

## ENTERTAINMENT FOR OFFICERS, NOBLEMEN, AND CITIZENS: THREE SOCIAL INITIATORS OF THE SECULAR MUSICAL STAGE IN SLAVONIA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

VJERA KATALINIĆ

Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, Zagreb

**Izvilleček:** V Slavoniji na Hrvaškem so posvetno glasbeno gledališče v 19. stoletju organizirali in obiskovali predstavniki treh družbenih slojev: častniki osiješke vojaške utrdbe, člani plemiških družin in novonastali premožni meščani, ki so v Osijeku prirejali predstave. Prispevek obravnava njihovo organizacijo, repertoar in recepcijo.

**Ključne besede:** Slavonija, 19. stoletje, glasbeno gledališče, opere, operete, potujoče gledališke družine slog

**Abstract:** Three representative social strata in Slavonia, Croatia organized and enjoyed secular musical theater during the nineteenth century: officers at the military fortress in Osijek, members of aristocratic families, and new wealthy citizens in Osijek. This article examines their organization, repertory, and reception.

**Keywords:** Slavonia, nineteenth century, musical theater, operas, operettas, itinerant theater companies

It was only during the eighteenth century that Osijek, one of the important Austrian imperial military outposts facing the Ottomans, slowly started to develop an urban infrastructure based on German military officers, merchants, and craftsmen. It consisted of the fortress (Tvrđa), with its churches, houses, printing office, and other facilities, the Upper Town, the Lower Town along the Drava River, and the New Town, developed only from the end of the eighteenth century. In addition to Osijek, a similar transition from military stronghold to urban center was experienced by other towns along the Turkish border, mostly on the banks of the Sava and Danube rivers: Sisak, Slavonski Brod (at that time called Brod, later Brod na Savi), and Vukovar. During this changeover, which took place during the eighteenth century following the withdrawal of the Ottoman Turks, the need for entertainment preoccupied members of the new urban society; this need was felt even more acutely in the early nineteenth century.

At the same time, the effect of the sacred musical play was never underestimated. In Osijek and Požega, the clergy, along with Jesuits and Franciscans, oversaw performances of educational and moralizing sacred plays, including their musical interpolations.<sup>1</sup> For example, the pupils of the Osijek Jesuit high school organized a “theatrum” in 1766, but in German, “so as to teach the Croatian people that language, as our Empress desired.”<sup>2</sup> Plays with

<sup>1</sup> They are known only from secondary sources.

<sup>2</sup> Diarium missionis essekinensis Societatis Iesu, *Osječki ljetopisi 1686.–1945.*, ed. Stjepan Sršan, Osijek, Povijesni arhiv u Osijeku, 1993, p. 246.

Biblical topics were also translated and printed: in 1783 the Franciscan monastery guardian and high school teacher Ivan Velikanović published a play in Buda on the martyrdom of St. Susanna, and another one in Osijek about St. Theresa, in 1802.<sup>3</sup> In Osijek in 1791, the Franciscan Aleksandar Tomiković translated and published the well-known text *Giuseppe riconosciuto* by Pietro Metastasio, which was frequently set to music throughout Europe. In 1819 Vukovar students of both genders performed a *singspiel* on a similar topic (*Joseph, the Son of Jacob the Patriarch*), containing 23 musical compositions, in honor of Đakovo-Srijem Bishop Emerik Karl Raffaj. The play was composed by Grgur Čevapović from Slavonski Brod, the guardian of the Vukovar monastery, and was published in Buda in 1820. Following the tradition of religious school plays, this Franciscan monk and teacher of church history and law in Brod and Vukovar put together original folk tunes, some newly composed songs with elements of Slavonic folk tradition, and fourteen “borrowed” melodies from central European art music heritage (e.g., W. A. Mozart, J. Haydn and some others).<sup>4</sup>

Nonetheless, the requirement for secular entertainment of the urban population along with a relatively safe environment enabled itinerant theater companies to visit this remote multiethnic<sup>5</sup> region of the monarchy. It seems that by the 1750s a small public theater (*theatrum stabile*) was housed in the adapted central military building of the fortress – the *Generalatshaus*. No plans or project documentation remain, but according to some descriptions the theater must have been narrow, illuminated only by oil lamps, with a modest stage “as primitive as possible.”<sup>6</sup> The sources of its description and repertoire can be found in diaries, a very small list of posters and programs, sporadically published theater journals and almanacs, and prompters’ notices, all of which constantly became more frequent during the course of the nineteenth century. Although the first sporadic information on actors in Osijek dates back to the mid-eighteenth century,<sup>7</sup> the names of theater directors are noted from 1801 onwards, and regular archival documents start to supply opera announcements only from 1825 onwards.<sup>8</sup> In this dark improvised military environment,

<sup>3</sup> Vjera Katalinić, Musical Culture and the “Kleinmeister” of Central Europe in the Period between 1750 and 1820: General Remarks Concerning the Topic and Their Application to the Research in Croatia, *Off-Mozart: Musical Culture and the “Kleinmeister” of Central Europe 1750–1820*, Proceedings of the International Musicological Symposium held in Zagreb, Croatia, on 1–3 October 1992, ed. Vjera Katalinić, Zagreb, Hrvatsko muzikološko društvo, 1995, p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Lovro Županović, *Centuries of Croatian Music 2*, Zagreb, Muzički informativni centar, 1989, p. 26.

<sup>5</sup> The handicrafts were of Hungarian, Austrian, and Croatian origin. Osijek (similarly to Vukovar) was also a place with multiple religions because, in addition to Roman Catholics, there were Calvinist, other Protestant, and Eastern Orthodox faithful, and later, in the nineteenth century, also Jews (Cf. Josip Bösendorfer, *Diarium sive prothocollum*, *Starine* 35 (1916), p. 199).

<sup>6</sup> Oskar Friml Antunović described it as “so primitiv als möglich” in his manuscript *Die Theaterverhältnisse in Esseg 1846–1866*, according to Gordana Gojković, *Njemački muzički teatar u Osijeku 1825.–1907.*, Osijek, Hrvatsko narodno kazalište u Osijeku, 1997, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> Information on mid-eighteenth-century actors has been found in marriage and birth certificates (cf. Josip Bösendorfer, *Glumci na njemačkom kazalištu u Osijeku*, *Osječki zbornik* 1–2 (1948); Kamil Firingier, *Prvih 85 godina osječkog kazališta. Spomen-knjiga o pedesetogodišnjici Narodnog kazališta u Osijeku*, Osijek, Hrvatsko narodno kazalište u Osijeku, 1957).

<sup>8</sup> The valuable lists of conductors, directors, and their repertoire are collected in: G. Gojković, *op. cit.*, pp. 81–100.

various types of light theatrical plays, some of them probably with incidental music or simple songs, were staged by itinerant theater groups of actors, who also had to sing and (occasionally) dance. As was typical of public theater functioning, its administration had to pay a certain percentage of income from each performance to the fortress captain or senator, and a sum was set aside to support the local hospital, the orphanage, and so on, or else the company had to offer a benefit performance for these town institutions.<sup>9</sup> The repertoire depended upon the ability of the company and its director. They came largely from the Austrian part of the monarchy and the organization of the company, as well as the need for performers, was usually announced in Viennese journals. Their repertoire at that early stage of theater development has been regarded as “pre-operatic,”<sup>10</sup> although the first among them – *Ida die Büssende oder das Todtengewissen* – was described as a heroic opera by the local regiment conductor Gyron to a libretto by Franz Ignaz von Holbein. The festive performance was announced on a poster printed on silk, which also informed the audience that the military orchestra was completed by some “respectable amateurs.”<sup>11</sup> A new announcement has been found only for the year 1834, and from then onwards they became more regular: various types of light theatrical plays with music by Ferdinand Raimund, Johann Nestroy, Therese Krones, and others formed the repertoire. In addition, it had to be approved by the town censor, who was usually the high school principal and, at the same time, a member of the theater board, who had to send the repertoire to Buda for final revision.<sup>12</sup> The military band was the core of the orchestra, but it also took part in other occasions such as visits by prominent political and military dignitaries,<sup>13</sup> church feasts, carnival balls of the fortress command, and private occasions. Their “Turkish music”<sup>14</sup> – played by wind- and percussion-based ensembles – was also mentioned in various diaries.

This undemanding public entertainment for the officers and all those that could purchase tickets had its complementary activity for private audiences in the homes of the Slavonian feudal aristocracy. Based on what is currently known, two families stood out in particular: the Prandau family at their estates in Valpovo and Donji Miholjac, and the Pejačević family in Osijek and Našice. The members of these families lived part of the year in centers of the monarchy such as Vienna and Pest and other towns with developed cultural activity, such as Pécs, where they also owned palaces and residences. They brought their big-city entertainment manners back to Slavonia and thus connected the Slavonian

<sup>9</sup> Stanislav Marjanović, Kazalište i kazališni angažman, *Od turskog do suvremenog Osijeka*, ed. Ive Mažuran, Osijek, Zavod za znanstveni rad HAZU u Osijeku, Gradsko poglavarstvo Osijek, and Školska knjiga d.d. Zagreb, 1996, p. 119.

<sup>10</sup> G. Gojković, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>11</sup> G. Gojković, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> S. Marjanović, op. cit., pp. 118–119.

<sup>13</sup> For example, when the commander-in-chief, Andreas de Mathesen, was leaving Osijek with other officers on 26 January 1778, the band of the Palfy regiment played at the gates of the city. (Cf. *Diarium sive prothocollum venerabilis conventus Sanctae Crucis inventae essekini intra muros ab anno 1686 usque ad annum 1890, Osječki ljetopisi 1686.–1945.*, ed. Stjepan Sršan, Osijek, Povijesni arhiv u Osijeku, 1993, p. 82).

<sup>14</sup> On the topic of military music at the Turkish border, see also: Koraljka Kos, Osten und Westen in der Feld- und Militärmusik an der türkischen Grenze, *Imago musicae* 5 (1988), pp. 109–127.

province with the centers, introducing models of a noble pastime and its accompanying artistic infrastructure: literature, sheet music, musical instruments, and so on. Aristocrats usually received elementary music training as part of their general education, but some of them acted not only as art devotees and Maecenases (e.g., Gabriela and Lila Pejačević, who were both Croatian governors' wives during the late nineteenth century and supported the Croatian Music Institute), but also were active and creative musicians.

The rich archival documentation of the Prandau family, partially studied only recently,<sup>15</sup> provides more concrete data. The musically gifted brothers Karl (1792–1865) and Gustav (1807–1885) Prandau, together with their brothers and sisters, were educated in an artistic atmosphere.<sup>16</sup> Baron Karl Prandau, a lawyer and an amateur composer,<sup>17</sup> took lessons from Mirko (Emmerich) von Turanyi, a teacher from Osijek, and the father of the composer Dragutin (Carl) von Turany (1805–1873, also one of his father's pupils), who continued his career in Zagreb and Aachen.<sup>18</sup> Later he continued his musical education while studying law in Bratislava. He adapted some compositions by Viennese classical composers and his contemporaries for the favorite house instrument in Slavonia – the physharmonica – accompanied by strings, and composed some original works as well.<sup>19</sup> Prandau proposed some innovations in the construction of the physharmonica, while collaborating with the Vienna instrument-builder Johann Georg Staufer.<sup>20</sup> His brother Gustav, who inherited Valpovo Manor after the death of their father (Karl moved to Miholjac), also enjoyed music, but he was active more as an organizer and supporter of musical life in Osijek. Their education in the arts also included a small house theater erected by their father Joseph in 1809 at their estate in Valpovo. The preserved documents (orders, contracts, and invoices from carpenters, bricklayers, locksmiths, and other craftsmen) concerning the “Kometij-Haus” (probably meaning *Komödie-Haus*) and other household buildings (e.g.,

<sup>15</sup> This documentation, with the major part of the Prandau family heritage, has been kept in the State Archives in Osijek. Since 2005 it has been studied by Ljerka Perči.

<sup>16</sup> “The early deceased Josip (1 March 1801–19 July 1804) started to learn violin at the age of three.” (Cf. articles by Ljerka Perči on this topic: Prilog poznavanju glazbenog života u Valpovu od 1790. do 1825. godine u svjetlu arhivskog fonda obitelji Prandau i Normann, *Anali Zavoda za znanstveni i umjetnički rad u Osijeku* 22 (2006), pp. 115–139; Kazalište u Valpovu od 1809.–1823. godine. Prilog poznavanju kazališnog života u Valpovu od 1809. do 1823. godine u svjetlu arhivskog fonda HR-DAOS 476, *Krležini dani u Osijeku 2006*, ed. Branko Hećimović, Zagreb and Osijek, Zavod za povijest hrvatske književnosti, kazališta i glazbe HAZU, Odsjek za povijest hrvatskog kazališta and Pedagoški fakultet Osijek, 2007, p. 52).

<sup>17</sup> During his stay in Vienna, after the March Revolution of 1848, he also composed a *Jellačić-Marsch* for piano, along with Johann Strauss Sr., Alexandar Morfidis Nisis, and others (Cf. Andrija Tomašek, Ustani bane. *Musicae Jellachichiane*, in: *Glasi crljene zemlje*, Zagreb, Cantus, 2004, pp. 13–90).

<sup>18</sup> Zdenka Kapko-Foretić, *Carl von Turanyi. Eine Monographie*, Köln, Arno Volk Verlag, 1973.

<sup>19</sup> Kuhač published his biography with a list of compositions in the Zagreb journal *Vienac* (1876), and later partly incorporated it in his book on Illyrian composers (cf. Franjo Ksaver Kuhač, Karlo barun Prandau, in: *Ilirski glazbenici*, Zagreb, Matica hrvatska, 1893, pp. 120–148).

<sup>20</sup> An example of a physharmonica in good shape, almost ready to be played on, was recently found by Branka Ban in the parish church of Michael the Archangel in the fortress of Osijek. Most probably it was connected with Johann Nepomuk Hummel, the founder of the *Esseker Kirchenmusikverein* in the mid-nineteenth century.

stables) confirm Franjo Ksaver Kuhač's statements from 1867, published in the Zagreb cultural newspaper *Vienac*, that "Baron Joseph arranged a small but beautiful and complete theater in his castle, the first one in Slavonia. Various pieces by members of the family and by invited volunteers" were often performed there.<sup>21</sup> The material studied points only indirectly at the physical appearance of the theater because the designs (which existed in two copies) have not yet been found. The reconstruction of costs shows that the Prandau family invested about 3-3100 gulden in its building, which was still less than the costs of erecting the stable for dairy cows (!).<sup>22</sup> Inventories from 1816 mention almost 200 costumes (including shoes, stockings, caps, hats, wigs, etc.), partly made by the local tailor Anton Drabek.<sup>23</sup> Some of these costumes were moved to the theater cloakroom after becoming outmoded or too tight. Performances were probably given mostly during Carnival time, as well as for the birthdays and name days of Joseph Prandau and his third wife, Maria Ana. The payrolls show that volunteer military musicians from the Osijek regiment were engaged, as well as choral singers from Osijek and Pécs. In addition, the material mentions numerous musical instruments and sheet music ordered from Vienna, Pest, and elsewhere.

As opposed to the Osijek theater in Tvrđa (since 1825) and the later Town Theater with its preserved programs, prompter books, and newspaper clippings, the main source of information for the Prandau theater is only partially researched private family library. This collection is filled with books on philosophy, education, economics, and other topics. The drama section consists of classical French and Italian texts, but also collections of stage works by Hugo, Dumas, Corneille, Beaumarchais, Guarini, and others performed in theaters in Vienna, Paris, and Berlin. They probably served as educational material for the baron's children. Among them are light pieces such as Beaumarchais: *Il barbiere di Siviglia. Dramma giocoso ... da rappresentarsi nel teatro di corte l'anno 1783* (Vienna, Kurzbeck), perhaps partly staged. However, titles such as Favart, Charles-Simon: *Theatre de monsieur Favart ou Recueil des Opera-Comiques et Parodies qu'il a données depuis quelques années* (Paris, Prault, 1746), and especially *Almanach dramatischer Spiele zur geselligen Unterhaltung auf dem Lande* (Kotzebue, Hamburg, Hoffmann u. Campe, 1832, 1833) point more directly to musical stage performances, as confirmed in the collection manuscripts. The musical stage manuscript material includes nineteen complete performance dossiers, with librettos, roles, instrumental and vocal parts, and stage instructions. They come from the German-speaking world, from the popular stages in the Viennese suburbs, where they were performed between approximately 1818 and 1835.<sup>24</sup> Their authors

<sup>21</sup> *Vienac* 1876, no. 14, p. 231.

<sup>22</sup> On this topic, cf. Ljerk Perči, Prilog poznavanju glazbenog života u Valpovu od 1790. do 1825. godine u svjetlu arhivskog fonda obitelji Prandau i Normann, *Anali Zavoda za znanstveni i umjetnički rad u Osijeku* 22 (2006), pp. 115–139.

<sup>23</sup> Lj. Perči, op. cit.

<sup>24</sup> Even though some pieces were staged earlier by the end of the eighteenth century – for example, *Der lustige Beylager* by Wenzel Müller – they were regularly performed later as well. In previous literature on the Prandau collection, this copy of Müller's work was mistakenly attributed to Franz Xaver Glöggl. On this matter, see: Vjera Katalinić, Bečki kazališni život krajem 18. i početkom 19. stoljeća i Prandauova glazbenoscenska ostavština, *Glazbena baština Valpova od 1809. do 2009*. Proceedings of the symposium Musical Heritage of Valpovo 1809–2009 (in press).

are barely known or forgotten today; for example, Joseph Drechsler (1782–1852), Franz Joseph (František) Gläser (1798–1861), Franz Xaver Glöggl (1764–1839), Wenzel Müller (1767–1835), Adolf Müller (1801–1886), Philipp Jakob Riotte (1776–1856), Johann Baptist Schenk (1753–1836), Ignaz von Seyfried (1776–1841), Adalbert Gyrowetz (1763–1850), Konradin Kreutzer (1780–1849), and others.

These authors and many titles of light plays performed with music connect Prandau's theater, active until at least 1825, with the repertoire of the Osijek theater in Tvrđa. Namely, the preserved programs list the same forgotten authors and pieces, with one exception: the staging of Carl Maria von Weber's opera *Preziosa* (1834/35 and later). (Probably the most popular piece among them was Nestroy-Müller's *Der böse Geist Lumpacivagabundus*.) An obvious connection can also be seen in the activities of the "principal," Ignatz Trattning. He led the opera *staggione* in the Osijek theater in 1821/22 and then in Valpovo in 1822/23. On that occasion subscriptions were introduced at the Prandau estate, and Trattning was regularly paid for ten months of consecutive performances. Thus it seems that Baron Prandau was engaged in a commercial business through which he ensured entertainment for his family and, at the same time, covered part of his production costs. It also meant that he changed the status of these performances from private to public.

According to notes taken by contemporaries and family memoirs,<sup>25</sup> the Pejačević castle in Našice was remembered as a place for performing *singspiels* and other music-making activities, which were usually performed in its central hall. These were organized in the nineteenth century by the members of the family, along with other professional and amateur musicians, from both non-aristocratic and aristocratic families (Prandau, Mihalovich, Salopek, etc.). Events included diverse variants and combinations of scenic speech, movement and music, and popular Viennese stage pieces with singing (such as vaudevilles and farces) and *tableaux vivants* with scenes from mythology, history, and literature were frequently performed. These were regularly accompanied by music, continuing the tradition of the aristocratic eighteenth-century masked balls.<sup>26</sup>

The Osijek theater may have also been connected with the Pejačević family theater in Našice. The memoirs of the Pejačević family, as noted in the newspaper *Drau* from 1905, mention an anecdote concerning the "merry play" *Der Verschwender* (by Ferdinand Raimund and Konradin Kreutzer) staged "some seventy years earlier;"<sup>27</sup> that is, around 1835. The same play with music was also staged in Osijek during the winter of 1841 (and later), so it seems possible that Osijek theater musicians also participated in the Našice performance.

Osijek's development was further stimulated after its elevation to the status of a "free and royal town" in 1809. With this honor, the town was also permitted "to found theaters."<sup>28</sup> The growing urban population, especially the new wealthy citizens, demanded more vivid and artistically better performances. In the application he submitted to the

<sup>25</sup> Cf. the article in the newspaper *Die Drau* from 19 March 1905 (Theater, Kunst und Musik), in which memories connected with the Našice performances were evoked on the occasion of a Zagreb soirée.

<sup>26</sup> In *Annuae*, the memoirs of Zagreb Canon Adam Baltazar Krčelić, one can read about such scenes also performed in Zagreb, often with the addition of lasciviousness.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. footnote 25.

<sup>28</sup> S. Marjanović, op. cit., p. 118.

town municipality, the new director Louis (Ludwig) Konderla pledged to respect the demands of the audiences, with a good company, appropriate wardrobe, and good selection of plays, and to regularly pay the rent for the theater.<sup>29</sup> He started with operetta productions in 1862, mostly with composers from standard repertoire such as Franz von Suppé and Jacques Offenbach, but in 1867 he also staged Zajc's operetta *Mannschaft an Bord!*.<sup>30</sup> The actors were still acting as singers and the regiment's music was the basis of the orchestra. This changed in 1867, when the town orchestra (the *Esseker Zivillkapelle*) was founded, which could, for a while, also support the theater productions.<sup>31</sup>

The first citizens' initiatives in founding a theater company date from the early 1840s. The idea of founding an amateur theater to amuse and educate the young, with promises to be decent and moral, was soon rejected by the fortress command. By that time, the old adapted theater with its theater boxes and a parterre<sup>32</sup> had become too cramped for the town's theatrical needs. The growth of the Upper Town and its rich citizens, along with the simultaneous loss of interest in the old-fashioned fortress theater, resulted in the founding of a "Stock Company for Building a Casino and Theater", and soon afterwards, with the construction of a new building, opened on December 31st 1866.

The Osijek theater building – the first in the town to be purpose-built as a theater, probably on its own land – was constructed before the Fellner and Helmer era (who built theaters throughout the monarchy, as well as in Zagreb, Rijeka, and Varaždin). The man responsible for it was the builder Karl Klausner, who was more a craftsman than an architect; the façade was marked in style by Historicism and oriental (Moorish) elements. The ground plan of the parterre followed the Baroque pattern (in the shape of a horseshoe), similar to those in Italian and Austrian theaters, and had three floor levels. This building was and still is interpolated within the row of houses in the street, as opposed to the free-standing Fellner and Helmer theater buildings, which were built as palatial edifices in the center of a square, and could be walked around in order to offer a more monumental impression. The building was meant to be an amusement center, also incorporating a restaurant, a café, a casino, ballrooms, shops, and so on. "By raising the podium mechanically, the theater could be transformed into a large dance hall."<sup>33</sup> For a while,

<sup>29</sup> G. Gojković, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>30</sup> At the same time, in 1863, the newly established National Theater in Zagreb started operetta production with a similar repertoire, but in Croatian. This Viennese operetta by Zajc was staged in Zagreb on 9 March 1867, in Croatian translation, entitled *Momci na brod!*.

<sup>31</sup> To supply musicians for such orchestras and soloists, the town needed to provide adequate musical training, but supporting this for an extended period seems to have presented a difficulty. Music schools started opening in Osijek since 1830, when a citizens' initiative resulted in the establishment of a *Musikverein* (and another one in 1834 in Miholjac); however, they were short-lived. In 1874, the town municipality opened a music school with departments for voice and for strings, which lasted for some ten years. In 1891, another singing society (later named after Franjo Ksaver Kuhač) opened a music school that operated until 1912. Only the twentieth-century initiative was long lasting. Nonetheless, the nineteenth-century theater orchestra never could have functioned seriously without regimental musicians.

<sup>32</sup> No sketches of the theater's interior or plans have been preserved.

<sup>33</sup> Stjepan Sršan, *Pozdrav iz Osijeka / Greetings from Osijek*, Osijek, Povijesni arhiv u Osijeku, 1995, p. 43.

performances continued in the old theater, too, but the audience lost interest in the old building. The first newspaper – the *Esseker Lokalblatt und Landbote* (1864–1869) – and later *Die Drau* (from 1868) and *Slavonische Presse* (from 1885)<sup>34</sup> – supply descriptions of its construction, and, later, of the performances through announcements and reviews. The critics were not satisfied with the productions, the quality of the singers/actors, or the stage design, and so in 1867 Konderla left for Novi Sad.

Another phase in the life of Osijek theater production was the short period when Julius Schulz was the director (during the many seasons in the 1870s and 1880s) and tried to raise the quality of the performances.<sup>35</sup> In addition to regular operetta productions, he introduced continuous operatic staging. He started to establish a standard repertoire with works by Italian, French, and German composers such as Vincenzo Bellini (*Norma, Romeo und Julia*), Gaetano Donizetti (*Lucia di Lammermoor, Lucrezia Borgia, Belisar*), Gioacchino Rossini (*Der Barbier von Sevilla*), and Giuseppe Verdi (*Der Troubadur, Ernani, Rigoletto, La Traviata, Ein Maskenbal*), and, during the 1890s, Pietro Mascagni (*Cavalleria rusticana*), Ruggero Leoncavallo (*Bajazzo*), Giacomo Meyerbeer (*Dinorah, Die Hugenotten*), Fromental Halévy (*Die Jüdin*), Charles Gounod (*Faust*), Friedrich von Flotow (*Martha, Alessandro Stradella*), Konradin Kreutzer (*Das Nachtlager von Granada*), Carl Maria von Weber (*Der Freischütz*), Albert Lortzing (*Zar und Zimmermann, Der Waffenschmied*), and many others.<sup>36</sup> Opera production intensified during some seasons in the 1890s, especially in 1894, when it was rented by the municipality and became the “Theater der k. k. Freistadt Esseg”. Franz Schlesinger was another successful theater director, who brought a soloist from Prague within his company of some fifty members, with whom he gave 138 performances in the 1896/97 season. Schlesinger left for Ljubljana and, after the beginning of the twentieth century, the theater production slowly declined.

Already by the mid-nineteenth century, the citizens of Osijek were beginning to promote the national idea within the theater. The first person to sing in the theater in Croatian was the Polish actress and singer Elizabeta Uhink: at the “grand quodlibet soirée” on 15 December 1847, she performed local songs in Croatian, accompanied by the newly established popular tamburitza ensemble of Pajo Kolarić.<sup>37</sup> The German theater companies were also the object of critical reviews by music critics such as Jakob Franck and Max Kohn,<sup>38</sup> as well as the nationally-oriented Stjepan Marjanović Brođanin (literally ‘from Brod’).<sup>39</sup> The national issue was additionally emphasized with guest performances by the national theater company from Novi Sad (they performed only spoken plays) and, especially, the Croatian National Theater from Zagreb in 1884, when the ensemble performed Verdi’s operas *Un ballo in maschera* and *Ernani* in Italian, and the first performance in Osijek of Ivan Zajc’s *Nikola Šubić Zrinjski* (in Croatian, of course). These guest performances from Zagreb also continued in Vukovar and, in spite of weak financial returns,

<sup>34</sup> G. Gojković, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>35</sup> Schulz quit Osijek in 1886, when he left for Timișoara. He spent the next season in Ljubljana, but returned again twice as director and conductor of the Osijek theater: in 1887/88 and 1893/95.

<sup>36</sup> The opera repertoire is listed in: G. Gojković, op. cit., pp. 98–101.

<sup>37</sup> S. Marjanović, op. cit., p. 121.

<sup>38</sup> G. Gojković, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>39</sup> S. Marjanović, op. cit., p. 121.



created strong patriotic feelings, highlighted the neglect of the vernacular language, and turned the theater into an arena of political rivalry, which gradually led to decreasing interest in the German theater. The culmination of the crisis was reached when Lajos Szalkai's Hungarian company was forbidden to give performances in 1895, and with the closure of the theater during the carnival season of 1906. Thus, in the spring of 1907, the theater doors remained closed. Soon afterwards, the Croatian Theater Society in Osijek was founded; some seventy wealthy members donated the initial funding, and the curtain of the Croatian National Theater in Osijek was raised on 7 December 1907.<sup>40</sup>

From an organizational standpoint, musical theater in Slavonia followed contemporary political changes in two ways: 1) socially, with a shift from aristocratic to public and town initiatives; and 2) ideologically, from a German – and, sporadically, Hungarian – to a Croatian national orientation. This came thirty years later than in Zagreb, the center of political processes, and it was caused by the fact that Osijek was a strong military stronghold and a long-term point of defense of the Austrian Empire, where German administration dominated. Former aristocratic theaters vanished, but many outstanding aristocrats, such as Gustav Prandau and Teodor Pejačević, joined the boards of town theaters. During the nineteenth century, another substantial change occurred in the attitude towards the musical stage. In the first half of the century, it was mostly seen as a pastime for aristocrats and well-off citizens; they either performed themselves or simply enjoyed the performance as audience members, regardless of whether it was “light” or “serious.” During the second half of the century, opera assumed political connotations, so that works by Verdi and domestic composers became part of cultural policy. In contrast to Zagreb, such tendencies were felt in Osijek only towards the end of the century. However, the important commonalities between Zagreb and Osijek were the full theaters and the profit made from light musical theater pieces – initially vaudevilles, farces, and parodies, and later operettas. Their performances required less educated and less skilful singers and smaller instrumental ensembles, but they were highly attractive because of the “lighter” topics. However, better-educated audiences and theater directors with more refined tastes treated “light music” as a “necessary evil,” an easy way to fill their cash boxes in order to mount more expensive opera productions, which – through their prestigious performances and richer ornamentation – would inspire critics to more positive writing about their respective theaters in the newspapers and satisfy the connoisseurs in the audiences.

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<sup>40</sup> In the meantime, there were some guest performances from Pécs and Ljubljana, both in May 1907. See G. Gojković, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

RAZVEDRILLO ZA ČASTNIKE, PLEMIČE IN MEŠČANE:  
TRIJE DRUŽBENI POBUDNIKI POSVETNEGA GLASBENEGA ODRA  
V SLAVONIJI V 19. STOLETJU

Povzetek

V hrvaški pokrajini Slavoniji je v poznem 18 in v 19. stoletju glasbeno gledališče veljalo za glavno razvedrilo trem značilnim družbenim skupinam. Organizirali so ga na zasebnih domovih in plemiških posestvih, denimo pri Pejačevićevih v Našicah in Osijeku, družina Prandau pa je razpolagala celo z lastnim majhnim gledališčem, zgrajenem 1809 na njihovem posestvu v Valpovem. Člani družin so v igrah tudi sodelovali, v svojih knjižnicah pa ohranili vrsto glasbenega gradiva, libretov itd. Vojaško uprava osiješke utrdbe je v zgradbi glavnega poveljstva uredila majhno gledališče. Oboji so gostili tudi potujoče gledališke družine, ki so večinoma uprizarjale preproste igre z glasbenimi točkami. Od leta 1834 je repertoar vojaškega gledališča vključeval različne vrste veseloiger s petjem, uprizarjanje operet pa se je pričelo leta 1862; večinoma del standardnega repertoarja. Razvoj gornjega dela mesta in rast števila premožnih prebivalcev sta, hkrati z izgubo zanimanja za staromodno gledališče v utrdbi, botrovala ustanovitvi "Delniške družbe za gradnjo kazine in gledališča" v Osijeku in kmalu zatem gradnji nove gledališke stavbe, ki so jo odprli leta 1866. V sedemdesetih letih 19. stoletja je gledališki direktor Julius Schulz vpeljal redne operne uprizoritve. Porast nacionalne zavesti v drugi polovici 19. stoletja je spodbudila ustanovitev Hrvaškega narodnega gledališča v Osijeku 1907. Prispevek ponuja tudi pregled socialnih in ideoloških sprememb v slavonskem glasbenem gledališču obravnavanega obdobja.