

MUSICKING IN CAPTIVITY – TRACES FROM THE KERESTINEC, STARA GRADIŠKA, JASENOVAC, AND KRALJEVICA CAMPS, 1941-1945

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Abstract

This paper provides data on possible musical activities and cultural programs that were realized in various forms of captivity in the Kerestinec, Stara Gradiška, Jasenovac, and Kraljevica camps in the period 1941-1945. Based on archival documents and the testimonies of survivors which confirm the existence of several music groups in the mentioned camps, the paper presents the hitherto known repertoire that was performed at cultural events and concert programs, and critically

examines the different types and circumstances of the musical and theatrical activities that were registered in the camps.

Keywords: camp orchestra repertoire; camp musicians; concentration camp cultural program; music making in captivity

Ključne riječi: repertoar logorskih orkestarâ; logorski glazbenici; kulturni i glazbeni program koncentracijskih logora; muziciranje u zatočeništvu

Introduction

The lives and professional activities of numerous musicians of different origin were interlaced with the musical cultures of the former Yugoslavia, and of the countries they lived in, namely Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. An examination of the membership of musical societies, chamber ensembles, amateur and professional orchestras, and theatrical music and stage performances, reveals that a significant number of musicians of Jewish origin contributed significantly to

the development of musical culture and musical art in these environments.¹ Many of them perished in the Holocaust.²

This paper aims to collect the names of musicians who participated in music activities in the Kerestinec, Stara Gradiška, Jasenovac, and Kraljevica concentration camps and give a critical overview of previously known information about musical and other cultural activities in the camps. Special attention will also be paid to musicians of Jewish origin who, either because of their origin or political orientations, ended up in captivity and participated in musical activities there in accordance with the circumstances.

Following the breakup of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia, the year 1941 saw the introduction of numerous repressive measures for members of different nations living in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, as well as members of the communist movement which was gathering momentum at the time. In a short period, many people, artists among them, found themselves, either for racial reasons,³ or because of their personal beliefs, in different types of captivity. People adjusted to each form of captivity differently. Captivity testimonies often stress music in its different forms, such as singing, playing, or simply listening, and they often emphasize that music was important to them in preserving human dignity and ensuring spiritual survival. Also, it should be borne in mind that the circumstances of music-making in captivity differed according to the type of captivity experienced. Sometimes, singing was the only type of music-making that was possible.

People were taken to concentration camps under different circumstances: they were taken away from their homes, caught trying to escape, or literally taken off the street. In forced removals to the camps, they could take with them only the most important things, sometimes simply what they had on, and sometimes musicians (professional or amateur) arrived in captivity with their instruments. Most often, the instruments they took with them were trumpet, clarinet, violin, or accordion. Usually, there were no musical scores in the camps, but the music was performed from memory or arranged for available instruments.

¹ Cf. Tamara JURKIĆ SVIBEN: *Glazbenici židovskog podrijetla u sjevernoj Hrvatskoj od 1815. do 1941. godine*, [Musicians of Jewish Origin in Northern Croatia 1815-1941], doctoral dissertation, Faculty of Croatian Studies, University of Zagreb, 2016.

² Cf. T. JURKIĆ SVIBEN: *Glazbenici židovskog podrijetla*, 2016; Maja VASILJEVIĆ: *Jevrejski muzičari u Beogradu od Balfurove deklaracije do Holokausta* [Jewish Musicians in Belgrade from the Balfour Declaration to the Holocaust], Beograd: HERAedu – Muzikološki institut SANU, 2021.

³ Provision of the law on the protection of the national and Aryan culture of the Croatian people dated 4 June 1941 points out that Jews are forbidden »to work, to participate in organizations and institutions of social, youth, sport and cultural life of the Croatian nation in general, and in particular to participate in literature, journalism, art and music, in urban planning, theatre and film«. Zakonska odredba o zaštiti narodne i arijske kulture hrvatskog naroda, čl. 1., *Narodne novine* [Official Gazette], NN 43/1941 [4. 6. 1941].

Depending on the type of concentration camp in the territory, which is an integral part of Croatian territory today, there were traces of different types of »orchestras«.⁴ Given that the camp in Jasenovac was an Ustasha camp in the Independent State of Croatia, and the camp in Kraljevica was a fascist camp at that time part of the Italian government, and that they differed significantly in the attitude of the authorities towards prisoners, in this work, based on the testimonies of the detainees, two musical groups and their repertoire are described which operated in very different circumstances and under different degrees of coercion experienced by the detainees. Most information about the Kraljevica orchestra comes from autobiographic writings of Branko Polić titled *Imao sam sreće*,⁵ *Muzika iza bodljikavih žica*⁶ and the documents of the Kraljevica camp published in the magazines *Novi Omanut* and the *Bilten jevrejske općine Zagreb*. Information about the Jasenovac camp orchestra comes from the personal testimonies of Milko Riffer,⁷ Erwin Miller⁸ and Jakob Danon⁹ from the documents of the Red Cross inspectors, who sporadically inspected the Jasenovac camp, and some archive documents consulted in the Croatian State Archive in Zagreb.

⁴ Most often it was not about real orchestras, but about musical groups that were composed of musicians who knew and could play instruments that they had available in camp circumstances.

⁵ Branko POLIĆ: *Imao sam sreće*, autobiografski zapisi [I Was Lucky, Autobiographical Writings] (1. 11. 1942. – 22. 12. 1945), Zagreb: Durieux, 2006. About Branko Polić in: ***: Polić, Branko, Hrvatsko društvo skladatelja, web page, <<https://www.hds.hr/clan/polic-branko/>> (Accessed 26 January 2024).

⁶ Anton EBERST (ed.): *Muzika iza bodljikavih žica; zbornik sećanja jugoslovenskih ratnih zarobljenika, interniraca i političkih zatvorenika, za vreme narodnooslobodilačkog rata 1941-1945. godine* [Music behind Barbed Wires: Collected Memories of Yugoslav War Prisoners, Internees and Political Prisoners from the National Liberation Struggle 1941 – 1945], Beograd: Prosveta, 1985.

⁷ Milko RIFFER: *Grad mrtvih. Jasenovac 1943* [The Town of the Dead. Jasenovac 1943], Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Hrvatske, 1946.

⁸ Erwin MILLER: *Izabran za umiranje* [Chosen to Die], Zagreb: Otvoreni kulturni forum – Durieux, 2004. Erwin Miller (Vinkovci, 27 January 1924 – Maabarot, Israel, 28 June 1991) was a craftsman. After the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia in 1941, he was deported to the Jasenovac camp. He survived the breakout from Jasenovac concentration camp on April 22, 1945. Cf. Ivo GOLDSTEIN (ed.): Miller, Erwin, *Židovski biografski leksikon*, <<https://zbl.lzmk.hr/?p=1387>> (Accessed 22 January 2024). The term »breakout« is used in this paper to refer to the organized escape from the Jasenovac camp on April 22, 1945 by a large group of prisoners, of which only a few survived. Among them were Erwin Miller and Jakob Danon, whose testimonies were recorded after World War II and are used as testimonies from the Jasenovac camp in this paper. On the breakout from Jasenovac: 22. travnja 1945. – Dan proboja zatočenika iz logora Jasenovac [April 22, 1945 – The Day of the Breakout of the Prisoners from the Jasenovac Camp], *Spomen područje / Memorial Site Jasenovac*, web page, <<https://www.jusp-jasenovac.hr/Default.aspx?sid=10290>> (Accessed 15 June 2024).

⁹ Jakob Danon testimony, in: Anton EBERST (ed.): *Muzika iza bodljikavih žica*, 106-110. Jakob Danon (Olovo, BiH, 2 April 1918 – Zagreb, 28 December 1985) was a public employee. At the end of July 1941, was arrested and deported to Gospić, and in August to Jasenovac. He survived the breakout of April 22, 1945. Cf. Ivo GOLDSTEIN (ed.): Danon, Jakob, *Židovski biografski leksikon*, <<https://zbl.lzmk.hr/?p=3039>> (Accessed 22 January 2024).

Music in captivity

The first writings about any musical activity in circumstances of captivity on Croatian territory are found in the proceedings of the Revolutionary Youth Movement in Zagreb 1941 – 1945. It comprises testimonies of the surviving communists from different prisons and camps, from Kerestinec, Stara Gradiška to Jasenovac. The most common type of musicking in captivity was singing because anyone could sing with or without musical education. Singing kept the morale of the prisoners and the internees; it boosted their faith in ideas and expressed their attitudes and emotions. One of the first examples is that from the camp in Kerestinec¹⁰ near Zagreb, which dates to 1941 when the communists were interned there, Pavao Markovac among them. Pavao Markovac, a composer, conductor, and music writer, was of Jewish descent, and Pavel Ebenspanger was his birth name. As a result of his political activities in the Communist party, Markovac was arrested in the spring of 1941 and transported to the Kerestinec prison. Vlado Mađarević writes: »Dr. Markovac organized a small choir in Kerestinec«, while Zdravko Dizdar mentions that revolutionary songs were sung.¹¹

These so-called revolutionary songs, or »advanced workers' songs«,¹² included, according to Zvonimir Komarica,¹³ *Bilećanka*, Russian *Kolotnjici*, and the song that was created in the Lepoglava camp with the following lyrics: »There is mountain Ivančica / And a valley at its foot / A penitentiary in the valley / A torture chamber for humans. // Hammer and sickle steel / Give bread wheat / Hammer and sickle are our badge / Badge of the working class and farmers. / My friend, my pal / Your socks are knit / Knit by the female comrades / From our factory...«¹⁴ Also,

¹⁰ For information about Kerestinec prison in: Ivan JELIĆ: *Tragedija u Kerestincu* [Tragedy in Kerestinec], Zagreb: Globus, 1986.

¹¹ It should be known that the Kerestinec camp existed only from April 19 to July 14, 1941. Markovac was arrested on March 31, and deported to Kerestinec on May 22, so he spent a month and a half in the camp (until the breakout of the communists from the camp on July 14, 1941). Although he was Jewish, he was condemned as a communist and placed in the communist part of the camp, where the inmates were given the status of political prisoners, and had special privileges (they did not have to work like the others, they cooked for themselves, they were allowed to receive visitors even in their rooms, they were housed in the castle, and they had electricity which allowed them to read, give lectures and have a choir). In contrast, the Jewish inmates (mostly refugees, so their names are unknown) were housed in a shed in the courtyard of the castle without privileges. A third group of inmates, the Serbs, also located outside the castle, had a similar fate. Cf. Zdravko DIZDAR: Logor Kerestinec [Kerestinec Camp], *Povijesni prilozi*, 8 (1989) 8, 143-192.

¹² Andrija TOMAŠEK: *Pavao Markovac – Čovjek i djelo* [Pavao Markovac – Man and Work], Zagreb: NIRO radničke novine, 1983, 14.

¹³ Zvonimir KOMARICA: *Grobovi bez sjena (bijeg iz Kerestince)* [Graves without Shadows (Escape from Kerestinec)], Zagreb: Lykos, 1962, 46.

¹⁴ Z. KOMARICA: *Grobovi bez sjena*, 1962, 47. Croatian lyrics were translated to English by Tihana Klepač. Original Croatian lyrics: »Ivančica planina / Pod njom leži dolina / U dolini kazniona / Ljudska mučiona. // Srp i čekić čelični / Daju hljebac pšenični / Srp i čekić naša značka / Radnička seljačka. // Prijatelju prijane / Čarape ti štrikane / Štrikale ih drugarice / Iz naše tvornice...«

Komarica states that »on peasants from the surrounding area and passers-by¹⁵ a special impression [was] made by Markovac's composition which we sang in the Kajkavian dialect: »Ej, preštimovani gosponček, cajt je da delamo račun...« [Hey, high-estimated sir, it's a matter of splitting the bill]«.¹⁶ According to Tomašek,¹⁷ it represents the last verses of Markovac's song *Ej, gospodar* [Hey, master].

Based on this repertoire, it is evident that in captivity Markovac culturally acted in accordance with his beliefs and actively advanced the ideas of communism and the workers' movement.¹⁸ By choosing revolutionary songs and his own songs to engage verses for the choir he led, describing the contrast of nature and captivity, torture, and suffering, he raised the fighting spirit of prisoners. He encouraged unity in the struggle for common ideals. These descriptions confirm that some of the political prisoners in the period when they were in Kerestinec had permission to pursue cultural activity, which Dizdar states when describing the different treatment of political prisoners, Serbs, and Jews.¹⁹

On the subject of singing as a way of preserving mental health in captivity, and on recalling from memory some parts of theatrical works, is Helena (Jelka) Pacht-Mandić's testimony from the »Danica« transit camp near Koprivnica²⁰ where she describes some cultural activities in the camp: »[...] we performed Nušić's²¹ 'Muha' [The Fly] by memory, we sang quietly or recited our songs [...] The best way to preserve physical health and psychological balance was to develop diverse ideological and cultural activities.«²²

¹⁵ From this comment, it is evident that the singing of the detainees could be heard by the peasants who worked in the fields near the prison and by passers-by. Kerestinec Castle near Zagreb, where the prison was located in the 20th century and where the camp was later located, was built in the 15th century and upgraded in subsequent periods. It is located on the edge of the settlement of Sveta Nedelja, where travelers who passed in the direction of Zagreb or Sveta Nedelja could hear the sounds coming from the closed court complex. Cf. Kerestinec, Reprezentativna stambena arhitektura kontinentalne Hrvatske – dvorci, Ministarstvo kulture i medija [Ministry of Culture and Media], 2022, <https://min-kulture.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Dvorci%20ZG/08_Kerestinec.pdf> (Accessed 22 April 2024).

¹⁶ Z. KOMARICA: *Grobovi bez sjena*, 1962, 47.

¹⁷ A. TOMAŠEK: *Pavao Markovac – čovjek i djelo*, 166, note 26.

¹⁸ A. TOMAŠEK: *Pavao Markovac – čovjek i djelo*, 95-132.

¹⁹ Z. DIZDAR: *Logor Kerestinec*.

²⁰ »Danica« camp near Koprivnica was the first Ustasha camp formed in 1941. It was used as a transit camp to other concentration camps such as Jasenovac, Jadovno, Stara Gradiška, or Auschwitz. Cf. Zdravko DIZDAR: Žene u logoru »Danica«, kraj Koprivnice 1941. – 1942. godine [Women in »Danica« Concentration Camp near Koprivnica 1941-1942], *Podravski zbornik*, (2008) 34, 159-208; Zdravko DIZDAR: Ljudski gubici logora »Danica« kraj Koprivnice 1941. – 1942. [Human Losses of the »Danica« Camp near Koprivnica in 1941-1942], *Podravski zbornik*, (2007) 33, 187-212. This paper mentioned the »Danica« camp as a place where internees were granted their wishes for singing and some cultural activity. It was not mentioned in the paper's main title because of its role as a transit camp for the biggest termination camps such as Jasenovac, Auschwitz, and others.

²¹ Branislav Nušić (8 October 1864 – 19 January 1938) was a Serbian novelist, playwright, satirist, and essayist. Cf. ***: Nušić, Branislav. *Hrvatska enciklopedija*, online edition, Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2013-2024, <<https://www.enciklopedija.hr/clanak/44444>> (Accessed 22 January 2024).

²² Helena (Jelka) PACHL-MANDIĆ: Jedna logoraška odiseja u logoru »Danica« kraj Koprivnice [A Camp Odyssey In The Concentration Camp »Danica« near Koprivnica], in: Ladislav Grakalić et al.

From the above, it is evident that the detainees recited and sang quietly from memory, which confirms that the guards did not initiate this singing. So far, archival research and testimonies have not confirmed that there were complete editions and complete scores in the »Danica«, Kerestinec, or Jasenovac camps.²³ It is possible to assume that fragments of works reconstructed from memory and arranged, paraphrases of individual dialogues, numbers from comedies, and individual arias or duets from operas or operettas were mostly performed.

Numerous testimonies from various concentration and labor camps describe that the detainees sang while working. Singing could have been initiated either by guards and then had the character of forced singing, or could have been self-initiated as a form of emotional comfort, especially among female detainees.²⁴ Nada Salomon's testimony provides such an example. She describes the atmosphere in which a breakout from the Jasenovac concentration camp was organized: »It was in the summer of 1944. Our song reverberated through the entire camp. The comrades told us it gave them greater strength and faith in victory.«²⁵

Singing is a mode of music-making that is easily performed in different situations, and it is something which connects a group sociologically. While it emotionally affects an individual, it strengthens the spirit or serves as comfort, as evidenced by the above testimonies of Vlado Mađarević, Helena (Jelka) Pachel-Mandić, and Nada Salomon.²⁶ Such moments of singing are also described in various testimonies from camps in Germany, a fact which is confirmed by Guido Fackler when he writes:

»Singing was the earliest form of music-making of camp inmates because it often did not require any preparation. Consequently, spontaneous, unaccompanied singing, whether solo or in groups, was very common. Some of the inmates' vocal groups were formed by members of former workers' movement choirs. Singing also framed illegal

(eds.): *Revolucionarni omladinski pokret u Zagrebu 1941-1945*, sv. I, Zagreb: Gradska konferencija SSRNH – Gradski odbor Saveza udruženja boraca NOR-a – Sveučilišna naklada Liber, 1984, 360.

²³ The testimonies of the surviving inmates mostly mention that the works of art were performed from memory. The scores are mainly mentioned in the context of written arrangements (see the section in this paper on the activities of the Jasenovac music group), except for the recollection of Branko Polić from the Kraljevica camp, who explicitly mentioned that some prisoners brought scores with them (see the section on musical activities in Kraljevica in this paper).

²⁴ Guido FACKLER: Music in Concentration Camps 1933-1945, *Témoigner entre histoire et mémoire*, 124 (2017), 60-83, <<http://journals.openedition.org/temoigner/5732>> (Accessed 23 April 2024).

²⁵ Nada SALOMON: Mladost u zatvorima i logorima, ženski logor u Jasenovcu [Youth in Prisons and Concentration Camps, Female Concentration Camp in Jasenovac], in: Ladislav Grakalić et al. (eds.): *Revolucionarni omladinski pokret u Zagrebu 1941-1945*, 351.

²⁶ On the emotional and sociological effects of singing in a group, see Margaret. M. UNWIN – Diana Theadora KENNY – Pamela Jane DAVIS: The Effects of Group Singing on Mood, *Psychology of Music*, 30 (2002) 2, 175-185, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735602302004>> (Accessed 22 January 2024); Elizabeth HELTZER – Hilary MOSS – Jessica O'DONOGHUE: Lifting Spirits and Building Community: The Social, Emotional and Practical Benefits of All-Female Group Singing, *Health Promotion International*, 37 (2022) 6, daac112, 1-11, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/daac112>> (Accessed 25 January 2024).

festivities, as well as authorized church services. Popular songs the inmates had known before their imprisonment were most frequently performed. They were life-affirming, allowing the inmates to revisit the time before imprisonment.«²⁷

However, it should be remembered that singing in concentration camps was not always practiced voluntarily and was not always used to strengthen the spirit, strengthen the group at work, or provide emotional comfort. In some labor and concentration camps, singing was also used as a form of torture, and spontaneous singing was not tolerated.²⁸

»Music group« and Ustashe entertainment

In addition to singing, there was yet another aspect to music-making in captivity in which music served as entertainment for the guards in Jasenovac camp. From the arraignment and trial of Dinko Šakić, there is information that Ivo Volner, the accordion player, was taken to play for the amusement of the Ustashe, following which he was charged with attempting to escape and was killed. In retaliation and as a warning to other internees, the entire »Music group« was taken away, never to return.

About this music group, which in Jasenovac was called an »orchestra«, the testimony of Jakob Danon from Zagreb says:

»In the spring of 1942, the Romani brought instruments to the camp with them which were confiscated and put away in the storage room: violins, guitars, accordions, contrabass. Slavko Goldschmidt who worked in the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb before the war,²⁹ and was in charge of the storage of instruments in the Ustashe accounting department in the camp, came up with the idea that an orchestra could be assembled there. The orchestra was named 'Ćelo'³⁰ after a nickname the Ustashe gave

²⁷ Guido FACKLER, Cultural Behaviour and the Invention of Traditions: Music and Musical Practices in the Early Concentration Camps, 1933–6/7, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 45 (2010) 3, 610.

²⁸ G. FACKLER, Cultural Behaviour and the Invention of Traditions, 615: »Collective singing was not only demanded of the inmates while marching or during roll calls; it was also a part of the march-in and march-out ceremonies of work details or during punishment actions. The adoption of these practices culminated in forced collective singing. It became a dominant ritual in the early camps and developed into an omnipresent phenomenon of daily routine in all concentration camps.«

²⁹ There is no evidence that Slavko Goldschmidt was employed in the Croatian National Theater in the interwar period. Perhaps this is why Slavko Goldschmidt was a lawyer by profession, and occasionally he participated as an amateur actor in performances in the Small Theatre in Zagreb, as stated in: V. HORVAT – I. VUKIĆ – S. PILIĆ – B. MATKOVIĆ: *Jasenovački logori – istraživanja*, 2015, 102. »The leader of the entire theatre was Slavko Goldschmidt, a lawyer from Zagreb and a native of Kutina. The theater was named Ćelo after Goldschmidt's appearance and nickname. Before the war in Zagreb, Goldschmidt participated in plays of the Small Theatre as an amateur actor, often in comic roles. In the camp, he organized skits where, like a contemporary stand-up comedian, he mocked everyone, even Ustasha-guards.«

³⁰ Ćelavac or Ćelo is slang for a bald person.

Slavko Goldschmidt.³¹ The Romani did not play in the orchestra except for one person. The orchestra played for the internees on Sundays, in the woodworks. The Ustashe guards attended the concerts. In the canteen, they played for the entertainment of the Ustashe when the German officers visited them. There were no or very few music scores [...] so [...] the musicians used to write the scores themselves from memory or they composed new compositions.«³²

When the question arises as to how musical instruments »came« into the camp and whether the detainees could have brought instruments with them at the time of their arrest, this testimony indicates that the Romani brought instruments with them. Although Danon claims that the Romani did not play in the orchestra, in his testimony Vlado Mađarević states:

»How terrible and eerie was the concert which the Romani gave the prisoners and themselves one Sunday of June 1942. Yes, the camp management just urged the Romani and other detainees to throw concerts. Later, when all the Romani were already killed, the detainees, according to the directives of Luburić and other Ustasha executioners, organized an orchestra which had to perform for Ustasas every Sunday. Among the music instrument players there were real virtuosos, as well as professors of music academies. In addition to classical, fairly well-practiced pieces, the orchestra had to play shallow Ustasha songs [...] Luburić was proud that to the detainees [...] he gave the opportunity to be supposedly 'spiritually strengthened' – with music. It is hard to imagine a more terrible torture for those who are expecting death at any moment, or who watch the killing and torture of their comrades with the music of a detention orchestra.«³³

From the above, it is possible that Iveković and Danon's perceptions of Romani in the camp orchestra differ because the number of Romani rapidly decreased³⁴ following their arrival at the camp, so it is possible that Danon, who stayed in the Jasenovac camp from 1941 to 1945,³⁵ attended the orchestra's activi-

³¹ Cf. Ivo GOLDSTEIN (ed.): Goldschmidt (Zlatarović, Zlatković), Slavko, *Židovski biografski leksikon*, <<https://zbl.lzmk.hr/?p=43>> (Accessed 23 January 2024).

³² J. Danon, in: Anton EBERST (ed.): *Muzika iza bodljikavih žica*, 107.

³³ Mladen IVEKOVIĆ: *Krv teče potocima*, in: Antun Miletić: *Koncentracioni logor Jasenovac*, book II, Beograd: Narodna knjiga – Spomen područje Jasenovac, 1986, 871.

³⁴ V. HORVAT – I. VUKIĆ – S. PILIĆ – B. MATKOVIĆ: *Jasenovački logori – istraživanja*, 2015, 133: »Due to their nationality, Jews and Romani were brought to the camp [...] former camp inmates talk about a smaller colorful group of several hundred Roma who found themselves in the camp in the early summer of 1942. Among them were circus artists who performed shows for detainees and guards with trained bears and monkeys. The Romani soon moved to the village of Uštica. Former camp inmates from both before and after that period do not talk about larger groups of Romani in the camp.«

³⁵ Zapisnik od 26. maja 1945. sačinjen u Zemaljskoj komisiji za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača u Zagrebu na osnovu izjave Jakoba Danona o ustaškim zločinima u koncentracionom logoru Jasenovac u vreme njegovog boravka u logoru od 1941. do 1945. godine [Minutes of May 26, 1945, made in the National Commission for determining the crimes of the occupiers and their accomplices in Zagreb based on Jakob Danon's statement on Ustasha crimes in the Jasenovac concentration camp during his stay in the camp from 1941 to 1945], in: A. MILETIĆ: *Koncentracioni logor Jasenovac*, book III, 1986, 525-546.

ties in which the Romani did not participate, while Mladen Iveković stayed in Jasenovac for a short period in 1942³⁶ at the moment when many Romani had been brought to the camp.

Also, according to Danon's testimony, Moritz Kohen wrote a libretto for the »Scheherezade« in Stara Gradiška, and an unknown person put it to music there. Danon also states that the score was secretly brought to Jasenovac and that it was an oriental-sounding composition.³⁷ Danon remembers the names of the following members of the orchestra: Erih Samlaić³⁸ and Natko Devčić³⁹ (conductors), Spasoje

³⁶ Cf. ***: Iveković, Mladen. *Hrvatska enciklopedija*, online edition, Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2013-2024, <<https://www.enciklopedija.hr/clanak/ivekovic-mladen>> (Accessed 25 April 2024).

³⁷ At present, no traces of a music score have been found that would confirm the aforementioned testimony, as no person with that name or a variant of that name is recorded in the list of victims of the Jasenovac and Stara Gradiška camps or the *Jewish Biographical Lexicon*.

³⁸ V. HORVAT – I. VUKIĆ – S. PILIĆ – B. MATKOVIĆ: *Jasenovački logori – istraživanja*, 82. »On December 31, 1942, Natko Devčić was released from the camp. His place was taken by musicologist and Jewish music heritage researcher Erih Samlaić. According to Milko Riffer, who spent a year in the camp until October 1943, Samlaić took the well-trained orchestra from Devčić's days to an even better level.« It should be noted that the descriptions of the orchestra and the persons who acted in the orchestra sometimes differ in individual publications and original archival documents. In: V. HORVAT – I. VUKIĆ – S. PILIĆ – B. MATKOVIĆ: *Jasenovački logori – istraživanja*, 82 states: »But Devčić and the orchestra are therefore described by Zdenko Schwartz, and witnesses at the Dinko Sakic trial in Zagreb in 1999 also mentioned the orchestra.« However, in the minutes of Zdenko Schwartz's testimony (a chemist who stayed in the Jasenovac camp, in Stara Gradiška, in Feričanci, again in Jasenovac and again in Stara Gradiška and Lepoglava), on page 10 of the minutes Zdenko Schwartz state this: »The depiction of camping would not be complete, if it were not mentioned that in the year 1943 theater sections were founded in Jasenovac and Stara Gradiška, and an orchestra was organized. The detainees also participated in this. In Jasenovac and Stara Gradiška, and later in Lepoglava, a liturgy was formed [...].« In box no. 64, the author of this paper did not find a mention of Natko Devčić or a more detailed description of the orchestra. Cf. Iskaz Zdenka Schwartz, Broj: 126/45, Hrvatski državni arhiv [Croatian State Archives], Zagreb, Centralna gradska komisija za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača, sign. HDA-ZKRZ, 64. [Zdenko Schwartz' testimony, Central City commission for determining the occupiers' crimes and their accomplices, No. 126/45.]

³⁹ From the statement to the National Commission for Determining Crimes, Natko Devčić said that he had been detained in the Jasenovac camp »since 10. VI. 1942. until 23 XII. 1942.« It is necessary to notice the difference in the dates of exit from Jasenovac, which was communicated by Natko Devčić personally in his statement, which can be found in the minutes in Hrvatski državni arhiv, Zagreb, Zemaljska komisija za istraživanje ratnih zločina, sign. HDA-ZKRZ-ZH, 150, registar 869. and a quote from the book V. HORVAT – I. VUKIĆ – S. PILIĆ – B. MATKOVIĆ: *Jasenovački logori – istraživanja*, 82. Devčić lists the release date as December 23rd and a citation from the book on December 31st. Natko Devčić made the statement in 1944 as a Member of the Cultural and Artistic Division of the Information Department of ZAVNOH. In his testimony, he does not mention personal activities in the camp but describes situations and suffering that he saw or heard. Also, the statement does not mention the name of any musician or musical activity but only the suffering of the painter Daniel Ozmo. Cf. Hrvatski državni arhiv, Zagreb, Zemaljska komisija za istraživanje ratnih zločina, sign. HDA-ZKRZ-ZH, 150, register 869. The file of the National Commission for determining the crimes of the occupiers and their accomplices in Zagreb is recorded as register no. 869, GUZ 205/44 Case Luburić Maks / Filipović Majstorović priest. Also, Natko Devčić was mentioned in: Hrvatski državni arhiv, Zagreb, Elaborat »logor Jasenovac«, sign. HDA-ZKRZ, 68, Guz 4547/45. »Drunk Ustasha heads sang enthusiastically, while the orchestra in which some detainees had to play, such as professor Natko Devčić, intoned the Ustasha anthem«. Note: The study has 93 pages and three versions: A, B, and C. This quote can be

Jovanović (gypsy, violin), Hajrija Musafija (Zavidovići, guitar and singer), Vavruška (Darugar, trumpet), Ante Majić (Sinj, guitar), Maminko-Avram Altarac (Zenica, violin), Ivo Volner (Zagreb, accordion), Vlado Cvia (clarinette), Maminko Kamhi (Sarajevo, violin), Milko Riffer (singer), Arnold Basch (singer) and Slavko Goldschmit (sketches writer).

As is obvious, witnesses often refer to any group of musicians as an »orchestra«. This musical group was composed of violins, trumpets, guitars, accordion, clarinet, three singers, and a sketch writer who was a lawyer by profession. According to the names, it is also evident that the ethnic composition of musicians was very different, and included Jews, Muslims, Croats, Czechs, Serbs, and Austrians. The music group members were mostly amateur musicians. The existence of musical groups or more profiled orchestras is recorded in the literature from the very beginning of the appearance of the Nazi regime in 1933:

»[...] official orchestras existed in almost all of the main concentration camps, larger subcamps and in some death camps. Sometimes there were several ensembles in one place, such as in Auschwitz, among them a brass band comprising 120 musicians and a symphony orchestra with 80 musicians.«⁴⁰

Following the incident with Ivo Volner in 1944, »Erih Samlaić, his brother Hugo, Slavko Goldschmidt and others, a total of 19 detainees, were killed. It is not known if the orchestra continued to operate afterward.«⁴¹

Music in Stara Gradiška and Jasenovac

The testimony of Milko Riffer⁴² also mentions the existence of a camp »orchestra«: »Saturated with impressions, we returned across the 'pond', [...] to the 'boulevard of freedom', where the camp orchestra played Adam's overture 'Si j'étais roi' and a few pop songs. [...] At the end, the conductor Erih sang in a soft tenor voice Tijardović's nostalgic 'Daleko je biser mora'«.⁴³

Based on Riffer's testimony, the public spread the story that Tijardović's operettas were performed in Jasenovac. The testimony mentions exclusively the performance of an aria, which is originally intended for a female voice, while the testimony mentions that Erih Samlaić performed the aria.⁴⁴

found in the B version. The pages are not individually numbered. The study was written on a typewriter, and individual paragraphs were hand-crossed with added notes.

⁴⁰ Guido FACKLER: The Concentration and Death Camps, <<https://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/camps/>> (Accessed 24 April 2024).

⁴¹ V. HORVAT – I. VUKIĆ – S. PILIĆ – B. MATKOVIĆ: *Jasenovački logori – istraživanja*, 102.

⁴² M. RIFFER: *Grad mrtvih. Jasenovac 1943, 1946*, 95.

⁴³ Original title of Ivo Tijardović' song from the operetta *Mala Floramyje* [Little Floramyje] is Daleko m'e biser mora [The pearl of the sea is far from me].

⁴⁴ The above statement, which limits the performance of Tijardović's entire operetta, is confirmed by the following: »Descriptions of life in the camp sometimes mention that the inmates performed the

According to previous statements and descriptions, it is evident that the performance of complete works was not possible because there were no complete scores of works in the camp. Still, testimonies also mention that parts were performed from memory and that more skilled musicians reconstructed scores for existing instruments according to memory. So, what was being performed could only be small parts of music pieces that could be reconstructed to some extent from memory. Furthermore, there was no orchestra in the true sense of the word. Next, the performances were exclusively performed by men, mostly musically uneducated. Thus, the Jasenovac camp performances of any work of art can, at best, be considered parodies of parts of original compositions. This was also the case in other concentration camps: »Their repertoire included marches, camp anthems, salon music, easy-listening and dance music, popular songs, film and operetta melodies, opera excerpts [...]«.⁴⁵

The mentioned name of Erih is that of Erih Eliša Samlaić, a conductor, composer, and writer, who was also mentioned in the censored chapter titled »Ćelo« of Riffer's book, which was published in its entirety in the updated edition of Naklada Pavičić in Zagreb in 2011. The censored chapter provides an insight into the cultural life of the internees. Theatrical performances and concerts for camp internees were held in the carpentry building on the ground floor of the administrative office building every Saturday and Sunday.

»Concerts and theatrical plays performed by the theater troupe 'Ćelo' were the only moments in which the internees felt like human beings [...] Short sketches, dramatized jokes, and sometimes even entire operettas and opera parodies were performed accompanied by the camp orchestra led by Samlaić. There was no written material to perform these pieces. Everything was done and composed from memory or, in the best case, from a piano excerpt, which had to be instrumentalized.«⁴⁶

A detailed reading of Riffer's testimony can lead to contradictory conclusions if some parts are interpreted separately. In one sentence, Riffer claims that sometimes »even entire operettas and opera parodies were performed accompanied by the camp orchestra«, and immediately in the next sentence, he claims that »There was no written material to perform these pieces. Everything was done and composed from memory or, in the best case, from a piano excerpt, which had to be arranged for instruments.« Based on the previously explained example of the performance of only one aria from Tijardović's operetta and the very plausible claim that the detainees did not have complete scores in the camp, it is possible to con-

operetta 'Mala Floramye' by Ivo Tijardović. But according to the book of detainee Milko Riffer, it should be more precisely said that Erih Samlaić, conductor and head of the camp orchestra, sang the aria 'Daleko m'e biser mora' from Tijardović's operetta at the events 'with his warm tenor'. V. HORVAT – I. VUKIĆ – S. PILIĆ – B. MATKOVIĆ: *Jasenovački logori – istraživanja*, 101.

⁴⁵ G. FACKLER: *The Concentration and Death Camps*.

⁴⁶ M. RIFFER: *Grad mrtvih. Jasenovac 1943*, 2011, 201.

clude that reworked parts of compositions and various more casual musical and stage works were performed. The lack of scores is confirmed by the information from Milko Riffer's camp correspondence from which it is evident »that he wanted to get the score of 'Ero s onoga svijeta' [Ero the Joker] from the composer Jakov Gotovac. But Riffer's friend Mladen Pozajić writes to him that Gotovac no longer has a single copy of 'Ero' with him.«⁴⁷

However, due to the lack of music scores, one new musical-stage work was created in the circumstances of camp life. Riffer's censored chapter also mentions the operetta *Raj na oceanu* [Paradise on the Ocean]. The libretto was written by Volner-Kengura, the music by Kende-Švabo, and directed by Čelo, scenographer Walter, inspector and technical head Jura, playwright Milko Riffer, and whisperer Vrabac (Sparrow). According to the given names, it is evident that the internees used nicknames. At the end of Riffer's book, the program sheet of the operetta *Paradise on the Ocean* was published in the uncensored edition of Naklada Pavičić.⁴⁸ The announced operetta is in two scenes, and on the back of the program announcement are the signatures of the participants: Ivan Vollner Kengur, Dr. Erih Samlaić, Josef Kende Švabo, Walter Kraus, Bernard Wiener, Vladimir Cvija, Spasoje Familić and Zdenek Zdenko Vavruška. Of those mentioned, only Vladimir Cvija survived the camp.⁴⁹ In the chapter, Riffer also states that the »orchestra« consisted of six violins, a cello, an accordion, a piano, a B-flat clarinet, a saxophone, two trumpets, and a drum, which is a different ensemble from the one cited by Danon.⁵⁰ Both witnesses may be right, but they mention the orchestra's composition (musical group) from different periods of the Jasenovac concentration camp.

In Riffer's uncensored book, the pantomime *Od kolijevke do groba* [From the Cradle to the Grave] is also mentioned. The pantomime was removed from the repertoire after the first performance because, according to the stated content, it grotesquely depicts, in seven scenes, the fate of the main character »Mucavac« [The Stutterer] from birth to death with many allusions to camp life. According to Riffer, each scene was accompanied by a musical number, including *Gaudeamus igitur*, the operetta hit »Kaj nam pak moreju« [»What can they do to us after all«] by Žiga Hirschler (which was a big hit before the World war II on Zagreb's stages and radio station),⁵¹ and at the end (when Mucavac [The Stutterer] dies of typhus) Beethoven's funeral march.⁵²

⁴⁷ V. HORVAT – I. VUKIĆ – S. PILIĆ – B. MATKOVIĆ: *Jasenovački logori – istraživanja*, 102.

⁴⁸ It is an idyllic illustration of a small island in the ocean with a palm tree, on which an embracing couple with turned backs are waving white handkerchiefs looking at a distant white ship. Looking in the illustration, one can still see a white tent on the island and a rope tied to a palm tree on which men's and women's underwear are being dried. Cf. M. RIFFER: *Grad mrtvih. Jasenovac 1943*, 2011, 212-213.

⁴⁹ M. RIFFER: *Grad mrtvih. Jasenovac 1943*, 2011, 212-213.

⁵⁰ J. DANON, in: Anton EBERST (ed.): *Muzika iza bodljikavih žica*, 107.

⁵¹ T. JURKIĆ SVIBEN: *Glazbenici židovskog podrijetla*.

⁵² According to Dr. Željko Holjevac's explanation in the preface to the revised edition of Riffer's book (2011), the authors of the revised edition received the censored chapter and other documents from Riffer's daughter Doroteja (Dora) Maček. Dora Maček is a retired full-time professor at the Department

The above-mentioned book also provides information on the existence of the camp orchestra »Ćelo«: »One sunny Sunday, the camp orchestra 'Ćelo,' with the participation of the best camp singers, performed a concert by the fishpond in honor of the female comrades from Stara Gradiška [...].«⁵³

Jasenovac concentration camp was sometimes inspected by different commissions that were announced, and the camp was then meticulously tidied up for inspection. One example of the internees' good treatment was the camp orchestra, which played popular songs.⁵⁴ Riffer also mentions that in the camp area referred to as the »Administrative office« there was a hall 35 meters long and 10 meters wide, »in the middle, there was a desk of the camp composer Švabo⁵⁵ who would be filling the music manuscript papers arranging the scores for the camp orchestra.«⁵⁶

Also, according to Riffer: »on New Year's Eve 1943 the first Catholic mass was held in the Jasenovac camp [...]. The mass was unusually solemn [...] in the narrow space in the back the camp orchestra squeezed together and played compositions by Vilhar, Handel[!] and Beethoven during the mass.«⁵⁷

Another testimony, from Erwin Miller⁵⁸ memories states:

»Tannerymen⁵⁹ were the founders of the cultural and educational group, which was supposed to fill the void of camp life since there were no books. A few internees with a talent for acting started the rehearsals of the operetta *Countess Maritza*⁶⁰ Arnold Basch, the

for English language at the University of Zagreb Faculty of Philosophy. The documents provided by Maček are the only copies, and are privately owned and not found in any archive. For an insight into this censored chapter, a copy of the manuscript, and the theater program which provides the most detailed description of cultural and musical life in Jasenovac so far, see Željko HOLJEVAC: *Od malja do violine*, in: Milko Riffer: *Grad mrtvih. Jasenovac 1943*, Zagreb: Naklada Pavičić, 2011, V-XXXIV.

⁵³ M. RIFFER: *Grad mrtvih. Jasenovac 1943, 1946*, 174-176.

⁵⁴ M. RIFFER: *Grad mrtvih. Jasenovac 1943, 1946*, 86.

⁵⁵ M. RIFFER: *Grad mrtvih. Jasenovac 1943*, 2011, 126 says »Švabe«, and the name index says that »Švabo« was Josip Kende. So far, no data have been found about Josip or Josef (Joseph) Kende, nor can such a name be found on the list of victims of the Jasenovac camp (Pregled i pretraga poimeničnog popisa žrtava KL Jasenovac 1941.-1945. [Review and search of the roll call list of victims of KL Jasenovac 1941-1945], <<https://www.jusp-jasenovac.hr/default.aspx?sid=7618>> (Accessed 25 April 2024)). Interestingly, Riffer calls him a »camp composer«. However, for the moment, there are no traces that a person named Joseph or Josef Kende was a professional musician, so it was probably a person who was a musical amateur and deft in arrangements and instrumentation.

⁵⁶ M. RIFFER: *Grad mrtvih. Jasenovac 1943, 1946*, 126.

⁵⁷ M. RIFFER: *Grad mrtvih. Jasenovac 1943, 1946*, 142.

⁵⁸ E. MILLER: *Izabran za umiranje*, 58-59.

⁵⁹ »Kožarci« [Tannerymen] refers to the internees who worked in »Kožara« [Tannery] in the Jasenovac concentration camp. About »Kožara« in: ***: *The tannery, Spomen područje / Memorial Site Jasenovac*, web page, <<https://www.jusp-jasenovac.hr/Default.aspx?sid=6776#breadCrumbs>> (Accessed 25 January 2024).

⁶⁰ As in the case of expanded information in the public magazines and newspaper articles that operettas *Mala Floramye* or *Countess Maritza* were performed in Jasenovac, the already stated facts should be taken into account (see footnote 39 in this paper) that it cannot be confirmed with certainty

opera singer was in the tannery with us [...] In front of the improvised stage in the yard, which was considerably large, benches were placed to seat the Ustashe officers and guards [...] One of the performances we called 'Midsummer Night's Dream', which was completely created by the internees, was invented with a specific goal in mind. Everything that was being played out on stage was supposed to present what an internee dreams about. During the performance, Arnold Basch sang 'Ave Maria' [...]!⁶¹

The Ustashe understood the song as a condemnation, and additional performances were banned.

In addition to the testimonies of the surviving internees, the Confidential report of Julius Schmidlin,⁶² the delegate of the International Red Cross in the Independent State of Croatia in Zagreb, concerning his visit to Jasenovac and Stara Gradiška camps in the summer of 1944, proves the »performing« of theatrical pieces, sketches, and concerts.⁶³ Section 68 of the report mentions that »Theatrical performances, games, and musical concerts performed by the internees were allowed in Jasenovac«. The program of the theatre performance from the Stara

that the detainees had complete scores according to which they could prepare a complete performance of the work, nor did they have an orchestra with all the necessary instruments that would be suitable for the complete performance of the mentioned works. Thus, in the case of this testimony, it should be assumed that according to memory, performances of some of the most famous arias were arranged, which were accompanied by any available instruments and a musical band consisting mainly of musical amateurs.

⁶¹ E. MILLER: *Izabran za umiranje*, 58-59.

⁶² For a detailed biography of Julius Schmidlin's and a discussion of the Confidential report, see: Mario KEVO: *Posjet poslanika Međunarodnog odbora Crvenog križa logorima Jasenovac i Stara Gradiška u ljeto 1944* [Visit of Members of the International Red Cross Committee to the Jasenovac and Stara Gradiška Camps in the Summer of 1944], *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 40 (2008) 2, 547-585. Julius Schmidlin's report in the context of the description of the situation witnessed in the Jasenovac and Stara Gradiška camps needs to be critically looked at because Schmidlin probably could not have been a fully objective observer. He was born in Zagreb, where he lived until 1945. He was appointed commissioner to the ICRC with the consent of the government of the Independent State of Croatia. About the naming procedure, writes M. KEVO: *Posjet poslanika Međunarodnog odbora Crvenog križa logorima Jasenovac i Stara Gradiška u ljeto 1944*, 551: »After the consent of the Government of the Independent State of Croatia and the Croatian Red Cross, Julius Schmidlin was appointed in January 1943 as a representative of the MOCK to the Independent State of Croatia in Zagreb, which was the result of the success of the special mission and the final agreement concluded with the Croatian authorities in a special mission carried out at the end of 1942 by a member of the MOCK Mission for the German Reich from Berlin and a special representative in the Independent State of Croatia, Dr. Robert Schirmer.« From the actors who participated in the acceptance and appointment of Julius Schmidlin as Delegate of the Red Cross, it is evident that a person who responded to the authorities in Berlin and Zagreb at the time was accepted.

⁶³ The confidential report of Julius Schmidlin, the ICRC delegate in the Independent State of Croatia concerning his visit to Jasenovac and Stara Gradiška camps and camp's farm Gređani Salaš, sent to Jean Etienne Schwarzenberg, member of the ICRC Secretariat and head of the Special Relief Division of the International Committee of the Red Cross (Mario KEVO: *Veze međunarodnog odbora Crvenog križa i Nezavisne države Hrvatske*, Dokumenti, knjiga 1 [Interrelations between the ICRC and the Independent State of Croatia, Documents, Book 1], Slavonki Brod: Hrvatski institut za povijest-podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje – Zagreb: Hrvatski državni arhiv – Jasenovac: Javna ustanova Spomen-područje Jasenovac, 2009, 378-405.

Gradiška camp⁶⁴ is attached to the report. On that occasion, the theatrical play *Gospodja ministarka* [Minister's Wife] was performed. At the bottom of the program page, a line mentions that »Camp music shall play during the intermission«. ⁶⁵ Also, in section 37 of the report, Julius Schmidlin writes:

»Immediately after that, I attended a theatrical performance which was given *ad hoc* in one of the described workshops of the men's labor camp. The play program is also attached. The actors are exclusively male internees. During breaks, a large prison orchestra played. The musicians were mostly Jews. I was told that theater performances and concerts are held regularly. A wardrobe and instruments are provided. The audience consists of prisoners /men/ and Ustasha – separated in rows.«⁶⁶

The sole official document that holds a written program from either of the camps discussed, which proves the existence of camp music or camp orchestra, is a document from the Red Cross report. It should be noted that the archival document produced for the purposes of the report by Julius Schmidlin, from which we learn of the performances and musical activities in the Jasenovac camp and Stara Gradiška, resembles the Reports of the Danish Red Cross from the Terezin camp in the Czech Republic from the same period (1944), which also provide information about the cultural programs (concerts and performances) that were part of the camp internees' everyday life.⁶⁷ Given that the »arrangement of camps« for inspections of commissions, especially those of the Red Cross, were frequent occurrences in many camps during the Nazi period, it can be assumed that for the arrival of Julius Schmidlin the camp was specially »arranged« and that the presentation of musical acts and parts of the theater performance was part of Ustasha propaganda about the »appropriate« life of inmates. It is important to notice specific statements and types of sentences in Schmidlin's report: »I was told that theater performances and concerts are held regularly. A wardrobe and instruments are provided. The audience consists of prisoners /men/ and Ustasha – separated in rows.« It was particularly stressed to Schmidlin that performances and concerts were held regularly. The audience, which according to the description included Ustasha guards

⁶⁴ How the prison Stara Gradiška became the Stara Gradiška camp in: ***: Stara Gradiška, Spomen područje / Memorial Site Jasenovac, web page, <<https://www.jusp-jasenovac.hr/Default.aspx?sid=6751>> (Accessed 25 January 2024).

⁶⁵ M. KEVO: *Veze međunarodnog odbora Crvenog križa i Nezavisne države Hrvatske*, 404-405; M. KEVO: *Posjet poslanika Međunarodnog odbora Crvenog križa logorima Jasenovac i Stara Gradiška u ljeto 1944*, 574.

⁶⁶ M. KEVO: *Posjet poslanika Međunarodnog odbora Crvenog križa logorima Jasenovac i Stara Gradiška u ljeto 1944*, 580.

⁶⁷ Cf. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Theresienstadt: Red Cross visit, *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, <<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/theresienstadt-red-cross-visit>> (Accessed 21 January 2024).

and the detainees, could be understood as being part of a »staged« situation for the benefit of the commission's review.

All other information about the existence of the orchestra in Jasenovac concentration camp is based on the testimonies of the surviving internees.⁶⁸

Jasenovac camp music scores

In addition to the written textual records of the orchestra, theater, and concert performances, musical activity in the Jasenovac camp is also indicated by rare sheet music preserved by the families of the martyred internees' private collections.

There are two instances which make Alfred Pordes⁶⁹ a person of interest in relation to the musical life of the Jasenovac camp. The first has to do with the fact that in 2002, the scores of two marches dated December 17th 1941 were found in a basement in Zagreb. Pordes composed those »in honor« of the infamous camp managers Bruno Diamantstein and Bernard Wiener (see **Figure 1a** and **1b**).⁷⁰

The lyrics of the march are a testimony to the absurdity of the camp situation. It is a well-known fact that camp manager Diamantstein was particularly cruel towards the internees.⁷¹

Was the march written »under coercion«, or was it created as an ironic comment on the life in the camp? The circumstances of the creation of this piece of music cannot be deciphered at present. Given that it is evident from the testimonies of Milko Riffer and Egon Miller that the internees knew how to depict sarcastic and ironic moments from their own captivity situations in their sketches and plays, it is possible that the words dedicated to Bruno Diamantstein were written in a sarcastic tone and that Alfred Pordes wrote the music to that satirical text for inclusion in a performance of satirical sketches accompanied by music in the Jasenovac camp.

The second instance is related to the portrait of Alfred Pordes painted in Jasenovac by Daniel Ozmo, and dated »Jasenovac 1941« (see **Figure 2**). Below the portrait, there are a few introductory measures of Pordes's opera *Jesenja bura* [Autumn Bora]. Both Ozmo and Pordes signed the portrait. The question is, why did the composer sign the introductory measures of his last work, which he com-

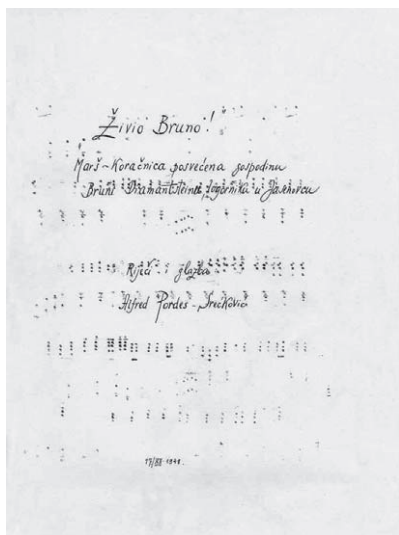
⁶⁸ On »testimonial literature«, see: Renata JAMBREŠIĆ KIRIN: Svjedočenje i povijesno pamćenje: O pripovjednom posredovanju osobnog iskustva, *Narodna umjetnost*, 32 (1995) 2, 165-185.

⁶⁹ Cf. T. Jurkić SVIBEN: *Glazbenici židovskog podrijetla*; M. VASILJEVIĆ: *Jevrejski muzičari u Beogradu od Balfurove deklaracije do Holokausta*.

⁷⁰ »Long live Bruno our camp manager / Long live Bruno our protector / He is the father and the mother to all of us / Without him we would live in terrible darkness. / Long live Bruno our camp manager / Long live Bruno our protector / Let him yell in agitation / We love him nevertheless.«

⁷¹ About Bruno Diamantstein: Ivo GOLDSTEIN (ed.): *Diamantstein, Bruno, Židovski biografski leksikon*, <<https://zbl.lzmk.hr/?p=3123>> (Accessed 25 January 2024).

Figure 1a and 1b: Alfred Pordes: *Živio Bruno! Marš koračnica* posvećena gospodinu Bruni Diamantsteinu, logorniku u Jasenovcu [A. Pordes: *Long live Bruno! A marche dedicated to Mr. Bruno Diamantstein, a guard in Jasenovac camp*, cover and the first page, in a private collection (with permission)]



*Živio Bruno!*⁹

*Marš - Koračnica posvećena g. Bruni Diamantsteinu
logorniku u Jasenovcu.*

Rijeci i glazba: Alfred Pordes - Srećković

Tempo di marcia

posed immediately before his deportation to Jasenovac? Did he wish to leave a reminder of his work which, most likely, he could not bring with him to Jasenovac? Did he want to leave a mark that the composer who wrote the opera *Jesenja bura* was still staying alive in the Jasenovac camp on a date written on the edge of the portrait? It is not known how the opera which Pordes completed in Sarajevo⁷² ended up with his cousin Vanda Stern.⁷³ Was it left with the family of Pordes's wife when the Pordes family hid while in Sarajevo? There are still numerous unanswered questions relating to Alfred Pordes's destiny and ending in the Jasenovac camp.⁷⁴

⁷² About the Pordes' opera *Jesenja bura* score: T. JURKIĆ SVIBEN: *Glazbenici židovskog podrijetla*, 135.

⁷³ About Vanda Stern: Ivo GOLDSTEIN (ed.): Štern, Oskar (Stern), *Židovski biografski leksikon*, <<https://zbl.lzmk.hr/?p=2534>> (Accessed 25 January 2024).

⁷⁴ More about Alfred Pordes in: Branko POLIĆ: *Uspomena na glazbena imena, Bilten* (1989) 12, 14; Vlasta KOVAČ: *Tragom nota koračnice, Ha-kol* (2002) 75/76, 26-27; Branko POLIĆ: *Židovski glazbenici*

There is no data on Alfred Pordes's participation in the Jasenovac camp orchestra, but based on the portrait of Pordes made by Daniel Ozmo and the mentioned date, it is possible to suppose that he was still alive in December 1941.

Music activities in Kraljevica Porto Re camp internment

The activities of the internment camp in Kraljevica stand out in contrast to those in the Jasenovac concentration camp.

In the coastal town of Kraljevica, by the citadel of the Zrinski and Frankopan family, which dates to the 15th century, was an assembly camp for Jews from today's Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The camp existed from November 1942 until May 1943 when the internees were moved to a camp on the island of Rab. There were 1250 internees in the camp, deployed in wooden barracks. Assembly camps organized by the Fascists in the period from 1941 to 1943 were completely different from those established by the Nazis or the Ustashe. They were called *Campo di concentramento per internati civili di guerra*. Branko Polić's autobiographical prose *Imao sam sreće*⁷⁵ and his reminiscences published in the proceedings titled *Muzika iza bodljikavih žica*⁷⁶ provide detail, data, photographs, and documents relating to the cultural and musical life in the so-called Porto Re camp in Kraljevica. Additional information about life in the Porto Re camp can be found in the texts in the *Bilten Jevrejske općine Zagreb* from 1993 and in the book titled *Propusnica za koncentracijski logor Kraljevica*.⁷⁷

Polić reports on a camp »orchestra«⁷⁸ that comprised six violinists and three accordionists.⁷⁹ »Violinists were all amateurs but did not fall behind the professionals.«⁸⁰ He also described the makeup and the quality of the orchestra members and attempted to evoke the atmosphere, enthusiasm, and effort the amateurs invested in the cultural performances, which boosted the morale of the internees. The orchestra accompanied the rich cultural life of the camp: the performances of adult internees, children's performances, and Catholic and Jewish religious services. In addition to the instrumentalists and conductors, there was a whole series of male and female trained singers who actively participated in different musical per-

stradali u Holokaustu, *Ha-kol*, (2005) 88, 9; Krešimir KOVAČEVIĆ: *Leksikon jugoslavenske muzike*, vol. II, Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod »Miroslav Krleža«, 1984, 200.

⁷⁵ B. POLIĆ: *Imao sam sreće*, 2006.

⁷⁶ A. EBERST (ed.): *Muzika iza bodljikavih žica; zbornik sećanja jugoslovenskih ratnih zarobljenika, interniraca i političkih zatvorenika, za vreme narodnooslobodilačkog rata 1941-1945. godine*.

⁷⁷ Mladen KUŠEC: *Propusnica za koncentracijski logor Kraljevica*, Rijeka: Adamić, 2007.

⁷⁸ The term »orchestra« is used by Branko Polić himself in his autobiographical book *Imao sam sreće*, 41, 423. However, he also calls the same ensemble a »violin accordion band« (B. POLIĆ, *Imao sam sreće*, 33).

⁷⁹ The members of the orchestra were Slavko Wolf, Ernst Glasner, Max Hochberger, Vlado Lošic, Heda Piliš, Ljerka Nadaši, Rudi Heran, Branko Polić. The conductor was Franjo Nadaši.

⁸⁰ B. POLIĆ: *Imao sam sreće*, 41.



Figure 2: Alfred Pordes, portret by Daniel Ozmo, in a private collection (with permission)

performances in the camp. For example, composer and conductor Bruno Prister rehearsed the choir for the synagogue service.⁸¹ The internees were allowed to use »one room in those front and larger administrative barracks« for Jewish religious service each Friday evening.⁸² On Sunday mornings, the army chaplain would hold a mass for the Catholic internees in the same room. The mass was usually accompanied by fragments of music classics. The repertoire used to accompany the mass (liturgy) and for the entertainment concerts included the following items:⁸³

- Georg Friedrich Händel: arias from *Alcina, Rinaldo and Xerxes*
- Johann Sebastian Bach: middle movements of violin concertos
- Giuseppe Tartini: Concert for violin in D minor; 2nd movement
- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: *Exultate, jubilate / Alleluia*
- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: *Ave verum*
- Giuseppe (Tomaso?) Giordani: *Caro mio ben*
- Luigi Cherubini: *Ave Maria*
- Johann Sebastian Bach: *Bist Du Bei Mir (aria for Easter)*
- Antonín Dvořák: *Biblical songs*

Repertoire for entertainment concerts:

- Jacques Offenbach: overture *Orpheus in the Underworld*
- Imre Kálmán: duet from *Princess Czardas*
- two songs from Napoli
- Léo Delibes: aria *Les filles de Cadiz*
- Johann Friedrich Reichardt: *Der Heuschreck*
- Giuseppe Verdi: Fiesco's Aria from the Prologue of *Simon Boccanegra*
- Fromental Halévy: cardinal's aria from the first act of *La Juive*
- Bedřich Smetana: *Bartered bride*, orchestral medley
- Gioachino Rossini: *The Barber of Seville* Rosina's Cavatina
- Johann Strauss jr.: *Perpetuum mobile*
- Giacomo Puccini: *Manon Lescaut*, aria *In quelle trine morbide*
- Amilcare Ponchielli: *Gioconda*, Enzo's aria
- Henryk Wieniawski: *Souvenir de Moscou*
- Pablo de Sarasate: *Gipsy melodies*
- Umberto Giordano: *Improvviso* from *Andrea Chénier*
- Gioachino Rossini: *Overture of The Barber of Seville*
- Giacomo Puccini: *La Bohème*, orchestral medley
- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: *Concert for violin and orchestra in G major*
- Johann Sebastian Bach: *Concert for two violins, 2nd movement, Largo ma non tanto*

⁸¹ About Bruno Prister (Zagreb, 1909 – Zagreb, 1996), musician and composer, in: T. JURKIĆ SVIBEN: *Glazbenici židovskog podrijetla*, 142-143.

⁸² B. POLIĆ: *Imao sam sreće*, 32.

⁸³ B. POLIĆ: *Imao sam sreće*, 67-69. In the Polić book *Imao sam sreće*, only the surnames are provided.

- Giacomo Puccini: duet from *Madame Butterfly*
- Johann Strauss jr.: *Emperor Waltz*
- Erich Wolfgang Korngold: *Die tote Stadt, Marietta's aria*⁸⁴

Arias were accompanied by accordion since there was no piano in the camp.⁸⁵ The rehearsals were held in the same barrack as the offices were. Slavko Wolf headed the music section.⁸⁶ The orchestra was allowed to practice five days a week, but rehearsals were not allowed on Mondays and Wednesdays.⁸⁷

In the Kraljevica camp, every program had to pass the control of the camp authorities before its performance. Sometimes, numbers were banned due to censorship. Camp authorities did not allow the pieces composed in the camp to be performed. The orchestra continued to operate even after the Porto Re internees were moved to the island of Rab in the summer of 1943.

Toward a conclusion

As stated at the beginning of the paper, the information on any reference to or form of musical activity described in this paper was collected from the available archival documents (primary sources) and testimonies published in memory books (secondary sources). The aim of this paper was to collect and give a critical overview of previously known information about musical activities in the Kerestinec, Stara Gradiška, Jasenovac, and Kraljevica camps. Recently, the credibility of testimonies for scientific, historical, and ethnographic research has been questioned, and they should, whenever possible, be verified with reference to archival material. It is indisputable that modern research should consider personal accounts, but in order to obtain a more objective picture of the observed cases, it is necessary to compare them with archival material whenever possible.⁸⁸ This is the method which has been followed in this paper.

Singing, as the simplest form of music making, was especially highlighted at the beginning of the paper based on testimonies that mention singing as the only possibility in the Kerestinec and Stara Gradiška camps. »Camp music playing« in Stara Gradiška is mentioned only in the program attached to Julius Schmidlin's Red Cross report.

⁸⁴ B. POLIĆ: *Imao sam sreće*, 42.

⁸⁵ B. POLIĆ: *Imao sam sreće*, 43.

⁸⁶ Circular letter no. 108 dated February 16th, 1943, *Novi Omanut*, (2002) 50, 20-21.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* »Central administration gave approval to the music section to hold rehearsals every day except Monday and Wednesday from noon on in the main office, and entire morning on Sundays [...]«.

⁸⁸ According to Renata JEMBREŠIĆ KIRIN: *Svjedočenje i povijesno pamćenje*, 1995, footnote 11, 171: »Relativiziranje bolne istine o brojnim zločinima protiv čovječanstva pomoću argumenata o nepreciznosti pamćenja nije samo nemoralno, nego dovodi u pitanje opstanak svih nas. Povijest zločina u velikoj mjeri ovisi o povijesti zločinaca.« [»Relativizing the painful truth about the many crimes against humanity using arguments about the imprecision of memory is not only immoral but calls into question the survival of all of us. The history of crime largely depends on the history of criminals.«].

Musical performance in the Jasenovac and Kraljevica camps is also mentioned in literature and archival documents. In this paper, the confirmation of performance activities in musical groups for the Jasenovac camp was based on published testimonies as well as access to archival documents in the Croatian State Archives in Zagreb. The mention of the camp orchestra in Kraljevica has so far been defined only on the basis of testimonies published in Branko Polić's book and articles. Based on the collected data, the comparison of the known repertoire of the Jasenovac and Kraljevica camp music groups («orchestras») reveals that the repertoire of the latter camp was much more extensive. The circumstances in which the internees lived, and the type of camp were radically different. In the Kraljevica camp people did not suffer physically and were not exposed to hard labour. They moved into a relatively small space and spent their free time organizing spiritual life through music. However, as is known, no member of the Jasenovac »music group« who still participated in cultural programs in the summer of 1944 (according to a Red Cross report) survived 1944, except for the cantor and singer Arnold Basch,⁸⁹ who perished in the breakout from the camp in 1945.

In Kraljevica, the internees made music to fill their free time and accompany religious services. In Jasenovac, music was made merely for the entertainment of the Ustashe and before different inspections as positive examples of internee treatment in the camp. In Jasenovac, there is a testimony that Catholic masses were also performed and that the orchestra played during the service.⁹⁰ The music group played for internees only on Sunday afternoons in Jasenovac, always guarded by the Ustashe.

It could be said that the possibility of music making in both camps, whether it be »under coercion« or »by their own free will«, presented an opportunity for a »spiritual flight« from reality and an opportunity to engross oneself in something artistic which gives a human being dignity and enables existence in a situation in which life loses its meaning. Pianist Alice Hertz Sommer, who survived the Holocaust by playing the piano in the Theresienstadt camp, declared that in the camp music gave the internees a sense of life, that making and listening to music was a fairy tale, and like a flight from reality, and as long as the internees could play there was a prospect of surviving one more day, and each concert performed was a moral victory over the enemy.⁹¹ The performers could preserve their personal identity through music, while the audience, transposed into another time and

⁸⁹ Arnold Basch (Sarajevo, 1913 – Jasenovac, 22 April 1945) was one of the cantors in the Jewish Community in Zagreb until 1941. He served in the synagogue on Praška Street in Zagreb alongside the cantors Bernard Grüner and Isaac Hendel. Basch was killed in the breakout from Jasenovac concentration camp on April 22, 1945. Cf. T. JURKIĆ SVIBEN: *Glazbenici židovskog podrijetla*, 193; Tamara JURKIĆ SVIBEN: Reverberations of the Reform Jewish Service in Synagogue Music of Northern Croatia from the 1880s to the 1950s, *Arti musices*, 49 (2018) 1, 169; Nataša MATAUŠIĆ: *Jasenovac 1941.-1945.: Logor smrti i radni logor*, Jasenovac – Zagreb: Javna ustanova Spomen-područje Jasenovac, 2003, 95; M. ŠVOB: *Židovi u Hrvatskoj*, II, 23.

⁹⁰ M. RIFFER: *Grad mrtvih. Jasenovac 1943, 1946*, 142.

⁹¹ Caroline STOESSINGER: *Stoljeće mudrosti*, Zagreb: Planetopija, 2012.

place through music, could, at least for the duration of the performance, have a feeling that life was normal. Milko Riffer's testimony confirms that Jasenovac camp internees⁹² felt that way too, when he writes that the detainees felt like human beings only during the concert and theatrical performances. These affirmations validate the inherent human desire to seek refuge in art to escape reality, particularly when subjected to inhumane circumstances. This notion is further corroborated by scientific research that delves into individuals' psychological and emotional states.⁹³

Further research and the eventual appearance of preserved sheet music or archival documents would be useful for deepening knowledge about musical life in the Jasenovac and Kraljevica camps, and could eventually be compared with the existing knowledge of musical activities in the Auschwitz or Theresienstadt camps, as touched upon in this paper.

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⁹² Riffer uses the term »detainees« and does not distinguish between performers and audiences, i.e., those who actively participate in the performance and those who are the audience (!).

⁹³ G. FACKLER: Cultural Behaviour and the Invention of Traditions, 601–627.

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Sažetak

MUZICIRANJE U ZATOČENIŠTVU – TRAGOVI GLAZBENIH AKTIVNOSTI U LOGORIMA KERESTINEC, STARA GRADIŠKA, JASENOVAC I KRALJEVICA U RAZDOBLJU OD 1941. DO 1945. GODINE

U radu se iznose podatci o glazbenim aktivnostima i kulturnim programima koji su se realizirali u različitim oblicima zatočeništva u logorima Kerestinec, Stara Gradiška, Jasenovac i Kraljevica u razdoblju od 1941. do 1945. godine. Također, evidentiraju se profesionalni ili amaterski glazbenici koji su bili zatvarani i odvođeni u logore uslijed uspostave rasnih zakona ili političkoga djelovanja koje je bilo protivno tadašnjemu društveno-političkomu poretku. Na temelju arhivskih dokumenata i svjedočanstava preživjelih koji spominju kulturne i glazbene aktivnosti te postojanje glazbenih sastava u spomenutim logorima rad donosi dosad poznati repertoar koji se izvodio na kulturnim manifestacijama i koncertnim programima te kritički propituje različite vrste i okolnosti glazbeno-scenskih aktivnosti koje su bile registrirane u logorima. Posebna pozornost usmjerena je na provjeru dosad poznatih podataka koji su se objavljivali u memoarima i periodičkim i novinskim publikacijama vezano za postojanje orkestra u logoru Jasenovac i moguće izvođenje glazbeno-scenskih djela. Naposljetku, u ovome se radu poznate objave uspoređuju s dostupnim arhivskim gradivom zapisnika svjedočenja preživjelih logoraša koje je pohranjeno u Hrvatskome državnom arhivu u Zagrebu.