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THE RISE OF CHORAL SINGING ORGANIZATIONS IN THE AREA OF BOSANSKA KRAJINA (1878-1941)

Abstract

The first forms of pro-European chorus performance throughout the area of Bosanska Krajina, which is situated in the north-west of Bosnia and Herzegovina, could be traced by Austro-Hungarian presence on this territory. The intense inclination towards a national identity among the local population resulted in the founding of cultural, educational and singing societies. It is obvious that these singing societies and chorus performances gathered more and more members that were then able to spread the ideas of the Enlightenment, as well as other religious, cultural and social ideas. Due to the fact that there was a huge lack of educated musicians among the local population, not to mention trained instrumentalists, chorus performances were the most convenient and economically adequate.

Key words:

Chorus performances, Bosanska Krajina (Bosnian border), Singing societies, music performances.

Introduction

It is a generally accepted fact that the year 1878 is considered the turning point in the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina, when the region fell under Austro–Hungarian rule, indicating a defining moment not only in the political but also in the cultural and music life. Leaving behind an antiquated feudal social system, Bosnia and Herzegovina for the first time encountered European ways of organizing public cultural and music life in a broader sense of the word. Although those were the first modest beginnings of music performances with a content which was similar to European artistic music heritages, their significance was the establishing of a direct connection with European music events.

Choral singing, as the most extensive link between music and the public, had a dominant role in developing music amateurism and the entire music life of the area. Thus, the thesis that music amateurism flourishes where artistic music is missing could be confirmed. Constant efforts to enable those musically untrained to enjoy music and to satisfy their desire for it, contributed to the expansion of music culture.

The beginnings of choral music in Bosanska Krajina (the areas of Banja Luka, Bihać, and other surrounding areas) could be traced entirely through the activities of national singing societies, until the beginning of the Second World War (1941). The ‘populist choral song’ and patriotic song were passed on from the time of war to the peace of socialist Yugoslavia. At that time, numerous cultural and artistic

societies were formed, based on the ideology of brotherhood and unity, and many well prepared choirs worked within them.

Choral music in the Austro-Hungarian period

The initial gatherings of local citizens in the period of the Austro-Hungarian Empire had a political background. Namely, there were ulterior motives underlying the activities of the mostly cultural and educational, or singing and “tambura-playing” organizations of the ethnic minority groups of Serbs, Croats and Muslims – from developing literacy and education, to developing their own intelligentsia and raising national awareness. The first singing groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina emerged among Orthodox Serbs and were named *odbori za priredjivanje svetosavskih zabava* (“Committees for Saint Sava Celebrations”). Under the ever-increasing pressure of requests and demands for founding cultural organizations in the entire north-western Bosnia, either choral societies (Christians) or ‘reading rooms’ (Muslims), the State administration (appointed by Austro-Hungary) relented around the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th, granting licenses to many cities and larger towns. However, not all choral societies had first-rate choirs and thus their work largely depended on the choirmasters’ skills.

During the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the most prominent societies in Bosanska Krajina were in Banja Luka - *Jedinstvo* – a Serbian Singing Society (founded in 1894), *Nada* – a Croatian Singing Society (1898); then, *Vila* – a Serbian Society from Prijedor (1892), *Krajišnik* – a Croatian Singers and Tambura Society from Bihać (1899), and several others. The Muslim population of the period had their ‘reading rooms’, or *kiraethanas*. The exception was a ‘craftsmen’s guild’, *Fadilet* (1908), which had its own mixed instrumental ensemble; at some later point *Fadilet* also got a male choir.

Jedinstvo started as a Serbian Orthodox Church singing society in 1894, obtaining its prefix designation ‘Serbian’ as belatedly as 1905. For the occasion of the renamed society’s Flag Consecration, there was a grand celebration organized by the society’s board and the Serbs of Banja Luka. The celebration received a review in the local papers *Naš Život* (‘Our Life’) and we cite a select excerpt: “From June 28-30 (or July 11-13 according to the Gregorian calendar) there was a consecration of the flag of the Serbian singing society *Jedinstvo*. The celebration lasted three days and a great number of people attended, including representatives of other societies from Bosnia and Herzegovina and from Serbia. *Balkan*, an academic singing society from Zagreb, also took part in that celebration. Moreover, besides Stevan Mokranjac, the choirmaster of Belgrade’s First singing society, also in attendance was Aleksa Šantić, the leader of the Serbian singing society *Gusle* from Mostar. Seven societies took part in the celebration: one from Šabac, Belgrade Alliance, *Branko* from Niš, the *Obilić* academic choral society from Belgrade, the *Balkan* Serbian academic society from Zagreb, the *Vila* choral society from Prijedor, the *Pobratimstvo* society from Sanski

Most and the *Jedinstvo* society from Banja Luka”. The next evening all the societies gave a concert in the courtyard of the *Balkan Hotel*.¹

The *Jedinstvo* choir was at first only a male choir, but later it became a mixed choir led by Ksenofon Zita, a teacher and choirmaster. Shortly after, the ‘tambura ensemble’ became a part of the same society, as well as an amateur drama group. The choir performed regularly for *Saint Sava Celebrations*, as well as for annual concerts and other festivities. We know from the local papers about a celebration from October 1907, when the Serbian singing society invited the public to the *Bosna Hotel* to attend their performance. The choral program consisted of songs from Bosnia, as well as songs from *Ohrid* by Stevan Mokranjac. Interestingly, S. Milovanovic was on the piano, a lady accompanist. The drama group performed ‘a play with singing’ - *Šljive za brašno* (Prunes for flour) by Sima Milutinović-Saraljija.²

The singing society of Bosnian Croats, *Nada*, was established in 1898, with Fra Augustin Čengić as the society president and choirmaster. *Nada* had only a male choir at the beginning, while some female voices joined three years later.

Nada was a successful and regular organizer of social events, as well as a guest performer at neighboring Croatian societies. The most important event for *Nada* was the appointing of Prague Conservatory graduate František Mačejovsky, a Czech by origin, one of the most educated musicians of the time, for choirmaster. He lived in Banja Luka from 1900 till 1905, and during his residency he composed a mass in honor of Saint Joseph (for mixed choir and organ in A major), and a number of Offertories and Graduals, fifteen preludes for the organ, and a “nadgrobica” (‘a grave song’) for a mixed choir, and some other pieces. Before coming to Banja Luka Mačejovsky worked as an organist in the Austrian Chapel of the Consulate in Constantinople.³

The Croatian singing society *Nada* had a rich and diverse program for Saint Sylvester’s (New Year’s) celebrations, on 31 December 1905 in Banja Luka: V. Šubir - *Himna Tomislava* (Tomislav’s Hymn- male choir), V.G. Brož – *Iz mog dnevnika* (From my Diary - tambura quintet), H. Satner – *Po zimi iz škole* (From School in Winter – a mixed choir), A. Šenoa – *Fratarska oporuka* (The Friar’s Last Will – a declamation), K. Bendl – *Proljetna pjesma* (Spring Song for two “violins”), *Cvijeće brala* (Picking Flowers - mixed choir), I. Pl. Zajc – *Hrvaticam* (tambura choir), Dr. Ante Benešić – *Soba br.13* (one act buffoon comedy).⁴

After choirmaster and composer Mačejovski moved to Sarajevo, there was stagnation in the life of the Banja Luka society, which also occurred as a consequence of unresolved relations within the board. Just before the First World War the Croatian society got a new choirmaster, a teacher in the “Real Gymnasium”,

¹ *Naš Život*, Banjaluka, 1 August 1905, p. 7, 8.

² *Otadžbina*, 19 October 1907, p.19.

³ Šajnović, Dragan: “Muzički život u Banja Luci od Austrougarske okupacije do drugog svjetskog rata (1878-1941)”, *Glas Banja Luka*, 1983, p.21.

⁴ *Pjevački Vjesnik* (Singers’ News), Banja Luka, 15. 01. 1906.

Josip Soukal. After a while, in 1918, Maćejevsky returned to Banja Luka for a short period of time. As a result, there was an evident revival of the city's music life, in spite of post-war consequences and for a while, he also ran a violin school.⁵

The Serbian choral society *Vila* from Prijedor was one of the oldest societies in Bosanska Krajina. Although *Vila* had an earlier start, it was officially authorized in 1892, with its founding member Sima Mitrinović, a merchant from Prijedor, at the head. This society had its own anthem for which the words were written by Aleksa Šantić and the music composed by Josif Marinković, a composer from Belgrade.⁶ *Vila* developed contacts and collaborated with *Gusle* from Mostar, *Sloga* from Sarajevo, *Jedinstvo* from Banja Luka, and the *Stanković singing society* from Belgrade, with *Vila* borrowing choral songs, liturgies and other material from them. It is interesting that each program intended for public performing was, under the existing rules, sent to the State Administration for approval. It can be said that for the first time in its history, Prijedor put itself on the cultural map, together with other developed centers in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In spite of this, the problem for the activities of the society was a lack of choirmasters. Thus, the position was often given to Serbian teachers, most of whom referred to Stevan Mokranjac (the best known Serbian choral composer of the period) for finished choral arrangements.

The reputation of *Vila* developed with time. Choirmasters stayed longer. Risto Misita, a confessional instructor, led the choir successfully from 1904. Finally, in August of 1908, Pero Radetić came to lead *Vila's* choir for the longest period of time.⁷ The repertory of the mixed choir changed significantly, in its quality and range, consisting of some of the following: *Rukoveti* (the Garland Songs) by Mokranjac, *Pjesme iz Bosne* (Songs from Bosnia) by Dr. J. Poču, *Pobratimstvo* by Štunc, *Heruvika* by Bertnansky, *Uskliknimo* (Praise song) by K. Stanković, *V Slatkih Sanjah* (In Sweet Dreams) by Heidrich (for a male choir), *Osana* – a Russian folk song, *Dva Šehida* by A. Petrović with lyrics by Osman Djikić, *Mornaru, Što ćutiš* (Why are You Quiet, Sailor) by Davorin Jenko, as well as Serbian folk melodies from Bosnia with lyrics by Aleksa Šantić, and many other songs. It is noteworthy that *Vila* society went on tours not only to other Bosnian towns, but also to Belgrade (Serbia), Zagreb (Croatia), and other places.

The work of the Croatian *Krajišnik*, the 'tambura' and choral society and the work of the Serbian choral society *Jugovići*, both from Bihać, had more modest results than others. *Krajišnik*, a Croatian tambura and choral society founded in 1899, was the first musical society in Bihać.⁸ Initially, there was only one central tambura orchestra that had gathered the best amateur musicians from all Croatian neighborhoods. The

⁵ Ravlić, Aleksandar-Aca: "Godine Ispunjene Nadom" (1898-1998), AARiS, Kastav, Rijeka, 1999.

⁶ "Stotinu godina horskog pevanja", Prijedor 1985 ('A Hundred Years of Choral Singing').

⁷ Archives of Vila choral society, Prijedor, Notes I (Minutes I) p.36.

⁸ See: Pejanović, Djordje: "Cultural- educational, human(istic) and other societies in Bosnia and Herzegovina during Austro-Hungarian ruling" ("Kulturno-prosvjetna, humana i socijalna društva u BiH za vrijeme austrijske vladavine"), Sarajevo, 1930, p. 93, printed by Bosanska pošta.

number of musicians varied, while on their repertory they had folk pieces from Croatia and compositions written by Croatian composers - I. Zajc, Vilhar and others. Several musicians playing brass instruments were also members of this society, later developing brass band music.⁹

From 1906, the forming of a mixed choir started, and Josip Sondil (secretary of *Napredak*) led it at first, but later, from 1907, the choirmaster was Arnold Vlasak. All activities of the Croatian tambura-choral society *Krajišnik* became, in the course of time, interrelated with the activities of the Croatian association *Napredak*.

It took quite an amount of correspondence with Austro-Hungarian authorities to found the Serbian choral society *Jugovići* in Bihać, and permission was finally granted in 1906. According to the *Bosanski Glasnik* (Bosnian Courier), in 1914 the president of the Serbian society *Jugovići* was Savo Miladinović, while the president of the *Prosvjeta* association was Risto Savić.¹⁰ One can also learn from the Archives that Serbian teachers (including several from Vojvodina) held lessons in church singing in schools and, due to a lack of professionals, were leaders of choral societies (replacing choral conductors). On *Jugovići's* repertory there were traditional church songs, as well as songs composed by Stevan Mokranjac, Aleksa Šantić, Stevan Hristić, and several Russian compositions. This society performed regularly for *Saint Sava Celebrations (Recitals)*, with a mixed and male choir. The Hymn to Saint Sava served as a regular opening song, followed by declamations and a comic piece at the end. In addition to Saint Sava Celebrations, a sort of 'literary gathering' was practiced by the society, as well as dances for members and other citizens.

Following the previous model of Serbian choral societies, other societies were organized in other towns: *Pobratimstvo* (1900) in Sanski Most, *Krajišnik* (1899) in Bosanski Novi and *Milutinović* (1898) in Bosanska Krupa. Due to the fact that Serbian Orthodox church-schools existed in all the mentioned places, they provided confessional school teachers to work in choral societies and as choirmasters.

Choral singing between the two World Wars

The role of the choral society *Jedinstvo* from Banja Luka was vastly significant for music in this town between the two World Wars. Together with the Croatian choral society *Nada* and the Yugoslavian-Muslim choral society *Sloga* and newly formed workers' cultural and artistic societies', *Jedinstvo* continued with its mission of performing and popularizing both traditional church and secular music. The choirmasters' contribution, among other factors, was invaluable for this; namely, Dr. Vladislav Kostić, a iurist (1919-1924), Dusan Umičević, also a iurist, Većeslav Nigl-Čeh, a military musician, Pero Milošević, a teacher, Maksimilian Mikšić-Čeh (came to Banja Luka in 1920 as a military musician), Marko Čanković, a regional

⁹ Archives of *Napredak* society in Bihać.

¹⁰ *Bosanski glasnik* (Bosnische bote) 1914, The State Archives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Inv. Br. 342, sign. Br. P-15/1914.

clerk in Vrbas, and professor of music Vlado Milošević (from 1931 until the beginning of the Second World War in 1941).¹¹

The first ‘official concert’ of the *Jedinstvo* society, under Kostić and Umičević took place in 1923, in the hall of the railway station (today an art gallery). The concert program contained mostly works by Stevan Mokranjac. The second such event, a successful evening concert, took place in 1928 in the Hall of the *Bosna Hotel*. With Maksimilian Mikšić’s conducting, several fragments from Tchaikovsky’s liturgy and a piece entitled “Jesen” (Autumn) by Stevan Hristić were particularly well performed by the choir.¹²

When the new region of ‘Vrbas Banovina’ was formed with Banja Luka as its center, the official newspapers in the thirties were *Vrbaske novine* (Vrbas News), as well as a cultural monthly magazine called *Književna krajina* (Literary Krajina). Since both papers followed regional events, the Serbian choral society *Jedinstvo* got very positive reviews.

In its last decade until 1941, the *Jedinstvo* society entered its most mature stage of music activity. The greatest contribution to that was the arrival of the new choirmaster, professor and composer, Vlado Milošević. The choir, under his guidance, performed a full and diverse repertory, with works written by Yugoslavian composers as well as works by other Slavic composers. Milošević’s work, parallel with his lectures at a teacher’s college, was truly professional, detailed, studied profoundly, and presented at the celebration of the society’s fortieth anniversary. The Jubilee was held on December 3, 1933, in the hall of the *Palace Hotel*. Vlado Milošević conducted some of the program while Marko Tajčević, as a guest, conducted his own compositions. The program of the anniversary was published in *Vrbaske Novine*:

1. M. Tajčević: *Jedin Svjat, Pričasno*
2. A. Arhangelški: *Glasom mojim ko Gospodu vozvah*
3. J. Slavenski: *Dedo i mečkiše, Grad gradile*
4. Krstić: *Nimfa*-solo tenor with piano, Suljo Plićanić
5. Žganeer: *Pij mila, Ni mi volja* (for male choir)
6. Binički: *Dvoje dragih* (for male choir)
7. Tajčević: *Komitske pesme* (for male choir)
8. Mokranjac: *Rukovet No. 5* (for mixed choir)¹³

¹¹ Mikić, Djordje: 1992, Banja Luka, Serbian choral society Jedinstvo in Banja Luka, 1893-1941, (“Srpsko pjevačko društvo – Jedinstvo u Banjoj Luci”), p.85, 86.

¹² Ibid., p. 85.

¹³ *Vrbaske novine*, 6 December 1933, p.3.

Two years later, *Vrbaske Novine* announced the next concert of *Jedinstvo*, with a program of religious music to be held on March 2, 1935 in the theater. The program announces the performing of works by Stevan Mokranjac, Vlado Milošević, Marko Tajčević and others, and Vlado Milošević as a conductor of the male and mixed choirs.¹⁴

Nada, as every other society in Banja Luka, had a stagnation period between 1914 and 1918, since most of the choir (male and mixed) members, went to war. In the period from 1919 to 1935, *Nada* underwent a changing of choirmasters: Matej Jankač, a court secretary, Dragutin Bajer, a banking clerk, Viktor Prohaska, a bank director, Vićeslav Nigl, a military band leader, Pavao Štefanac, and Marko Čanković, both clerks in State Administration. The first significant concert of *Nada* was advertised in the Croatian paper *Novi Život*.¹⁵ According to this paper's comments, there was a great public interest in that concert and the program was carefully selected:

Part One

- 1) G. Rossini: *William Tell*, Overture, orchestra
- 2) Ivan pl. Zajc: *Na Vrelu Bosne* (At the Spring of the Bosnia River), baritone solo and male choir
- 3) H.V. Ernst: *Elegie*, violin solo with choir accompaniment
- 4) Z. Špoljar: *Croatian Folk Songs* (tunes) for mixed choir:
 - a. *Mamice su štrukle pekli* (Mothers baked "štrukli")
 - b. *Lepe su ti molivarke*
 - c. *Češljaj me majkice* (Comb my hair, mother)

Interestingly, in the second part of the concert program *Nada* performed Leoncavallo's "Intermezzo" from *Pagliacci*, and a cantata for mixed choir with Soprano, Baritone and Bass solo, with orchestral accompaniment. According to the program, it apparently had an artistically rich and ambitious content. From 1935 *Nada* was again at the peak of choral music. From then to the beginning of World War II the conductor's position was shared by three professionals: Dragan Šajnović, Jaroslav Plecity and Josip Kaplan. In the spring of 1937 *Nada* performed at the Second Festival of the Croatian singing association in Zagreb with the new conductor Jaroslav Plecity. *Nada* from Banja Luka received second prize, competing against fifty two choirs, with its two songs: "Bosančica" (Bosnian Gal) by Taclik and "From Old Bosnia" by Plecity.¹⁶

¹⁴ *Vrbaske Novine*, 26 February, 1935, p. 3.

¹⁵ *Novi Život*, 31 January, 1920, p. 3.

¹⁶ Ravlić, Aleksandar-Aco: "Godine ispunjene Nadom", AARiS, Kastav, Rijeka, 1999, p. 244. Plecity was an excellent choirmaster and composer, occasionally in conflict with the local administration. According to Vlado Milošević, he was a 'natural conductor' while composing for his appointment.

During the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, some newly roused Muslim singing societies started working in Banja Luka, societies which understood the significance and role of music in spreading national awareness. These were *Sloga*, the First Yugoslav-Muslim choral society (1922), and the First Female choir joined to an educational society called *Gajret* (1931).

Sloga had a male choir until 1938. Two choirmasters, Josip Jiranek and Jaroslav Plecity (from 1936), were professional musicians. The repertory was very similar to repertories of other choirs, and the works mostly performed were those by S. Binički, S. Mokranjac, S. Hristić, J. Marinković, V. Novak, I. Zajc and other composers. The distinction of this society was a “sevdalinka” type of song, performed with other standard choral pieces and at certain occasions, in original or arranged versions. The best known interpreters of sevdalinka were three brothers: Hamdija, Mustafa, and Irfan Karabegović, and Muhamed Čejvan, Muhamed Gušić, Adem Kovačević, Faik Hadžibegović, Sulrjman Plićanić and Mustafa Blentić.¹⁷ Unlike the concert in 1933, when *Sloga* got negative reviews in *Vrbaske novine*, this concert in 1938 received accolades in the same paper. The article begins with: *An example of how work should be done, and how results will ensue is this concert of the Yugoslavian Muslim singing society, Sloga. An impressive group of singers with a developed musical awareness and technical perfection provide proof that the national cause today is not served via a romantic color, but through a contemporary understanding of gravity in appearance and in interpretation.*¹⁸ The same article emphasized that *Sloga* appeared with its mixed choir for the first time, delighting the audience. The conductor was Marko Čanković, employed in the Regional Administration.

Along with its main task of assisting impoverished pupils and students to educate themselves and raising the national awareness of Muslim youth, *Gajret's* local board organized social events with the best choirs, orchestras and individual musicians. Apparently, *Gajret* did not have from the start its own music ensembles, but some students from its dormitories were active in various art groups, including music groups. The local board of *Gajret* in Banja Luka opened a new girls' dormitory on October 3, 1929.¹⁹ That probably caused the founding of a newly formed girls' choir only two years later, in 1931. The girls' choir numbered around 30 girls and was led by Josip Jiranek, albeit not for long.

In the 30s in Banja Luka, the choir of the cultural-educational Muslim society *Bratstvo* (Brotherhood) was working with Boris Jakovljević, although another very successful choir was the ‘Workers’ choir’ within the sports and cultural society *Pelagić*. The main activity of *Pelagić* was to share and spread revolutionary ideas, and under its wings it had one male and one female choir. Nevertheless, more successful than both choirs was the mixed choir of *Pelagić*, under two conductors, Jaroslav Plecity and Dragan Šajnović. Numerous concerts were held, the mixed choir's program was adapted for the masses, from workers to the

¹⁷ Šajnović, Dragan: “Music life in Banja Luka from the Austro-Hungarian occupation till World War II” (Muzički život u Banja Luci od Austrougarske okupacije do drugog svjetskog rata”), *Glas*, 1983, p. 3. Banja Luka.

¹⁸ *Vrbaske novine*, 12 January, 1938, p.3.

¹⁹ *Gajret*, 1929, Sarajevo, p. 353.

common people, and to the proletariat. The songs and titles were: *Radnički Pozdrav* (Hail from the Workers), *Mi smo brod* (We are a ship), *Pjesma Besprizornih* (The Song of Outlaws) and some other songs. In the other towns of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the *Vila* organization, a Serbian choral society from Prijedor, held a prominent place. *Vila* also had some members from different religious communities between the two World Wars and thus it acquired a new, Yugoslavian character, confirmed by its participation in 1920 in the *Zrinski-Frankopan evenings*.²⁰

In regards to the repertory, *Vila's* programs included diversity, complexity and gravity. From the 1920s onwards, the repertory included all of the *Rukoveti* by Stevan Mokranjac, the *Croatian Mass* by F.S. Vilhar was also practiced, as well as songs by Jakov Gotovac, Marko Tajčević, Dobrenić, Krstić, Adamič, Odak, D. Jenko, V. Novak, V.Ljadov, V. Milošević, S. Binički, P.I. Tchaikovsky, I. Bajić and others. A special honor for the *Vila* society was the invitation to perform in the National Theater in Belgrade in 1923, on the occasion of moving Mokranjac's posthumous remains and forming the *Yugoslavian Singing Association*. Under the conducting of Pero Radetić, the choir performed the thirteenth *Rukovet* (Mokranjac), which was an amazing success for *Vila*.

At the eight Congress of Yugoslav Singing Associations in Ljubljana in 1932, *Vila* had the following representatives: its president, Prof. Branko Vranješević, and the celebrated choirmaster Pero Radetić. The openness of *Vila* society and its humanistic orientation were confirmed and, consequently, a list of concerts in different places followed: in Sanski Most, Bosanski Novi, Bosanska Krupa, and other larger and distant places around Bosnia and Serbia.²¹ Other choirs, like the *Gajret* choir from Bihać, and the Serbian *Jugovići* also from Bihać, the *Jakšić* choral society from Ključ, *Milutinović* from Krupa, *Pobratimstvo* from Sanski Most, attempted to develop and maintain a high level of choral singing. In reality, due to a lack of singers and conductors, they did not reach the level of the groups from Banja Luka, either in repertory or interpretation. However, they were still the main participants of social and cultural events. The most significant and popular festivities were the Serbian Saint Sava Celebrations and Bayram Teferićes, both major cultural events with choral programs.

Ultimately, we can conclude that there was an almost continual ascent in the quality of music practices in Bosanska Krajina during both periods, the Austro-Hungarian period and between the two World Wars. The programs performed were ever more demanding and had elevated the local music and cultural life. The city of Banja Luka, the economic and cultural center of Bosanska Krajina, is especially relevant, as it had been culturally close to the larger centers of the province; which was also the case, although to a lesser degree, with Prijedor and Bihać. Choral singing was the foundation of musical amateurism in the region, at times reaching artistic and esthetic peaks, going beyond the expected levels for amateurs. Even more

²⁰ *Vila* society's minutes (notes).

²¹ *Ibid.*

significant was the fact that choral conductors tried to expand the program and make their own arrangements, or even compositions in some cases. This is how, along with foreign and visiting musicians, the local people became more and more capable of working within choirs and organizing regular concerts, as well as developing an informed, involved and critical audience.

Translated by Svetlana Maksimović

Summary

We can conclude that chorus performance in the area of Bosanska Krajina was characterized by a continual rise in the quality of musical performances, richer and more demanding programs, and also had an important role in boosting music life and culture in general. Banja Luka has to be especially distinguished among others, as the cultural and economic center of Bosanska Krajina. In the field of music life, Banja Luka ranks with some other bigger centers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, such as Bihać and Prijedor. Chorus performance represented the foundation for music amateurism, at times developed so much that it went beyond the so called amateurism in repertoire and interpretation. Most frequently the quality of chorus performance depended on the conductor's skill. Upon the arrival of foreign and especially military musicians to the Monarchy, this and other modes of musical performance were enhanced. Furthermore, due to a lack of specific music literature for these choruses, many conductors began their own work in the fields of arranging and composing. In this way, along with foreign and visiting musicians, a new locally educated music cadre was created. Gradually, the number of concert activities increased and a qualitative critical and music audience arose.