

BOSNIAN URBAN TRADITIONAL SONG IN TRANSFORMATION: FROM LUDVIK KUBA TO ELECTRONIC MEDIAS

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This article focuses on the transformation process and changes in the manners of interpretation undergone by Bosnian traditional urban song from its emergence, through the first melographic transcriptions in late 19th century – that is, from Ludvik Kuba's times – through the development of electronic media.

Keywords: *Bosnian urban song, transformation, electronic media.*

Prispevek obravnava proces transformacije in spremembe interpretativnih načinov tradicionalne pesmi v urbanem bosanskem okolju od nastanka preko prvih notnih zapisov konec 19. stoletja, torej časa Ludvika Kube, pa vse do razvoja elektronskih medijev.

Ključne besede: tradicionalna pesem v urbanem bosanskem okolju, transformacije, elektronski mediji.

INSTEAD OF AN INTRODUCTION

It was almost a convention within ethnomusicological research to study Bosnian traditional music from the aspect of its primary, rural context. A stationary nature, authenticity, and homogeneity were until recently the only ethnomusicological values. Therefore research on musical forms in an urban environment, with everything this implies – changes, acculturation, and heterogeneity – could not fit into the existing framework.

The focus of this study is Bosnian traditional urban music and local electronic media (radio and television), which, as a distinctive means of communication, in a technically advanced manner satisfy the same need that was satisfied by local narrators, poet-singers, and semi-professional and professional traveling singers and entertainers in the “old traditional practice.”

This presentation is a small part of a much broader research project aimed at investigating standardized production and mass consumption, in which the creator-inheritor-performer (now only part of a creative team) and consumer are depersonalized, and where traditional culture and cultural heritage are dehumanized.

HOW DID IT START?

It is well known that the Bosnian people, both those in cities and those in villages, are easily and deeply moved by song. They sing everywhere and on every occasion. Song was greatly admired in Sarajevo and other towns in Bosnia-Herzegovina:

There were good singers, people loved to sing and talk about songs ... A well sung, genuinely experienced song left a deep impression, and the decisive factor of its action were not the voice force and beauty, but rather the knowledge of style, correct interpretation of cursorily indicated contents, which in turn required singers only to hint at contained emotions through reserved nuances of interpretation. [Rihtman 1974: 8–9]

Urban singing is difficult to classify in formal frameworks, because it is not a “defined” type of song such as lullabies, songs accompanying bridal preparations, and so on. In order to understand urban singing, it is necessary to describe rural music practice in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Forms of rural music in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where the population was traditionally primarily engaged in farming (except in the northern parts of the area), are considered more archaic than urban singing. However, even the “oldest” forms eventually underwent a transformation process, particularly if one bears in mind that this is an orally transmitted tradition. In essence, this means that one cannot superficially and lightly say that these forms as such date from “time immemorial.”

The rural music practice found in Bosnia-Herzegovina is associated with various rites and occasions in people’s lives. Of course, ritual songs within closely-knit communities are performed by their older and more experienced members, whereas forms with an entertainment character are performed by younger members. Although each smaller region of the country has its distinctive manner of singing, by which the rural population of different regions can be recognized, this musical tradition has some common features.

Ethnomusicological research on traditional music in Bosnia-Herzegovina has shown that differences between rural and urban practice are manifested in many elements: the manner of singing, the forms of songs, the development of the melody, tonal relations, and the contents and manner of their presentation; they are so varied “that it is easier to observe their distinctive features than their common ones” [Rihtman 1980: 225].

Urban tradition was shaped under powerful oriental influence. The urban population was “open” towards the East:

Middle Eastern music was primarily transmitted through religious classes, the learning of religious songs in primary religious schools in dervish houses of worship, the muezzin’s summons to prayer five times a day, on the Kaaba (Islamic pilgrimage), in the army through military music, and particularly in the marketplace... [Rihtman 1982: 10–11]

In urban singing, female songs can be distinguished from male ones. The woman lived “between the four walls,” oriented toward the family and a very narrow circle of her closest relatives and girlfriends, and when she sang she sang mostly “for herself.” Her song was “mu-ffled”, refined, and subtle; she used it to articulate what moral norms did not allow her to say openly. Male song, on the other hand, was more open, more abandoned and lascivious, and

was sung at get-togethers, “over the glass,” and was therefore named the *sarboška* ‘drinking song’. Still, they have something in common, and we recognized both as the *sevdalinka* ‘love song’; they both sing of love, though in different ways. Both are essentially intimate, aimed at being performed in a closed environment, with slower dynamics (particularly compared to rural singing). They are traditionally performed by a single female or male singer, without accompaniment or with instrumental accompaniment on the *saz* (a long-necked fretted lute) and, more recently, the accordion, with ample opportunity to manifest individual expressiveness and artistic skills. These songs’ features include their broad breadth and range, melismatics, alterations and, in a certain number of examples, an augmented second.

Tonal sequences in *sevdalinks* include five to nine tones from hypotonic and up. One can also observe foothold tones in this kind of singing, the function of which is very clear. Because the song develops over an extended time, in order to avoid monotony the foothold tone changes its position. For this reason it is possible for foothold tones to become distant from the song’s final tone and to appear as final tones of individual sections. More complex songs therefore have a number of foothold tones. *Sevdalinka* verses are isometric. In fact, their metrical structures are identical with the structures of other forms of traditional singing in Bosnia-Herzegovina. These are two- and three-syllable meters, with the stress on the first syllable. The verse meter coincides with the rhythm of the song. *Sevdalinks* appear in six meter varieties, and they also inherit some very rare verse forms.

The emergence of traditional Bosnian song was also affected by some elements of Oriental musical modal systems. It is difficult to determine exactly which elements these are, because the sound of the *sevdalinka* is unknown in the Orient. Why, then, Oriental influence? In any case, it is a product that has not grown exclusively out of the sediment of Bosnian traditional sound. If we do not always recognize the “Orient” as the sonority carrier in the *sevdalinka*, if we recognize forms unknown in the “Orient”, the following question arises: How was the “Orient” was still decisive for its emergence? There are many answers, and an ethnomusicologist must search for those that define reasons for the emergence and survival of this distinctive music and poetry form in both ethnomusicological and anthropological, ethnological terms. Influences during Ottoman rule over Bosnia undeniably imposed characteristic norms of life and behavior. A different sound harmony was undeniably heard and experienced in Bosnia at the time. However, it also cannot be denied that the previously deposited “Bosnian harmony” never completely disappeared. It is out of this complex time, which was spontaneously experienced in music, that this indigenous music and poetry form emerged. They are simply an “experience.” Singers relate them according to their momentary inner feeling. They are an expression of a singer’s sensitivity, and this is why they do not have a “lasting” and “certain” form. “The *sevdalinka* can exist both as a melody and as an auditory phenomenon, but it becomes what it is only when sung by a true singer” [Milošević 1964: 38].

Performers that sing the *sevdalinka* “correctly”, but without inner vibes, are well known. In this case, it is sung in a refined, noble, and enchanted manner, but without affectation.

Some sing it in a half-voice, with much warmth, in a soft nasal voice. Others, in contrast, sing it at the top of their voices, and attract the listener with the force of their voices. Simply stated, nothing is written, there is no music, only interpretation.

THE END OF THE “GOLDEN AGE” OF BOSNIAN TRADITIONAL URBAN SONG

Bosnian traditional urban song was historically nourished in the atmosphere of the intimate circle. When this was disturbed and the song went “public” – that is, to pubs – the road was prepared for the modification of the song and, later on, its decadence. This was confirmed by the German scholar Gerhard Gesemann in 1930s. The pub song did not emerge abruptly. Its development started when the “male” song, performed at distinctly male get-togethers at dusk, received a somewhat unbridled expression. Such a song became increasingly distant from its original basis and acquired artificial features, particularly when performed by professional and semi-professional singers that, for commercial reasons, overdeveloped the externally appealing elements. The pub song spread and, fully transformed, returned to where it started from as an authentic traditional song.

One cannot discuss pub singing without mentioning Gypsies. Because Gypsies came to Bosnia-Herzegovina from multiple origins, they brought the music of the regions where they had stayed for a longer or shorter time. They merged the music they brought with the domestic music that they encountered. In order to stay up-to-date and be able to satisfy the audience’s changing taste, they acquired songs quickly. They memorized music easily, but they performed everything in their distinctive style. Their music left its trace on the first gramophone records and an undeletable impact on the generations of singers that were developing between the two world wars. This point will be discussed later.

KUHAČ AND KUBA

When tracing the process of transformation in Bosnian urban traditional song, we must go back to the 1860s – to the time of Franjo Kuhač, who, according to some historical records, stayed in Bosnia until the end of Turkish rule over these regions, for example: “I made transcriptions this March in Sarajevo, in 1865, based on playing by a Turkish fife player” [Kuhač 1898: 20]. Although we have no actual basis on which to doubt this, it is highly unlikely that Kuhač traveled to Bosnia twice in a short, two-year period.

In the first volume of South Slavic folk songs published by Kuhač in Zagreb in 1878, among the 400 songs from the South Slavic regions there are 28 from Bosnia-Herzegovina. Bosnian songs are also found in the volumes that appeared later: 21 in the second volume, 27 in the third, 15 in the fourth, and 10 in the fifth.

Kuhač was not inventive in the harmonics and did not provide models or solutions that could have a significant impact on the further development of harmonization for folk songs. However, his work on collecting songs in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in a specific period, has historical value because it was the first time that songs from this region were treated in this way.

Work by Ludvik Kuba is far more significant for Bosnian ethnomusicological research.

I have been studying and collecting Slavic folk songs ever since 1883. I primarily focus on their musical aspect.... According to my program, I turned to Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1893... [Kuba 1984: 25]

In four summer months, while he stayed in Bosnia in 1893, Kuba managed to transcribe 1,127 songs, most of them published by National Museum in its *Herald* (in the period 1906–1910). He worked according to a plan previously agreed upon with Kosta Hormann. Kuba carried out the plan only in part: he cancelled his trip to Tuzla due to cholera (and thus left northeast Bosnia unstudied), and he toured only towns and cities, and thus there are almost no rural songs in his collection. It is a pity that he did not have more time for Bosnia-Herzegovina, because his melographic transcriptions would otherwise have been more diverse and the region studied more thoroughly. However, he registered what he came across first in a great hurry, and had no time to study the field more thoroughly. Numerous doubts were cast upon the accuracy of his transcriptions. Vlado Milošević believes that Kuba was working too fast and did not check the songs. The author himself does not deny the grounds for such objections. However, he claims that he was transcribing what he heard and deliberately did not change anything. The problems faced by Ludvik Kuba were problems of the melography method. These issues were not fully resolved at the time, nor were there any possibilities for them to be resolved until the invention of tape recorder and other technical devices. Another weakness of Kuba's transcriptions is the issue of meter. There are many inconsistencies in word stress, verse meter, and song rhythm [Verunica 1989: 10]. The weakness of Kuba's melographic work in Bosnia is also reflected in the fact that the song texts were not accompanied by information on narrators, which is an obstacle in a detailed study of his collection. Kuba's transcriptions of some very popular songs in Bosnia differ from what could be heard from before the Second World War up to the present.

Despite numerous objections, Kuba's collection has remained a valuable source for studying the musical tradition of Bosnia-Herzegovina. This is confirmed by the collection's second edition [Svjetlost 1984], edited by academy member Cvjetko Rihtman, in unabridged form, with an index and table that facilitate its use.

TRADITIONAL SONG BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS

Consideration of the transformation process for Bosnian traditional urban song leads to singers that were active between the two world wars and immediately after World War Two.

The interviews I conducted with Mile Janjić (born in Mostar in 1910, lived in Sarajevo and Belgrade), revealed how the songs were transmitted and learned. Mile Janjić's narrations discuss the visible impact of a "new" medium – gramophone records in his early youth. Here is what Mile Janjić says:

Each pub with a patio in Mostar had a gramophone. The owners would play records and we children would listen by the fence. This is how I learned to sing... Like everyone in Mostar, I started singing in the street. All the children sang. Eventually, good and poor singers would be observed. I went on singing...

Among singers that had a strong impact on the generation that grew up between the two world wars, Mile Janjić mentions Sofka Nikolić, former "bey" singer Nikola Stojković, and professional Gypsy singers from Serbia. The impact of these singers is confirmed by an anecdote relating to Haki bey Reufbegović, who heard Bora Janjić's singing on a record (around 1928), went to bring him to Šabac and brought him over to Bosanska Gradiška, and later to Banja Luka. This event also shows the change in the audience's taste, and the impact of the media on shaping it. This is important because Sofka Nikolić, Nikola Stojković, and Bora Janjić are all representatives of a pub-style, professional, Gypsy manner of interpretation that uses every technique to arouse the feelings of pub patrons. The instruments used include the piano, violin, tambourine, and accordion.

Mile Janjić also told us that there were "72 music" – that is, folk ensembles – in the Sarajevo region at the time, from Baščaršija to Ilidža. In Mostar of the time, the most prominent band of this kind was the Handalija brothers' ensemble, described by Janjić as an "eight-member band, all playing stringed instruments".

The narrator also speaks of the Šabac-based Cicvarić band, which toured Mostar and Sarajevo, and even mentions a 26-member band as a rarity of the time.

Based on Janjić's narration and the analysis of available transcriptions, one can only partly assume what the singing and its environment were like. Critical and scholarly writing of the time also did not fail to touch upon such singing.

Gypsies appear as professional singers, musicians, masters of their trade, who do their job for a price, who sell music, as it were, like a commodity, the same as any trade product.... If they nourish music, they do not advance it. They give a special, typical character to folk music.... For this reason, gypsy music in Serbia is music of the masses and will remain present at fairs, gatherings, pubs, and feasts, where any easily-sold goods can do well, for a long time. [Đorđević 1910: XXV]

FINALLY, AN ELECTRONIC MEDIUM

The issue dealt with here, the position and role of traditional song (and folk music in general) in RTV Sarajevo programs, has been broached before but was rarely discussed and written about. Because this subject matter is still topical in Bosnia-Herzegovina (particularly with the emergence of numerous local radio and TV stations), it deserves full attention, systematic analysis, and, most of all, separate research that would help to resolve this complex issue, because it should not be understood as the in-house problem of a single radio station. Folk music has a significant place in shaping national music programs, which in turn give character to a radio or TV station. Therefore the entire issue has very broad significance and is connected in numerous ways with various issues in political, cultural and artistic life.

In the first years following the Second World War, the entire activity of the only radio station in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Radio Sarajevo (which broadcast folk music), was developing within what was known as the folk music department. Editors and associates were not only responsible for preparing a specified program – their responsibility was far more complex. They had to manage folk music ensembles, choose their repertoire, select soloists (i.e., folk music singers), and make selections of folk songs. Their tasks also included regular contacts with “living song” in the field. From this broad description of tasks, it is clear that this was a very delicate job that, unfortunately, was not performed by skilled staff for the most part. This will be discussed in more detail later.

In its early practice, the folk music department classified all of the material according to the following categories: original folk music, improvised folk music, stylized folk music, and arranged folk music.

Such classification naturally has its weaknesses, but it was the most suitable for the practice at the time. The original folk music category included faithful reproduction of folk singing and dancing, primarily rural tradition. Improvised folk music (which includes the interpretations of Bosnian urban song), which is the focus of this article, was widely represented. However, there was a very strong stream that completely denied any significance for this kind of folk music in contemporary life, considering it a decadent remnant of the past. Nonetheless, the fact remains that this kind of music was the most frequent in the national broadcasting station programs for over fifty years. In the first years of national radio station operation, stylized folk music was believed to be the most promising. It was supposed to represent the essence of folk music being broadcast. It was believed that the unchanged melody, transcribed by a melographer and its latent harmonics fixed by an “artist”, was supposed to offer the audience the most authentic expression of the folk spirit. It should be added that the analysis of the classification of folk music department materials established in the first decade of national radio station operations, and listening to almost all recordings made in the almost forty-year-long period, reveals that in a number of cases it is not possible to draw clear lines between separate categories.

When discussing this classification one clearly must dwell on the issue of singers, solo

instrumentalists, and instrumental ensembles appearing within the national radio station programs. In the very beginning, auditions were organized (this practice also continued later) and numerous performers were hired, some of whom developed into noteworthy singers. These were the singers that had a naturally good voice and sense of improvisation, but had no musical or esthetic education, which frequently led to adoption of the “pub manner” of singing.

Initially, radio programs broadcast *sevdalinkas* live, accompanied by an accordion duet, the most significant of which was that of Ismet Alajbegović and Jovica Petković. The specifics of this duo accompaniment are known only because of archive recordings made in the period 1956–1965, because there is no sheet music or any transcriptions. In fact, these were self-taught – that is, musically illiterate – instrumentalists, who used to improvise their accompaniment immediately before the recording session, in agreement with singers, of course. It is true that in this way one obtains a more complex sound picture, but such an accompaniment decreases the possibility of improvisation in the singer’s melodic line, and therefore his or her opportunity to “relate to” the poetics of the text, which is very important in interpreting the *sevdalinka*.

Some time during the 1960s, national radio started hiring educated musicians, whose work gave a new dimension to the manner of interpreting the *sevdalinka* and changed its direction. Among other things, they would prepare materials for recording sessions, which involved transcribing songs on paper and processing them through arrangements written for a folk (i.e., tamboura) orchestra. Particularly significant among these musicians were Beluš Jungić, Zvonko Nevžala, Ljubinko Miljković, and Jozo Penava.¹ Their work led to corrections of the singing technique, including correct voice positioning and the manner of performing with a folk (i.e., tamboura) orchestra. It should also be pointed out that these musicians prepared *sevdalinkas* both for singers with orchestral accompaniment and for vocal groups, and even for multi-part (i.e., polyphonic) interpretations. However, it should also be added that such a manner of singing is not suitable for the tradition of performing Bosnian urban traditional song, which originated from Oriental modal systems and was conceived only monodically.

The arrangements for Bosnian urban songs for performances with a folk or tamboura orchestra imposed a new concept and a new organization – briefly, a new model, which was typically considered the only correct one.

The arrangements made for folk orchestra implied a necessary introduction, which could also serve as an interlude. The arrangers tended to compose the introduction or interlude “in the spirit of” the *sevdalinka* or use the existing melodic material of the song. Interestingly, the orchestra would often not stick to the written sheet; its members would instead agree on the manner of performing before recording. They would change the introduction

¹ These authors’ arrangements cannot be found in the archives of the Radio of Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina or in their estates.

and interlude, so that the leading melodic line would be played by a different instrument (accordion, violin, or clarinet) every time.

Because no arrangements by the musicians mentioned above have been preserved, the discussion of this manner of interpreting the *sevdalinka* is based on the records of songwriters that continued their work in the same environment, with orchestras expanded with new instruments. Songwriters' work in preparing *sevdalinks* for singing with folk or tamboura orchestra resulted in the development of a clichéd manner of interpretation, a model frequently understood as the only possible one – and the one that prevails on the national broadcasting station even today.

One must not ignore another songwriter that left his trace on the national broadcasting station music programs by working as a free-lance artist and affected both the formation of a new style of interpreting *sevdalinks* and the development of new requirements by the audience. This is Omer Pobrić, who was born in an urban family with an inclination toward music. As a child, he was in contact with Bosnian urban songs, which play an important role in his professional music work. On the one hand, as he himself says, he wanted to preserve these songs from gradual disappearance and, on the other, he attempted to enrich their instrumental accompaniment with new elements and adjust them to the taste of younger generations. What was the result? His activities were not only limited to arranging *sevdalinka* accompaniment, but also included work on the text's poetic structure. A good example of this kind of treatment are the songs recorded under the title "Za dušu i sjećanje" (For Soul and Remembrance),² which Omer Pobrić carried out in cooperation with popular performer Safet Isović. He agreed with the singer on adding a refrain to the song "Moj dilbere" (My Sweetheart) that was popularly sung but had never been recorded in the singing of professional singers.³ What can immediately be observed when listening to these recordings is the unusual instrumental accompaniment of the *sevdalinks*. The arranger added synthesizer to accordion, violin, and clarinet as instrumental accompaniment. The rhythmic and harmonic background was actually reduced to synthesizer performance. The use of synthesizer allowed the arranger to work quite independently, without orchestra mediation, to directly implement his own ideas, to achieve a more contemporary sound and a financially acceptable production. For these songs, the arranger made only a transcription for accordion, which accompanies the singer's voice, and harmonic codes for the synthesizer.

Omer Pobrić was an exceptionally inventive musician, but also an entrepreneur who left behind two books, "99 sevdalinki i još poneka pjesma" (99 *Sevdalinks* and a Couple of Other Songs) and "Sevdah nadahnut životom ... slobodom" (Love Yearning Inspired by Life ... Freedom),⁴ in which he recorded his thoughts on and impressions of Bosnian urban

² Published by Diskoton in 1987/88. Until 1992 national radio programs censored this project and strictly assessed it as unworthy.

³ According to Pobrić, this refrain was originally sung in Turkish, but was translated into Bosnian during the processing.

⁴ Both books were published by author himself, in 1990 and 1996.

singing, as well as instructions for *sevdalinka* singing and playing. Although we cannot fully agree with his approach of “cheap” production, nor with his requirements for performers,⁵ it should be noted that Omer Pobrić was the first, after Kuba, to publish a collection of Bosnian traditional urban songs with transcriptions.

Among the *sevdalinks* broadcast in national broadcasting station programs, performances with an accordion duet and folk or tamboura orchestra accompaniment were observed, although the form sung with a saz accompaniment was also broadcast (although rarely until 1992). For a while, it was believed that the *sevdalinka* sung with the saz was not appropriate for the “modern” approach to interpretation and radio-production requirements, and this manner of performing was “reserved” for specialized programs about traditional music. For these purposes, a few saz player recordings were made. Nonetheless, this sort of censorship or neglect of *sevdalinks* sung with a saz accompaniment was actually the result of a general social and political climate. From 1992 onwards, with the “awakening of national awareness” and the need to discover one’s own identity, roots, and tradition in Bosnia-Herzegovina, singing with the saz was recognized once more and this sort of interpretation obtained its well-deserved place in the national broadcasting station programs. This phenomenon should be analyzed more thoroughly from historical, sociological, political, and cultural viewpoints. When one listens to the present program selection of the national broadcasting station in the field of saz players, new performers are appearing that acquired songs and playing both in the traditional way and through the forms offered by omnipresent media. Because it has already been claimed that this sort of tradition within the media is inevitably experiencing a transformation, part of this transformation, presented in this way, is inevitably transmitted to these performers.

NOTES

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, electronic media have become nearly the most influential social institutions. The purpose of future research is to show that within electronic media spontaneous traditional music practices are being replaced by organized music-making, which observes normative models far more strictly, and in which the sense of the music is shaped more through reception than through music production. Further research will demystify the process in which electronic media takes over the intermediary role between the narrator-transmitter of traditional thinking and the “consumer”, and then reply to question of whether, when, and to what extent radio and television stimulate social dynamics and the creativity of the inheritors (i.e., transmitters) of traditional music expression. I am convinced that electronic media, as perfect means of communication and correspondence, are firmly

⁵ Pobrić’s words are that *there is no sevdalinka without Gypsies and pubs*. When working on projects with Nusret Kobić and Hasiba Agić, he insisted on the “Gypsy” style of *sevdalinka* singing.

tied to the age they emerged in, refracting in themselves all the positives and negatives of a world that is still searching for itself.

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PREOBRAZBA TRADICIONALNIH PESMI URBANEGA BOSANSKEGA OKOLJA: OD LUDVIKA KUBE DO ELEKTRONSKIH MEDIJEV

Pričujoča razprava poskuša osvetliti ustvarjalni proces, prenos in spremembe v načinu interpretacije sevdalinke – ene od najpomembnejših glasbeno-poetičnih oblik ljudskega ustvarjanja v Bosni in Hercegovini. Ta oblika, ki je nastala v posebnem zgodovinskem obdobju (času turške administracije v Bosni, ki se je začela leta 1463) in družbenem kontekstu, izraža spremembe, ki so jih nosilci te glasbene zvrsti doživeli v teku stoletij.

Austroogrška zasedba Bosne in Hercegovine leta 1878 je pomenila veliko prelomnico v življenju ljudi Bosne in Hercegovine. Ta hiter preskok v popolnoma drugačno kulturo in način življenja pa seveda ni bil preprost in neboleč. Z vzpostavitvijo in uveljavitvijo novih družbenih pogojev sta se tako spremenila okvir in oblike ustvarjalnega izražanja, vključno s petjem sevdalinke.

Pri analizi sevdalinke kot muzikološkega fenomena so poudarjene nekatere posebnosti sevdalinke (ob upoštevanju, da je bila sevdalinka v prvotni osnovni obliki samo vokalna oz. jo je spremljal saz); obenem pa avtorica poskuša odgovoriti na vprašanje: 'Zakaj sevdalinka in saz?'. Avtorica analizira prve notne zapise sevdalinke in zbirke del folkloristov Franja Kuhača in Ludvika Kube (ki sta raziskovala v Bosni v drugi polovici 19. in na začetku 20. stol.).

Leto 1918 predstavlja pomembno prelomnico v življenju sevdalinke. Sevdalinka se je namreč bolj in bolj oddaljevala od prvotne oblike, saj je med predstavami poklicnih pevcev, zlasti Romov, vse bolj prevzemala umetne značilnosti. To nam potrjuje poslušanje in analiza pesmi iz urbanega bosanskega okolja na starih posnetkih (iz let 1928 in 1929).

Kasneje se je sevdalinka razširjala predvsem preko medijev (posebno nacionalne radijske in televizijske postaje, ki je bila dolgo časa tudi edina). Zaradi tega so v raziskavo vključena tudi dela samoukov in šolanih glasbenikov iz obdobja med letoma 1945 in 1990. Pozornost je posvečena tudi zahtevam tega medija, ki so jih morali upoštevati interpreti in instrumentalisti, in gledanju na 'nov način' kot na edini možni način interpretacije.

Razprava torej želi prispevati vsaj majhen delček k sistematičnemu ohranjanju in preporodu sevdalinke, ki je izredno reprezentativen in pomemben del bosanske kulturne dediščine.

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