

# THE PRESENTATION OF POPULAR MUSIC IN YUGOSLAV SOCIALIST DISCOURSES (1945–1952)

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This paper deals with popular (entertainment, dance or light) music in Yugoslav socialist discourses, in the period from 1945 to 1952. It is based on newspaper articles of the time, which provide insight into the ways in which the tension, contradictions and possibilities in everyday life related to music and dancing forms of entertainment, were identified. The analyzed data shows that there was an interaction of generative and restrictive practices in Yugoslav society. They indicate the way in which the image of popular music was shaped in the socialist discourse in the 1945–1952 period.

Keywords: popular music, entertainment, dancing, jazz, concerts

In the *new* Yugoslav state (Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia), established after the Second World War, music, like other fields of art and culture, played a prominent role in the construction of the new socialist society. The goal was to make a cultural transformation of the social milieu and to build the *new* socialist man through art, a process that implied comprehensive cultural management (Popovska 2022: 47).

The state/Party<sup>1</sup> strategies of incorporating desirable culture into the public sphere included the generation and restriction of discourses that should enable the production of collectively recognized attitudes, ideas and values in social frameworks. By constructing the "public", an effort was made to codify the politically determined image of legitimate or valuable music, as a norm through which all practices in the field of music, in general, would be measured.

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<sup>1</sup> In post-war Yugoslavia, the Communist Party directed and controlled all social processes through its executive political body, the Politburo, an elaborate political apparatus and state government bodies filled by communists. Thus, the Party and state leadership were united in the state (Šarić 2010: 387).

The paper deals with popular music as presented in Yugoslav socialist discourse in the period from 1945 to 1952.<sup>2</sup> In accordance with the principles of socio-cultural anthropology, I consider popular music through the process of symbolic interactions, that is, the relations of communication that imply its *recognition* in the social space. The paper focuses on media narrativizations that shape the meaning of popular music in the Yugoslav social and cultural context.

The main research question concerns the way in which the image of popular music is structured in Yugoslav socialist discourse. More specifically, the paper focuses on the following question: What is the relationship between the representation / image of popular music and the alternative discourses / phenomena simultaneously offered / present in the public sphere? In this sense, the article deals with the redefinition of discourses and the activation of social capacities, according to the demands and needs of social reality.

The primary source of data are newspapers published during the studied period. They provide insight into the ways in which the tension, contradictions, and possibilities in everyday life related to music and dancing forms of entertainment were identified. The focus is specifically on the Yugoslav newspaper *Borba*. This newspaper was selected taking into account that the historical period under investigation coincides with the Department for Agitation and Propaganda at the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY). Specifically, *Borba* as the newsletter of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, served as a herald of the Communist Party at the federal level, and its aim was the mobilization of the masses and the ideological struggle for social progress, i.e., it presented directives, interpretations, and attitudes that constructed the social atmosphere to the public. In other words, *Borba* was an ideological *indicator* for any communication within social frameworks. Media narratives in the newspaper are instrumental in studying significant aspects of the research question. The analysis also includes data from texts published in other Yugoslav magazines and newspapers from the period, which are presented in scientific articles of other researchers. The paper, to a lesser extent, also includes archival material published in the collection of documents: "Agitprop culture 1945–1952" (Doknić, Petrović and Hofman 2009).

Methodologically, the study is mostly based on content analysis and discourse analysis. Content analysis enables covering a lot of data, which is identified based on the context in which it appears. Discourse analysis provides a critical approach, which takes into account the different levels of linguistic hierarchy in social life. The linguistic product which is realized as a message, reveals patterns of interpretation, which shape the symbolic value as

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<sup>2</sup> It is a particularly dynamic period of the formation of the new state, because of developments on the geopolitical scene, which were also reflected in culture. More specifically, in the first years there is a strong sovietization in the cultural field, where adhering to Soviet models in politics is particularly noticeable. Desovietization began in the 1950s, after the conflict with the Information Bureau (Cominform) in 1948, a process that consisted of abandoning the Soviet model of cultural practices, abandoning the ideological matrix of socialist realism and the introduction of self-managed socialism, which would contribute to a certain degree of democratization in the field of cultural production (Popovska 2021: 25).

well as the meaning of popular-music-related discourse in social frameworks.<sup>3</sup> The paper takes into account linguistic expressions such as “new Yugoslavia”, “new society”, “new man” and others, which are current during the period under investigation, and provide a more complete picture of the context in which popular music existed.

Adopting this methodological approach, the obtained research results will make it possible to gain insight into the way in which popular music was presented in socialist discourse from 1945 to 1952; a period characterized by complex configurations of generative and restrictive practices, further mediated by the dynamic social and political context.

### CLASSIFICATION OF MUSIC AS WORTHY / UNWORTHY IN THE 1945–1952 PERIOD

The organization of music life in the period aimed at elevating music into a “general cultural good”, instead of it being the “privilege of a narrow circle of intellectuals”. In this sense, the education of the masses through music aimed to inculcate moral qualities, in accordance with the desirable social norms. In the context of this function of music, CPY tried to bring “order” to the musical “chaos” found after the Second World War, to bring clarity and meaning, appropriate to its political ideology, i.e., to establish a clear distinction between “true” and “false” art of music (Popovska 2022: 127).

Immediately after the end of the Second World War, the predominant aesthetic paradigm in all Yugoslav fine arts, including music, was that of socialist realism. In 1949, after the Second International Congress of Composers and Music Critics in Prague (1948), the Yugoslav magazine *Muzika* published essays by the Soviet composer Tihon Hrenjиков and the Yugoslav composer Oskar Danon, thus presenting the desirable Party line in music at the that time. Socialist realism was evaluated as a “harmonious, true view of the world”, enriching humanity with great spiritual values, and was, therefore, perceived as advanced (Hofman 2005: 46). Hrenjиков’s preference for realism implied hostility to formalism in all its manifestations, “as an art that rejects what is substantial in music, its social significance” (as cited in Hofman 2005: 47). While Soviet realistic music was considered as appropriate for the general public, western music was considered as reflecting the world subjectively, due its narrow scope, involving only “a narrow circle of musicians, estheticians, musical snobs” (as cited in *ibid.*). According to Danon, bourgeois art acted upon the masses as “the poison of reactionary false sentimentality (and) banality in the form of schlager music”, and the “advanced” music of socialist realism reflected “real” life and “real” people (as cited in *ibid.*: 48).

In Yugoslav society, the following traits were desirable: in vocal music – mass songs, choral composition and solo songs, as well as symphonies. They had to have “a seri-

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<sup>3</sup> For the connection of linguistic products with social relations and relations of dominance, see Bourdieu 1991.

ous premise” and the content of program music and opera had to be founded in reality, filled with “heroic feats, our recent past and everyday examples of self-sacrifice and work enthusiasm” (ibid.). In other words, musical creativity was to be a reflection of the national liberation struggle and the construction of the socialist community, which were ideologically desirable; in other words, creativity had to have in mind “the creation of the masses”.

“Urban and civic pseudo-folk melodies” and “schlager dance forms” which included tango and various types of jazz were considered unworthy music. In this period jazz was considered decadent bourgeois culture (ibid.: 48), which contributed to it being partly censored in the first post-war years. The prevalent opinion in social discourse maintained that jazz was a bad influence on the upbringing of young people. On the other hand, post-war sanctioning of jazz driven by political and ideological reasons did not prevent its broad reception in Yugoslavia and the foundation of new jazz orchestras (Hofman 2016: 134).

Popular music, which was called “dance”, “entertainment” or “light” (Vuletić 2008: 861) in the first post-war period, mainly came from abroad. Before the Second World War, Yugoslavia had a tradition of playing and listening to jazz. However, jazz was poorly developed in the post-war period, because it was ignored by Yugoslav professional musicians of “serious” music, on the one hand, and, on the other, because “creating [a national] entertainment music is a big job that requires a cadre of musicians” (Hercigonja 1952: 2). According to Nikola Hercigonja it is this shortage of Yugoslav popular music that led to it being “unsystematically managed, insufficiently supervised, [which is why] it has become a fertile area for degenerate experiences of all kinds and subspecies [...]” (ibid.: 2). In this sense, according to the representatives of the federal agitation-propaganda department, entertainment music was seen as a genre “which should rouse us”.<sup>4</sup>

The conflict between Yugoslavia and the countries of the Information Bureau found its reflection in the area of music, when stronger cooperation with the West began. This is the period when debates about popular music also began. Slovenian composer Bojan Adamič, for example, suggested that popular music should be based on domestic folklore. According to him, composers should take the technical framework of Western entertainment music and then fill it with Yugoslav socialist content and national characteristics (Hofman 2005: 59–61). It was only two years earlier, in 1948, that the federal Committee for Culture and Art wanted to establish order in the area of light music, and proposed the creation of a Yugoslav version of light music, but this music was not recognized as a “proper national genre” until the mid-1950s (Buhin 2016: 140).

Debates about “entertainment” music that took place during the 1950s show that popular works of light “classical” music, were also included in the definition or understanding of entertainment music (s. n. 1958). While some composers and musicians considered light classical music an appropriate way of preparing listeners for “serious” classical

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<sup>4</sup> AJ. 507, VIII, I-(1-41)(K-1). CK KPJ, Komisija za agitaciju i propagandu, Beograd, 15 December 1948 (cf. Doknić, Petrović and Hofman 2009: 35).

works (Janjetović 2011: 125; Buhin 2016: 143), “others rejected the idea, believing that the audience was looking for easy music genres only because that was ‘what the organizers first brought or sent them’, thus underestimating the intellectual capabilities of the listeners. Many members of SMUJ<sup>5</sup> and SJK<sup>6</sup> considered it humiliating to compose or perform lighter genres” (Buhin 2016: 143). Some composers continued underestimating entertainment music in the following years. It created problems in the efforts to produce national Yugoslav entertainment music. Sometimes this went so far that at the round table organized by *Borba*, composer Bogoljub Srebrić said that he knew of “examples when students at secondary music schools or academies were directly or indirectly forbidden to engage in entertainment music or jazz” (s. n. 1958). Moreover, Srebrić pointed out: “one of our eminent composers of classical music stated that he saved a young composer by separating him from jazz and entertainment music” (ibid.).

Considering the growing interest of the population in entertainment / light music and its availability in everyday life through local dances, festivals, radio programs, etc., agitprop deemed it strategic to “introduce the mass battle song” into the so-called light music, which consisted of “schlagers, operetta arias and romances”. Pointing out that “American, Czech and French decadent music now prevails in light music, because Russian light music often resembles American jazz”, representatives of agitprop said: “We are not against schlagers, jazz, but only if they are of high quality”.<sup>7</sup>

In one of his articles in the daily newspaper *Borba*, Hercigonja stressed that attention should be turned “to the cultivation of more wholesome and better-quality entertainment and dance music from a broader perspective, which should also include higher quality jazz music”, and that this process should include the radio and music experts. He called on the classical music stakeholders, who had provided no help in solving this issue – to take a more active part, so that “the general situation with regard to audience education should not deteriorate”. This suggestion stemmed from Hercigonja’s belief that, “if, a priori, entertainment music is rejected as something completely unworthy of the attention of musicians, it will continue to develop spontaneously, ‘wildly’ and anarchically in its worst forms and will then poison the taste of the audiences in a way that the condition becomes incurable” (Hercigonja 1952).

Although, this is when jazz got its right to the public, this did not come easily. The increasing penetration of jazz into the Yugoslav public space, which was perceived as a strong American influence on the masses, led Tito himself, in 1953, to declare that “jazz music does not correspond to our character and our reality [...] Jazz bands are playing everywhere and you often can’t hear our own music anymore” (Vučetić 2009: 90). In the same year, the

<sup>5</sup> SMUJ is an abbreviation of Savez muzičkih umjetnika Jugoslavije (Association of Music Artists of Yugoslavia).

<sup>6</sup> SJK is an abbreviation of Savez jugoslavenskih kompozitora (Association of Yugoslav Composers).

<sup>7</sup> AJ. 507, VIII, I-(1-41) (K-1). CK KPJ, Komisija za agitaciju i propagandu, Beograd, 15 December 1948 (as cited in Doknić, Petrović and Hofman 2009: 35).

Association of Jazz Musicians of Yugoslavia was founded. Taking into account the role of professional associations in socialist Yugoslavia in *re-educating* the intelligentsia and artists in general (among other things, by holding constant discussions on current issues in the field of culture), the Association of Jazz Musicians was probably established to channel the work of jazz musicians, i.e. to achieve some sort of regulation in the field of jazz. This is confirmed by the speech of the musician Dušan Plavša, then a member of the Cultural and Educational Assembly of Yugoslavia, five years later. During a round table discussion organized by *Borba* focusing on the growing public concern over entertainment music ensembles and performances, Plavša, highlighting the need to control entertainment music, said that “only the Association of Jazz Musicians actively control[led] the quality of performances” (s. n. 1958).

An essay by Macedonian composer Petre Bogdanov Kočko, written a year later, showed that control would be no mean feat. Talking about popular music and entertainment in general, he wrote:

we are witnessing a wave of entertainment music in composition, embodied in the work of Geršavin and Adamič, which has already become the ideal for a large number of entertainment ensembles, and is gobbled up by a large part of radio listeners, not to mention all [...] rhythmic ensembles in the up-country following American-like rhythms, and our high-school and particularly working-class youth are being systematically poisoned, all in the name of “entertainment”. (Bogdanov Kočko 1954: 10)

Kočko suggests that music associations, the educational authorities, as well as radio station music editors should take the situation more seriously and should reduce jazz on the radio and in the programs of music associations. He also refers to the music that was sung in taverns (*kafane*) or patios in the province and in Skopje. Calling on Macedonian associations not to be indifferent to everything being played there, he asked: “Isn’t it vulgar, not to call it a cultural embarrassment, when the visitor of an opera performance on the summer stage has to listen to the quartet from the first act of ‘Onegin’ by Tchaikovsky and get annoyed because of an out-of-tune jazz orchestra and a hoarse-voiced singer fifty meters away, and all this in the name of entertainment for everyone?” The author concluded that “‘kantoman’ singing,<sup>8</sup> *claqueurs*<sup>9</sup> and dilettantism in all its forms, whether in production, reproduction or critical-essayistic form, are in fact disinformation variants which are not the least characteristic of a socialist society” (*ibid.*).

All this shows that the trust placed in / opportunities given to musicians, composers, radio program editors, etc. was expected to result in them adopting a responsible ap-

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<sup>8</sup> The term *kantomani* referred to “artists” with no singing voice, who know all the songs by heart, but are unable to sing anything of quality, although they themselves are confident that “they can sing anything”. In their performances, it was difficult to tell who was struggling more: themselves or their listeners (cf. Celio Cega 1972: 42, 43).

<sup>9</sup> The term referred to “people paid to applaud at performances by individual artists and singers during theater performances, in order to suggest to the audience an impression of success” (cf. Makedonski pravogovornik, 4335. Pravogovor—Rečnici, <https://www.govor.mk/govor/index.php?resetfilters=0&clearordering=0&clearfilters=0&limitstart1=26008>).

proach to their own music creation and that of others as well as their representation in the public; in other words, they were expected to create works that correlated with the demands of Yugoslav society.

## POPULAR MUSIC AND DANCING: UNDER CONTROL

Music, as a carrier of meaning, was used in social communication to reinforce desirable social norms, but the state was aware that it could be used by “subversive forces” to violate the established rules as well. Hence, the practice of controlling music within the given socio-historical context took place on several levels. It was aimed at the content of the lyrics, music itself as a genre, how people danced to music, and music program on the radio. The behavior of musicians was also controlled, as well as the behavior of “ordinary” people, i.e. listening to music/dancing in public spaces. In a word, music and its representations/manifestations were controlled in the public sphere. In line with the aims of this article, in what follows we focus on popular music.

Modern music, as it was referred to, “the disgusting foppery on the podiums and in front of radio microphones” (P. J. 1947: 4), was used during the war as propaganda that was supposed to “serve to make the masses stupid, to contribute to their enslavement, to kill consciousness in them” (ibid.). Keeping this in mind, an inscription in *Borba* presents the appearance of this kind of music in the post-war period as “a continuation of the occupation tradition in the form of schlagers”, i.e., as *inappropriate* to the spirit of socialism and the new *revolutionary* reality. Young people who listened to this sort of music, who danced to it, were characterized as “decadent, empty and failures”:

These are “young people” who mindlessly move around our cities in problematic bars moving in atrocious ways like some western dances, to barbaric music. [...] In many places misconstrued “parties” with nothing but mere entertainment, and completely misused festive occasions (for instance, New Year’s Eve) enable some of our youth to gradually succumb to those horrid fads imported from other countries, with completely different living conditions. (ibid.)

Musical fashion, which was considered an import from the West, was constantly under the watchful eye of the Party. The state/Party paid particular attention to the American reading room in Belgrade, where “music classes with gramophone records” were organized, dedicated to American contemporary music, etc., which made it possible for various musical genres to become accessible to the young population. Ivana Lučić-Todosić, based on Vinko Stojić’s memories, claims that at the front door of the American dance school in Belgrade – “there stood a man from the secret police, UDBA, who often detained the visitors”. Also, people were accused of “holding parties in apartments, where enemies of the state would gather”, i.e. they were accused of associating with “reactionaries” (Lučić-Todosić 2002: 51).

Another focus of interest of the security police was the concert of the “Dance Orchestra of Radio Ljubljana”, which took place in Belgrade in 1947, which UDBA<sup>10</sup> representatives believed was organized by the American Embassy. As Bojan Adamič remembers it, this was the reason why some of the visitors were arrested (Vučetić 2009: 89). Adamič was called to the Central Committee of the CPY, where Radovan Zogović ordered him to prepare a different repertoire for the following evening, when the same orchestra performed folk and Russian songs, waltzes and polkas (Vučetić 2012: 62) – music and dances that were perceived as valuable art at that time.

Miljenko Prohaska, a Croatian jazz musician, testified that in this period even playing Yugoslav music at concerts could be banned if it was judged to have been “influenced from abroad”. For example, Krešo Vandekar, a pianist at the Radio Zagreb Dance Orchestra, arranged the Russian song *Kozak išal na vojnu*, including in it a baritone saxophone solo. Someone took this as a mockery of the Russian original, which resulted in the orchestra being kicked out of the concert. A few months later, the orchestra returned, but they were kicked out again. Angry, they went to play on the Kvaternik Square in Zagreb, where they played the composition *Caldonia* arranged by Woody Herman out of spite. But immediately after the intervention of a known Croatian communist, the members of the orchestra were expelled again (Hrvoj 2022).

The label “singer under American influence” was also attached to the singer of entertainment music Vojin Popović because, during a concert, he exhibited “inadmissible behavior”, i.e. instead of standing still while singing, he made a movement with his hand that contributed to his discredit. Removal from the radio program was punishment for Popović’s behavior (Lučić-Todosić 2002: 55).

The Party newsletter *Borba* wrote about publishers of schlager sheet music, who, in *Borba*’s view, were guided by lack of cultivation when they published sheet music, as this was in complete opposition to the needs of the people. According to them, continuing the profitable pre-war practice of issuing “schlagers”, these publishers tried to infect the youth with such music and “draw them into such barbaric dances” (P. J. 1947: 4). By doing so, it was believed that they contributed to the “gradual surrender of a part of our youth to those atrocious fads from the other countries with different living conditions”. The newspaper article focuses on the city of Zagreb, and Zagreb music publishers Melos, Krug and Albini. The owner of Albini was the head of the music department of the Croatian publishing house (Hrvatski nakladni zavod) at the time. The way in which the journalist refers to her in the text is interesting. He says: “At least she would have to give up one thing if she is to remain at the publishing house in state ownership: as a competent professional, she would have to stop publishing uncultivated musical products as a private publisher” (ibid.). Obviously, the problems that the state had a lack of music professionals led to compromises at different levels.

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<sup>10</sup> UDBA is an abbreviation and the most commonly used name for the Directorate for State Security, secret police in socialist Yugoslavia.



Regarding the “uncultivated” musical products of Albini, the newspaper writes that the publishing house started a series of hits with two popular Soviet songs: the waltz from the film *Zdravstvuj Moskva* and the tango *Tamna Noć* (Dark Night). Those two songs, according to the author of the text, were meant as an excuse for the trash that followed them, such as the following songs: *Zar se ljubit ne sme?* (Is one not allowed to love?), *Suzne oči* (Tearful eyes), *Zašto si pospan, Čo?* (Why are you sleepy, Čo?), etc. “with completely twisted rhythm, language, sense and feeling”. The newspaper classifies these songs as “anti-national trash” (ibid.).

Later, the text mentions the publisher Acord and the bookstore owned by Svetislav B. Lazić from Belgrade, which competed with Zagreb music publishers. An example of the Belgrade bookstore edition is mentioned. The edition starts with two songs placed at the beginning for camouflage, the Soviet song *Smrt komsomolca* (The Death of a Komsomol member) and the Yugoslav partisan song *Konjuh planinom* (The mountain of Konjuh). They were followed by *Karamba, Ja rado plačem* (I like to cry), *Čataga, ču ču, Kikiriki, Ti si moj san* (You are my dream), etc., which shows the way in which publishers tried to cope with control in the public sphere. The cover of this edition included a Hawaiian tango and “a voluptuous naked Hawaiian girl”, which, according to the author, comes out “right in the age when the imperialists rule over the ‘idyllic’ Hawaii, and naked people stand up to defend themselves” (ibid.).

Jazz music was also under supervision, which, although socially undesirable, nevertheless increasingly positioned itself as an important factor among the citizens. This trend was noted by the press, which criticized the situation in the civil society. For example, the radio journal of the Zagreb Radio Station (*Radio vjesnik*, 17, 1947), pointed out:

In our state too, jazz has conquered the idealess civil society and is trying to penetrate even further down, to conquer the broad layers of the people. The more contradictions in the civil society grow, the more this effort seems forced. In the interest of the exploiters of the working masses, the wealth of folk music, of folk creativity, in general, is being destroyed, and idealess products of urban jazz composers appear instead under the moniker of “light music”. Such music with simple-sounding titles (such as: “Ga-ga”, “Oh, come to love you tonight”, etc.) exert an influence on a large part of the city’s youth, who, in the circumstances of the old society, could not understand the tendentious harms caused by unhealthy jazz music. (in Križić 2003: 5)

As can be seen, the text makes a clear distinction between valuable folk creations/songs and mindless/unhealthy light music/jazz, which is the production of urban jazz composers. In this way, through the press, the state/Party created the norms of eligible and ineligible music, and thus also of eligible and ineligible musicians.

The newspaper *Narodni student* considered jazz dances “harmful, backward and unknown to our revolutionary morality” (s. n. 1948). They pointed out that universities allowed jazz orchestra performances, “for fear that dances would fail” (ibid.). According to the newspaper, no one controlled these performances, so the hired jazz orchestra Dynamo “played notes that are against our morals”, “jazz-rumba”, “boogie-woogie”, “new things”, etc. The article also mentions the performance of a newly founded jazz orchestra

from the Faculty of Economics, which played mainly “American dances” during the dance parties, held on February 28. According to the newspaper, the troking<sup>11</sup> dance was danced to this music, “which distorts the character of the dancing parties”, and awakens a person’s “lowest of instincts” (ibid.).

The media narrativization also refers to the inappropriate behavior of the secretary of the Academic Theater, who, in connection with the organization of jazz parties by the theater, convincingly justified their financial motivation, when he said: “For us, it doesn’t matter what the dance will be, who will be there, whether it will give pleasure to the people or not! It is important for us to secure the necessary money for props” (ibid.).

The members of the old jazz orchestra of the Cultural-Artistic group of the Technical Faculty were also “accused” of inappropriate behavior. They did not appear at the New Year’s party when they were supposed to play, because they went to another place for financial reasons. The president of the cultural board of the Technical Faculty, the author of the text, referred to them as “supreme masters of the American rhythm” who represent the worst side of cultural and artistic work. Speaking about the need to form a new jazz orchestra, the author points out that it would include “new more trustworthy and disciplined members” (Martinović 1948).

The establishment of clear distinctions between *old* and *new* morality, in the context of music and entertainment for the education/re-education of youth, has been the focus of press interest. “Poisoned youth” was accused of avoiding military service, of inappropriate appearance, which emphasized eroticism and lavishness, of being work-shy – spending time unproductively on entertainment and thus setting a bad example and negatively influencing others (Lučić-Todosić 2002: 47).

In other words, all those whose hairstyles and clothes deviated from the established/imagined views of *decency* were considered “devotees of Western culture”. Of course, this group also included the “children of the rich”, who also enjoyed jazz. Through various methods, the Party tried to institute moral and ideological guidance of young people in accordance with the socially established standards, that is, they attempted to steer them onto the *right* path.

The struggle against “petty-bourgeois influence” occurred at a more formal level, opposing tight pants, “hip hairstyles”, make-up. The Party’s methods included: closing school events, censoring party programs (Šarić 2015: 269), expulsion from school, public name-calling, as well as beatings (Radelić 2006: 164).

To prevent the surge of reactionary influences on the young population caused by jazz, the American jazz film *Rhapsody in Blue* (1945) was banned in 1949, with the explanation that it was “decadent music (and) propaganda of cacophony” (Miloradović 2012: 275).

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<sup>11</sup> A dance in pairs, with partners standing at a distance, holding hands and “hopping” from one foot to the other. It appeared in Belgrade after the screening of the film *Sun Valley Serenade* in October 1944 and was referred to as as “troking”. Towards the end of 1945 and the beginning of 1946, this dance was banned (Lučić-Todosić 2002: 44–45).

The wave of Western culture that swept Yugoslavia in the 1950s became the subject of an article published in *The Economist*. In the text, the anonymous author wrote that, after being banned for nearly ten years, cultural trends from the West in literature, film, music, contemporary art, etc., were now accepted with the uncritical enthusiasm with which forbidden fruit is usually indulged in: “everything western from comic books to existentialism experienced a great popularity” (Ristić 1952). According to *Borba*, the text emphasized that “even the members of the Party were not spared from this” (ibid.).

However, the increasing opening of Yugoslavia to the West in the 1950s would lead to jazz taking a significant place in entertainment, especially in urban areas. This is a period when newspaper criticism of jazz dangerously “poisoning” young people was particularly evident, “because with the help of music, various feelings can be suggested and various social ideas spread, which in a class society necessarily have a class character” (Lučić-Todosić 2002: 95). This article also highlights the hysteria about jazz in Belgrade, which evaluated as a “poisonous form of entertainment”, i.e., “an epidemic that threatens to poison us” (ibid.). As is clear, newspaper articles attempted to sway the public opinion against jazz fans and their way of life.

The text “Stop, MEDICUS” which appeared in *Narodni student* in 1952 called for a ban on the “Medicus” jazz orchestra. According to the newspaper, this orchestra was considered to be the best student jazz orchestra, because several people from Gutešin’s Radio-Jazz orchestra played in it. The author wrote: “the great ‘Medicus’ forgot how to interpret music – they provide beat and rhythm, and the whole room listens to them”. Then, the author continues: “The whole room was like enchanted. They shook, twisted, bent like grasses of corn, following the rhythmic wind of Medicus [...]. We should say STOP to all this” (E. K. 1952).

Fair-like events, tangle-tangle evenings and a flood of “cultural” events that took place in the cities were perceived as being to the detriment of the cultural development of cities. Cities were plastered with posters and other advertisements inviting people to have “good fun”. These events were co-organized by, among others, cultural and educational associations. In a text published in *Borba*, N. Polak observes that the Karlovac Council for Science and Education approved such “events to be held”. The author calls for more stringent criteria “because not every third-rate artist or group of ‘artists’” can keep up with the tastes and social needs (Polak 1952). *Borba* also wrote about the departure from the conceptual and artistic level of entertainment parties, where, referring to “strong protests from the audience”, they demanded more planning and control of the organization and the quality of the program at such parties (V. D. 1950). Weaknesses were also noted in the organization of some performances in villages, where, in addition to being exposed to singing by “people who could not carry a tune and had no voice”, their singing was accompanied by “a jazz trumpet” (Bogojević 1951).

In order to ensure profit and increase turnover, various catering establishments hired jazz orchestras with singers. Complaints about this practice came from, among others,

Party activists from Montenegro, who pointed out that singers frequently had “nothing to do with real music”, and their “incorrect, pre-war pub singing and playing [could] only negatively affect the artistic tastes of the audience” (Prekić 2017: 480).

In the youth cultural association “Budo Tomović” in Titograd, a “new” form of entertainment also appeared. Choir rehearsals often became dance gatherings “and then various sambas, boogie-boogies and other crazy modern dances come into play” (ibid.).

The Belgrade City Committee of People’s Youth published an announcement in *Borba* calling attention to the harmfulness of entertainment events featuring “a commercial program that is harmful and alien to our sensibilities, because for us ideological and educational content is more important”. Referring to the opening of the “Palace (Palas) dancing club”, the article, among other things, draws attention to the improper practice where “many ‘famous’ singers of chansons, romances as well as bandleaders invent various names such as ‘Johnny’, ‘Bobby’, etc. Such names can also be found in the program of the Košutnjak restaurant”. The opinion expressed in the article is that society should not be opposed to jazz music in principle, but should oppose distortions that occur; that it should oppose the introduction of “things that are not cultural into the entertainment life” (s. n. 1952).

In 1952, the youth continued to be enthralled by “corrupt” movies, by various “sambas”, singing “on corners” and other songs and games “full of primitivism and decadence”, which were considered to have an “inevitable detrimental effect on the formation of character and the worldview of young men and girls”. Taking into account the great influx of jazz music, accompanied by “unpleasant banging and squealing” in the school halls and outside them, a group of high school teachers, in “Letters to the editor”, pointed out the need to criticize young people in everything they do, including music that they listen to. They believed that at school dances, one should see and hear a variety of “folk dances, waltzes and generally better things than modern music”. In the fight against “decadence” and in music and the education of young people, these teachers sought active participation not only from schools, but also the involvement of parents, cultural workers, musicians, writers and everyone else (Grupa profesora IV ženske gimnazije 1952).

Mistaking “democracy [...] for smuggling into our lives something from the past created by the enemies of our progress” which only pandered to “arrogant city slickers that saw democracy as nothing but their city slicker ways” is also mentioned by Hercigonja in an article published in *Borba*. Hercigonja considers entertainment and dance music a much more serious cultural and educational problem than it may initially seem. He claims that “what passes for jazz and dance music at parties” is in fact “primitivism and ignorance in its darkest form”: “It is just plain lying to the audience [...] by the know-nothing and half-educated dilettantes”. Hercigonja mentions that both sides complement each other perfectly in their lack of knowledge, because the so-called musicians play what the “dancers” “know”, and the so-called dancers dance to what the “musicians” “know”. According to the author, both groups “hide behind the ‘originality’ of jazz, probably having no idea what real original jazz sounds like” (Hercigonja 1952).

Others also pointed out the “uncultivated nature” of the parties that were held at cultural centers and various other places. They emphasized that social organizations should tackle this issue and ban some indecent dances that damage the youth’s reputation and have a detrimental effect on them (Vukašinović 1952). However, there were also those who believed that prohibitions would cause more harm than good. The following paragraph, entitled “Not in such a way”, was published in *Borba’s* “Letters to the editor”: “[...] prohibitions, oversight and similar methods, which in themselves are neither popular nor pleasant, but they are foreign – and it is good that they are, and should become more and more foreign – to our people and our society” (Seferović 1952).

In order to prevent “uncultured, immoral behavior of young people”, a Commission of the Council for Science and Culture would visit parties unannounced, which was seen as part of its care for the “moral health of the young population” (Lučić-Todosić 2002: 96).

## POPULAR MUSIC ON THE RADIO – UNDER CONTROL

Music on the radio was also under supervision of the Party. After liberation, BBC, Radio Monte Carlo, Radio Belgrade, etc. could be listened to on the radio. This meant that different types of music were available to listeners, including jazz. According to Party members, this created sonic chaos, which began to be tackled at the agitprop meetings of the Central Committee of the CPY in late 1948. The reason behind this was the fact that radio propaganda was considered one of the tools for cultural and political education of the masses.

In the Agitprop Report, which refers to the work of Belgrade radio stations, the “problems” of all the other radio stations are also established. Agitprop emphasized the need to introduce order into music programs, because “it is currently unclear what idea music programs should follow. They mix tavern music<sup>12</sup> with salon and decadent music.”<sup>13</sup> Criticism about which music was played on the radio referred to, among other things, the presence of “western music and some dances” (Prekić 2017: 479). According to Lučić-Todosić, all songs on the radio “were listened to in the company of the editor”, and special attention was paid to “high tones in jazz interpretation”, as indicated by a cardboard sign placed in the studio of Radio Belgrade, which read: “Not to be played on air: trumpet – scream” (Lučić-Todosić 2002: 54).

The Party’s activities were aimed at dealing with such tendencies on the radio, i.e., *silencing* popular music as music that did not contribute to the cultivation of the people. In early 1948, Josip Zmazek, director of Radio Zagreb at the time, wrote a piece entitled “Radio in the service of the people” (*Naprijed*, 6 February 1948):

<sup>12</sup> “Kafana” has been the central spot for informal socializing, communication, and entertainment in rural, semi-urban and urban communities, from the 19th century onwards, cf. Hofman 2010: 155.

<sup>13</sup> AJ, 507, VIII, I-(1-41)(K-1). CK KPJ, Komisija za agitaciju i propagandu, Beograd, 15 December 1948 (as cited in Doknić, Petrović and Hofman 2009: 36).

Jazz music has disappeared and is not coming back, at least in its most brutal and completely diluted form. Petty-bourgeois schlagers about palm trees, moonlight and southern seas are also absent from the radio stations. All this was done knowingly and by design, because these were selected not for cultural cultivation, but to dumb people down. (Zmazek in Jakelić 2013: 257)

In the post-liberalization period, the inflow of music from abroad became stronger. Considering that music became an important segment through which good and bad behavior of young people were recognized, the press was also active in this respect.

Radio broadcasts that aired the sounds of “rumba”, “samba” and *La Cucaracha*, together with jazz films, were portrayed in the press as being disastrous for young people, for their school grades. For instance, the article entitled “Jazz, film and grades” (Jezz, film i ocene) published in *Omladina* (12 January 1952) said that high school students’ poor grades were a result of them watching movies like *Ball on the Water*, *Lady Hamilton*, *Madame Bovary* ten times, and students doing their homework in front of the radio playing “rumba”, “samba” and *La Cucaracha* (Lukić-Krstanović 2010: 107).

At the agitprop meeting of the Central Committee of the CPY, which took place in 1952, a number of shortcomings of radio program were noted:

Anyone can order a song and anything can be sung. The music commentator of Radio Belgrade “philosophizes” in such a way that even the musician himself could not understand him. Various songs played “according to the wishes of the listeners” are often terrible, they are everything but not folk, with no discernable idea... The programming department needs to be cleaned up, the “Camera” show should be cut. (Miloradović 2012: 127)

Although agitprop’s note refers to Radio Belgrade in particular, it still speaks to the way in which the state/Party tried to establish order on the radio. Thus, it went so far as to suggest that certain radio shows, such as the “Camera” mentioned above, should be cut (ibid.).

The State/Party tried, by regulating and supervising music programs on the radio, to present musical works that would be recognized as a cultural symbol of Yugoslavia, that is, to present music that would confirm the legitimacy of the society.

Popular music, which mainly came from abroad given the lack of national entertainment music, was one of the things under Party supervision. Party control of radio programs was supposed to fight against the “harmful influence” of foreign propaganda which, through popular music, led to the emergence of various forms of vice among the population.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The study showed that in the early post-war period, popular music (dance, entertainment and light) was not part of the socially desirable set of cultural values, and thus was not

part of the regulated cultural field. However, it existed and circulated in the Yugoslav social space, although it did not receive great publicity in the media discourse,<sup>14</sup> which contained mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. Popular music, along with parties, was given a wide audience from the beginning of 1947, when light, popular and entertainment music, “schlagers”, and jazz become the subject of many texts. They enable us to learn about developments in this field, not only at the time, but also in the earlier period, when music was not widely covered by the media.

Considering that the post-war Yugoslav “public” was characterized by a high degree of complexity and heterogeneity, the ideological goal of achieving broader or more limited consensus between different groups/communities/individuals about what kind of music should be listened to, was, naturally, more difficult. Unwanted popular music appeared on the Yugoslav public scene as an alternative bottom-up canon (a set of values) transmitted by various social groups/cultures/subcultures. As such, popular music mediates the exchange of cultural values in society even if its public expression is restricted. Therefore, the Party’s struggle with alternative tendencies, took place, among other things, through media interpretations, as a system of specific socially structured censorship practices, which played a role in shaping their symbolic value. Bearing in mind that *Borba* was a Party newsletter, it disseminated the position of the Party and Party-related authorities applying them to popular music, whereas the attitude of music creators, publishers, the audience, etc., who were outside the Yugoslav socialist mainstream did not have a “voice” in the media space.

The Party’s effort to control public awareness through ideology also becomes evident in the media’s use of expressions that emphasize the effect of popular music and parties on the population: “dumbing down the masses”, “awareness being killed”, “enslaved”, etc. This unequivocally indicates that this type of music was perceived by the Party as alternative music or alternative fashion. The reason for this is that popular music as audio and visual content made it possible to construct patterns of perception that were largely different from those created by the state, especially among young people. The increasing presence of popular music in the social sphere was perceived as a threat that could disrupt the consensus maintained through strategies of community creation. This is confirmed by media discourses that show concern about the possibility that some of the youth would gradually succumb to “the fashions of other countries with different living conditions”. Young people from all over the country increasingly participated in such dancing parties, which means that they became “carriers of the idea” that determined a set of topics that would be discussed. This was exactly the reason for the activation of social resources in resolving the situation, which included dealing with the issue in the public sphere.

Desirable discourses, as the study showed, were articulated mainly by the authorities who worked in the field of culture and who had the political “authorization” to write, codify

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<sup>14</sup> Considering the complexity of the media interpretation that occurs at the national, local and other levels, it should be emphasized that the analysis of the data presented in this paper is based on the media texts published in the newspaper *Borba*.

and build a system of norms or a set of values.<sup>15</sup> It is through these discourses that the state/Party sought to establish distinctions through constant reinforcement of dualities such as “national-foreign”, “proletarian-bourgeois”, etc.

The narratives that construct the popular music and entertainment media image in the public sphere characterize them as: “the tradition of occupation”, “fascist propaganda” and so on. Popular and entertainment music was referred to as “barbaric music”, “trash”, “anti-national music”, etc., and the melodies were presented as “foreign”, “atrocious”, “superficial”, etc. When addressing the audiences, which were supposed to recognize the “inappropriateness” of this type of entertainment, dancing was presented as “surrendering”, being “Western”, etc. All of these, although they are only metaphors, still have the function of influencing the audience, especially the youth. In line with this, the youth are classified as “decadent”, “empty”, “failed”, and it is worthwhile mentioning that there were opposite expressions, such as “the people won” but “the shipwrecked remained” found in one of the articles (see in P. J. 1947: 4).

Rhetorical strategies in socialist discourse did not bypass even publishers of unwanted schlagers who spread the “infection” with their actions. The activities of music creators (musicians, publishers, etc.) who introduced various modifications so as to present their work to the public in this controlled market of cultural values were also disparaged by the media. The content of the song lyrics was not exempt from this either.

As this study has shown, narrativizing popular music and entertainment in this way served to ensure that it be viewed by the general public as “unhealthy” or “inappropriate” for the socialist society and socialist morality. At the same time, the need for light, popular and entertainment music was acknowledged, but only if it was “healthy”.

Despite strategic actions of the Party to suppress *competition* in the public scene, the tensions between social and individual/group interests, as this study has shown, increased after the introduction of self-government and opening up to Western countries. Media texts reveal a “flood” of entertainment events, often describes as “fairs”, “tingle-tangle evenings”, etc. They became a profitable business not only for individuals organizing them, but also for cultural and artistic groups that organized them. They often hired artists and amateurs to play at them, without announcing their names. Musical authorities presented such performances in media discourse as being an “enemy” of socialist progress and a

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<sup>15</sup> Some of the articles are signed with the full name and surname of the authors (Hercigonja 1952; Bogdanov Kočko 1954), and others, only with their initials (for example P. J. 1947). Although we do not have the exact names and surnames in the latter case, it should be taken into account that these are articles in the Party newsletter *Borba*, which provided the direction in which cultural life was supposed to develop. For instance, since 1946 the Commission for Agitation and Propaganda at the Central Committee of the CPY *Borba* was required to hire external collaborators from the ranks of state and Party managers, cultural and public workers. They were required to contribute at least a single article to *Borba* every two months. *Borba*, on the other hand, was required to notify them at least ten days in advance, in case they needed expertise on a specific issue. A.J. 507, VIII, I-(1-41)(K-1). CK KPJ, Komisija za agitaciju i propagandu svim CK i PK, Beograd, 29 October 1946 (as cited in Doknić, Petrović and Hofman 2009: 27).



potential danger to the audience, whose taste could be “poisoned” in a way that their condition became “incurable”. The data shows that criticism was also directed at jazz, and that media representations tried to make a distinction between jazz and so-called “jazz”. And while some value was recognized in the former, the latter was perceived as “primitivism” that contributes to lying to the audience. Performers playing “jazz” were referred to as “so-called musicians” and “dilettantes”. All these developments resulted in an intensification of public rhetoric about “unhealthy phenomena” in dance music, especially in 1952. Then, the authorities attempted to put a stop to “wild” development of entertainment music, and the musicians were instructed to turn to creating of “our own” entertainment music, which would be in accordance with the desirable system of cultural values in Yugoslav society. This provides clear insight into the way in which generative and restrictive practices in the field of culture functioned. They aimed at satisfying the interests of the youth, but within the limits of socially imposed restrictions.

The study showed the image of popular music in Yugoslav socialist discourse in the period from 1945 to 1952 depended on current social processes, cultural trends, but also economic conditions, which influenced its shaping/reshaping in the public sphere. The role of accompanying/alternative discourses/phenomena (dancing, fashion, hairstyles, etc.) was significant, and they were presented as cohesively related to popular music, that is, they were arranged as a single “image”.

Overall, popular music in Yugoslav social discourse was presented not only through sound, but also through the cultural inventory present at musical events, that is, through the range of elements that could represent the visual and sonic element of the message or its creation in the public sphere.

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## PREZENTACIJA POPULARNE GLAZBE U JUGOSLAVENSKIM SOCIJALISTIČKIM DISKURSIMA (1945. – 1952.)

Rad se bavi popularnom (zabavnom, plesnom ili laganom) glazbom kroz jugoslavenske socijalističke diskurse u razdoblju od 1945. od 1952. godine. Temeljen je na novinskim člancima toga vremena, koji pružaju uvid u načine na koje su identificirane napetosti, proturječnosti i mogućnosti u svakodnevnom životu vezane uz glazbene i plesne oblike zabave. Analiza podataka dobivenih kao rezultat istraživanja omogućuje praćenje interakcije generativnih i restriktivnih praksi u jugoslavenskom društvu. Ona ukazuje na to kako se oblikovala slika popularne glazbe u socijalističkom diskursu u spomenutom razdoblju.

Ključne riječi: popularna glazba, zabava, ples, jazz, koncerti