atanas) Manev (*daire* frame drum). For photographs with some of the recorded musicians in Belgrade in 1930 and in Prizren in 1934 (see pages 484 and 485 in Džimrevski). The recorded repertoire included thirteen instrumental pieces and eight songs in Turkish and one in Ladino; the catalogue does not specify the performer of 'Kol Nidre'. As no surviving records of the session are known to exist, the accompaniment for Lazo (Lazar) Tumbule's three songs in Greek and one in Slavic remain unknown. (**): *Edison Bell Penkala: Glavni katalog domaćih i stranih ploča, studeni 1927*.

⁴⁰ Paul VOIGT: Letter to the Editor, *The Gramophone*, 17 (1940) 9, 8.

season 1927, contains both local and foreign recordings. As always, the catalogue is in Latin and Cyrillic script.⁴¹

The Yugoslavian Edison Bell records that we have seen indicate a gradual development of the company's business. At least three label variants seem to be common: Edison Bell Radio, Edison Bell Electron and Edison Bell Penkala Record. In addition, the Edison Bell Penkala Baby format utilised small, 13.5-cm-diameter records. The discs with the Edison Bell Radio label show no information on the manufacturer, but both Edison Bell Electron and Edison Bell Penkala Record are credited to the Edison Bell Penkala Ltd., Zagreb. The Edison Bell Radio discs have catalogue numbers in an SZ 1300–1400 range. The EB Electrons have catalogue numbers from Z 1800 to Z 2000s, and EB Penkala discs show numbers from Z 1000 to the 1200s. Moreover, some larger 30-cm discs in a VZ 1100 range exist, but we do not know if this was a separate numerical series, or whether the VR prefix was just an indication of size.

The EBP ceased to make local recordings in 1933 and began using exclusively foreign matrices. The firm went bankrupt in 1939, but the Elektroton company purchased two EBP record presses in 1938 and began issuing records. Elektroton, however, exploited foreign matrices, mainly German ones, almost exclusively.⁴²

We have estimated above that several record companies recorded more than a thousand titles of Croatian music before the First World War, at the time when Croatia-Slavonia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.⁴³ The number of Croatian recordings during the interwar period is much more difficult to estimate, as most of the archives are lost and the number of records surviving in public collections today is relatively small. Until we have a fuller reconstruction of the catalogues of the principal record companies which were active in Yugoslavia at this time, any estimate will be speculative, but we will suggest that several thousand recordings once existed.

The recorded repertoire of the 1920s and 1930s certainly reflects the era. Hence, »modern dances« became the most prominent category of recorded music, although classical compositions and regional styles such as tamburitza orchestras were also represented. In addition, one should keep in mind that record shops in Yugoslavia at that time could offer their customers a choice of international recordings, although the study of this repertoire is beyond the aims of this paper.

⁴¹ ***: EBP advertisement, *Virovitičan*, 6 February 1927, 3; ***: *Edison Bell Penkala: Glavni katalog domaćih i stranih ploča, studeni 1927*.

⁴² Dario BULIĆ: *Diskografija u Jugoslaviji od 1918. do 1941.*, 24-26.

⁴³ The main source for the estimate is Alan KELLY: *Kelly On-line Database*.

The United States

We must also consider the role of Croatian recordings made in the United States. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the United States was already the largest record market in the world. The country has since become a driving force in the record industry, where new technologies and musical trends are introduced. But in 1900, the USA was still a country of immigrants; more than 15 per cent of all Americans were foreign-born. Therefore, hundreds of »foreign-language« newspapers in most European languages were published regularly in the USA, and numerous music stores catered especially for immigrant customers.

Major American record companies were quick to include immigrants in their marketing plans. The leading companies, Victor and Columbia, established special departments for producing and marketing »foreign-language« records, as they were called in the trade. For this purpose, they had two alternatives: they could obtain recordings from their European associates and press them for the American market, or record immigrant artists in New York. Victor was closely associated with the Gramophone Company, and it had the rights to market the latter company's European recordings in the USA. Columbia had also established subsidiaries in Europe. At first, most immigrants were eager to hear records by popular artists from their homelands, but over the years, tastes diverged, and immigrant artists began to develop a repertoire better suited to American conditions.⁴⁴

The largest immigrant groups in the USA were Italians, Germans, Poles, Spanish-speakers from many countries, and Yiddish-speaking Jews from Eastern Europe; the largest number of »foreign-language« records were naturally produced for them. In total, records were issued for at least thirty immigrant groups, of which the Croatians were not among the largest. According to the 1940 census of the United States – earlier figures are not available – almost five million Americans still claimed German as their mother tongue, but only 153,080 identified themselves as »Serbo-Croatians«. The census did not list Serbians and Croatians separately. Croatian Americans were thus a relatively small group, below Finns, Greeks, and Slovenians in size. Yet both Victor and Columbia kept issuing »Serbo-Croatian« records fairly regularly at least since 1910.⁴⁵

The first Croatian records issued in the USA seem to have been reissues of the Gramophone Company's European recordings.⁴⁶ At least two of Dušan Mitrović's recordings from 1911 were also issued in the USA. But as the war broke out, importing new recordings from Europe was becoming more difficult, and it was

⁴⁴ See Pekka GRONOW: *Ethnic Recordings: An Introduction*, *Ethnic Recordings in America: A Neglected Heritage*, Washington: American Folklife Center and Library of Congress, 1982, 1-49.

⁴⁵ Pekka GRONOW: *Ethnic Recordings: An Introduction*, 22-23.

⁴⁶ ***: *Discography of American Historical Recordings*, <<https://adp.library.ucsb.edu/>> (access 12 December 2021).

easier to make original recordings in the USA. The recordings of Emilio Blažević illustrate the business practises of the companies. Blažević was a Croatian-American baritone who was born in Kraljevica in 1879 and emigrated to the United States in 1900.⁴⁷

Between 1916 and 1929, Blažević made 89 recordings for Victor and Columbia. Most of them were Croatian, but Victor also used him to record songs in Czech, Slovenian, Polish, Slovak, Macedonian and German. On the record labels his name was changed according to the conventions of each language, and he was Emanuel Bláha on Czech, Elnick Boda on Slovak, and Emil Blazewicz on Polish releases. On Slovenian recordings, for some reason, he used the pseudonym Franjo Potočnik. His repertoire illustrates the patriotic feelings which the war in Europe aroused among immigrants: he recorded the Pan-Slavic hymn »Hej, Slované!« in Czech and its Croatian nationalist rendition »Oj, Hrvati!«. Both recordings are available online in the *Discography of American Historical Recordings*; they are the same song and the same arrangement played by the same studio orchestra, but with different lyrics.⁴⁸

The production of Serbo-Croatian recordings continued regularly at least until the 1940s.

Richard Spottswood's discography *Ethnic Recordings in America* contains a listing of all known Croatian recordings made in the USA until 1942.⁴⁹ Spottswood has also published a numerical listing of the Columbia »E« series (1908–1923), which includes American issues of European recordings.⁵⁰ Between 1923 and 1952, Columbia issued 303 »Serbo-Croatian« records; for Victor, the corresponding figure between 1929 and 1952 is 147. These figures include both original US material and European recordings.⁵¹

In the 1950s, the record industry adopted a new technology, namely the microgroove disc. Furthermore, the 45-rpm »singles« and 33-rpm Long Playing records replaced the old 78-rpm speed. As the descendants of first-generation immigrants became Americanised, the production of »foreign-language« records declined, and it became easier to import new recordings from Europe in accordance with market demand. The history of Croatian recordings in America still needs further study.

⁴⁷ Urša ŠIVIC: Gramofonske plošče z 78 obrati na minuto – izraz ponarodelosti ali vzrok zanjo?, *Traditiones*, 43 (2014) 2, 164.

⁴⁸ ***: *Discography of American Historical Recordings*.

⁴⁹ Richard K. SPOTTSWOOD: *Ethnic Music on Records: A Discography of Ethnic Recordings Produced in the United States, 1893–1942*, 7 vols, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990.

⁵⁰ Richard K. SPOTTSWOOD.: Columbia Records E series, *Recording Pioneers*, <https://www.recordingpioneers.com/rs_links.html> (access 12 December 2021).

⁵¹ Pekka GRONOW: *Ethnic Recordings: An Introduction*, 22-23.

Conclusions

The first commercial recordings in most European countries appeared soon after the turn of the twentieth century, as record companies wanted to create an international market for their products. From the very beginning, the companies realised that although identical gramophones could be sold everywhere, they had to provide local content for their customers. To achieve this, they sent their »recording experts« on long expeditions, where temporary studios were established in major cities, usually for a few days or weeks each year. In Croatia, too, recordings were made fairly regularly from 1902.

Although international companies made the first recordings, for example, in Finland, Portugal or Croatia and produced them abroad, available evidence suggests that the selection of artists and repertoire reflected local tastes rather well due to cooperation with local agents. Thus, in a study of the earlier Scandinavian recordings, Gronow and Englund were able to conclude that the chosen artists were well known in their countries and could choose their repertoire relatively freely.⁵² On the other hand, the number of recordings made annually in each country was limited, and it did not represent the broad spectrum of local musical life.

An interesting feature of Croatian recordings is the marketing of records over cultural and linguistic boundaries. As we have noted in this paper, the same artists would frequently make recordings for both Croatian, Serbian and/or Slovenian markets, or records could be pressed with both Croatian and Serbian labels, in Latin and Cyrillic script. The extent of this phenomenon needs further study.

Recording technology also accelerated the global movement of music. Although this article focuses on the production of local music, international record companies marketed their products as widely as possible, if a demand emerged. The recordings of internationally known opera singers are a good example of this phenomenon: although Caruso never visited Helsinki, his records were available in record shops there. Recording technology also made it easy to sell immigrants music from their homelands; the metal masters, which were used for pressing recordings, could easily be duplicated and sent to another factory for further pressings.

Very little is known about record sales before the First World War. Although gramophones were already widespread, they were expensive, and only a small part of the population bought records regularly. That said, available evidence suggests that in smaller European countries, records usually sold only a few hundred copies which was still sufficient. On the other hand, the most popular records went through several pressings over the years, and therefore they must have sold several thousand copies. From the largest countries like the USA and the UK, doc-

⁵² Pekka GRONOW – Björn ENGLUND: *Inventing Recorded Music: The Recorded Repertoire in Scandinavia 1899–1925*, *Popular Music*, 26 (2007) 2, 281-304.

uments confirm that certain records have sold hundreds of thousands of copies. By the late 1920s, at least 200 million records were sold globally every year. In Germany, 27 million records were sold in 1929, while in Sweden, three million were sold – in Finland, one million. We have not been able to find comparable statistics for Croatia, or Yugoslavia, for this period, but on the basis of our research we suggest that also Croatia had developed a considerable record market.⁵³

As production in Zagreb expanded over the years, the repertoire also became broader, but a more detailed study is still needed. Hence, the move to more local production in the 1930s, the effects of the war, and the role of state-owned record companies in the 1950s certainly deserve further scholarly attention.

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⁵³ Pekka GRONOW: *The Record Industry*, 63.

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*Sažetak*ZAGREB, LONDON, BERLIN, NEW YORK:
ISHODIŠTA DISKOGRAFSKE INDUSTRIJE U HRVATSKOJ (1902-1939)

Diskografska industrija brzo je rasla između 1900. i 1914. Iako je proizvodnja ploča bila koncentrirana u najvećim industrijaliziranim zemljama, tvrtke su krenule u stvaranje globalnog tržišta snimanjem pjesama na svim dominantnim jezicima. Uobičajeno je bilo da tvrtke šalju svoje inženjere na ekspedicije koje bi ih odvele u velike europske gradove. Snimali su s lokalnim izvođačima koje su odabrali lokalni predstavnici tvrtke. Matrice snimaka otpremale su se u tvornicu na obradu, a gotovi otisci slali su se natrag lokalnim prodavačima.

Rad potanko govori o djelatnosti tvrtke Gramophone Company (UK), koja je između 1902. i 1913. godine u Zagrebu i Osijeku napravila najmanje 500 snimaka. Tvrtka je imala nekoliko konkurenata, među kojima su njemačka grupa Lindström (Odeon, Beka, Parlophon) i Pathé u Francuskoj, a u radu su se razmatrale i njihove aktivnosti. Svjetski rat uzrokovao je prekid u snimanju, no nakon Rata diskografske su se tvrtke vratile. Gramophone se vratio u Zagreb 1924. godine, a za njim su došli i Nijemci. Novi vrhunac u globalnoj prodaji ploča dosegnut je 1929. godine. U međuvremenu, američke diskografske kuće, posebice Victor i Columbia, izradile su velike kataloge ploča na »stranom jeziku« za imigrante, uključujući i Hrvate u Americi. Za američko tržište izdavale su i materijale koje su snimili njihovi europski suradnici, poput Gramophone Co.

Prvom diskografskom industrijom dominirao je malen broj multinacionalnih kompanija koje su držale temeljne patente na tehnologiju snimanja. Nakon Prvog svjetskog rata na tržište su ušla i lokalna poduzeća jer su u manjim zemljama kao što su Švedska (Sonora), Latvija (Bellaccord), Čehoslovačka (Esta) i Jugoslavija (Edison Bell Penkala) pokrenute nezavisne diskografske kuće. Taj je razvoj ubrzala nova gospodarska politika 1930-ih, koja je stvorila carinske barijere i pogodovala lokalnoj proizvodnji.