

UDK: 84.4.096(497.11)“1929/1940”
654.191(497.111)“1929/1940”
DOI: 10.2298/MUZ1314031V

Accepted for publication on
September 19, 2013
Original scientific paper

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**RADIO BELGRADE IN THE PROCESS OF CREATING
SYMBOLIC BOUNDARIES:
THE EXAMPLE OF THE FOLK MUSIC PROGRAM BETWEEN
THE TWO WORLD WARS (1929–1940)***

Abstract: This article deals with the process of creation of symbolic boundaries in the context of designing the folk music programs at Radio Belgrade since its foundation until the beginning of World War Two. A detailed insight into the musical contents aired on Radio Belgrade, the texts on folk music published in the radio weekly magazine (*Radio Belgrade*), and the preserved memoirs, with an emphasis on their broader socio-cultural and socio-political significance, has enabled me to single out the factors and mechanisms that played a key role in defining the boundaries of folk music. I will analyse the work of different editorial teams before World War Two; at the same time, I will consider the tastes and cultural preferences of the subscribers and listeners of the Radio Belgrade programs. By means of crossing out specific aesthetic, political and economical positions of radio editors and experts who designed the folk music program with the expectations of listeners and, to an extent, performers of folk music, I will attempt to explain how the process of symbolical demarcation of folk music as a separate entity, different from art and popular music, took place; but also, how the folk music broadcast on the radio related to the Serbian folk musical practices.

Key words: symbolic boundaries, Radio Belgrade, folk music program, folk music, editorial policies, Petar Krstić, Mihailo Vukdragović, musical preferences, radio listeners

* The paper was written as a part of the project *Serbian Musical Identities within Local and Global Frameworks: Traditions, Changes, Challenges* (ON 177004), funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

Introduction

The beginning of radio broadcasts throughout Europe and North America in the 1920s was an important socio-cultural phenomenon, which left an impact on politics, culture, journalism and music in different environments. Although the regulations that governed the activities of radio stations differed from one country to another, which was an outcome of the differences in their economic powers, political systems and social hierarchies, one can still observe certain parallels with respect to understanding the role of this new medium in various societies, and the challenges faced by the creators of musical and radio programs (see Currid 2006; Neulander 2009; Baade 2012). Firstly, there had been diverse opinions on the possible consequences of introducing radio to the daily life of people, but also with respect to the relations between public, political, cultural and other domains. A potentially mass access to the information on culture and art facilitated by the radio had provoked, on the one hand, positive reactions, because it enabled popularisation of the exclusive practices such as art music or obscure folk music practices; this also contributed to the cultural emancipation of certain social strata. On the other hand, it was feared that an easy access to prestigious artistic and musical products would disturb the traditional hierarchy of cultural institutions and the evaluation of artistic products.

A simultaneous fascination with the radio's potential for breaking social barriers and fear of its potential to destroy the historical, cultural and social divides, accompanied the activities of the Belgrade radio station during the first twelve years of its existence, i.e. before the outbreak of World War Two. The political circumstances that surrounded the "birth" of Radio Belgrade were particularly difficult. The first few years of its activity were characterized by an atmosphere of political uncertainty, with unclear boundaries of what was politically acceptable. This was a consequence of King Alexander's dictatorship introduced in 1929 (the so-called "January 6th Dictatorship"). Therefore, a complex relationship between the radio experts with loosely set financial, cultural and artistic goals on the one hand, and the listeners as a heterogeneous social group consisting of individuals with different social habits

and needs on the other hand, was further complicated by the criteria of political acceptability, which meant that the radio program was expected to comply with the ideology of integrative Yugoslavism (see Dobrivojević 2006; Nikolić 2006).

Political, cultural and economic factors played an important role in determining the profile of musical programs of Radio Belgrade, including the ways of presenting folk music, which was an integral part of the daytime and evening radio programs. Folk music was a subject of negotiations between the managers and editors, listeners and performers, both regarding its aesthetic and normative characteristics, and the quality of performance. It is important to observe that folk music had a strong cultural potential, because it was seen as relevant for the process of national identification. Its commercial potential was equally strong, due to its popularity. A dualistic nature of this type of music, which became particularly prominent with the emergence of radio, became a departure point for a symbolic clash between the radio experts on the one hand, and the listeners and performers on the other, due to discrepancies in their economic interests and aesthetic and ideological motives. By relying on their own cultural capital, i.e. their extensive knowledge of art music and a slightly less reliable knowledge of musical folklore, but also having in mind the economic needs of the radio station and its technical capacities, the editors and their associates established the normatives for creating folk music programs, that could deviate to a certain extent from the listeners' demands and the performers' habits.

A result of the incompatible aims of these three sides was not a consensus, but a certain "balanced imbalance", which led to constant redefining of aesthetical and formal boundaries of folk music – either as a consequence of complying with the listeners' and the musicians' demands, or due to the strengthening of the "disciplinary" agenda of editors and their teams. Hence, it is important to note a mutual dependency of the editorial policies and the activities of performers and listeners in the process of the creation of folk music program on Radio Belgrade during the first twelve years. Consequently, the complexity of their interrelations was important for a symbolic demarca-

tion between art, popular and folk musical practices.¹ Defining the repertoire boundaries of musical folklore, selection of performers, manners of performance, and the program scheme, influenced the presumptions on what musical folklore was, i.e. what types of musical practices, genres and performance styles it could encompass. As a fruit of crossbreeding incompatible functions and goals, the folk music program on Radio Belgrade between two world wars played an important role in establishing and strengthening the boundaries of folk music, thus contributing to an extent to the processes of transformation of local folk musical practices. Moreover, it played an important role in establishing standard repertoires and performance manners in Serbia / the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, as well as the types of media presentation of folk music.

Bearing in mind the socio-cultural and political dimensions of the folk music broadcasts on Radio Belgrade between two world wars, and the historical importance of establishing the practice of radio distribution of this type of music for its later development in Serbian and Yugoslav media and cultural space, I will now turn to several phenomena that I find relevant for understanding the significance of the radio in establishing the symbolic

¹ My understanding of the notion of symbolic boundaries relies upon the work by Michel Lamont and Marcel Fournier (see Lamont and Fournier 1992). These two sociologists and their associates have set a theoretical basis for studying the phenomenon of *boundary construction* in the sphere of cultural (including artistic) production; moreover, they have offered different ways of its empirical application. Their work is based on the theoretical foundations set by Pierre Bourdieu, both with respect to their understanding of the importance of cultural consumption, and to the social role of culture. However, unlike Bourdieu who aimed to explain that the manifest cultural and social practices are conditioned by the workings of the deep structure and its mechanisms, the authors who dealt with the issue of boundaries are oriented towards the cultural / social practices, i.e. the processes and phenomena that have originated from these practices. Lamont, Fournier and their followers consider the analysis of the process of diversification of artistic practices through the institutionalization of the categories of high and popular art as an inevitable part of the research of social boundaries. Considering the cultural and social history of the so called First and Second Yugoslavia, we think that the examination of the formation of symbolic boundaries between art, popular and folk musical practices is of special importance due to the fact that the given process encompass other social processes including the regional, ethnical and class identification, cultural and political disciplining etc. Besides, the research of the delineation of three musical practices in Yugoslavia that started to manifest itself more clearly in the 1930s has great significance for the explanation of trends in the field of music in the Second Yugoslavia, and the ex-Yugoslav states. Widening of the historical perspective with the inclusion of the period before the World War Two seems crucial for underlining the continuities instead of usually emphasized discontinuities in the given field before and after 1945.

boundaries of musical folklore. I will discuss different approaches to creating folk music programs on Radio Belgrade in the first eleven years of its existence, by analyzing the formal aspects of that process. Given that the selection of program formats, performers, repertoires and interpretative styles was a result of a crossing between the editorial policies, listeners' preferences and the characteristics of performance practices, this segment will also be highlighted. Having considered the formal outlines of folk music programs I will then review the aesthetical and ideological positions of the editorial teams, but also the listeners' affinities. In conclusion, I will evaluate the significance of the process of symbolic delineation of folk music, the process in which Radio Belgrade played a key role in the Serbian and Yugoslav culture and society in the period between two world wars.

*Folk music broadcasts on Radio Belgrade (1929–1940):
an overview of formal aspects*

Radio Belgrade started broadcasting on March 24, 1929. Since day one, it was required that the music of folklore origin should occupy an important place in the music program. This was explicitly stated in the inaugurative speech by the Radio Belgrade founder and co-owner, dr Milan Stojadinović. Speaking publicly to mark this key moment in the history of media in the country, Stojadinović highlighted that an important task of the Belgrade radio station would be to present Yugoslav culture to foreign and domestic consumers, and to stimulate national cohesiveness in Yugoslavia. Thus it had an important task to cherish and preserve national culture, i.e. “the cultural heritage of our ancestors” (Anonymous 1929: 7). According to Stojadinović, “the imprint of folk culture” was to be a defining feature of Belgrade radio, and the program was to encompass both the works by contemporary Yugoslav composers and the “performances of old gusli players” (1929: 7). An awareness of the importance of showcasing folk music as part of the Radio Belgrade program for the purpose of intensifying the process of “national rapprochement” and unification, that would eventually lead to the creation of a unique Yugoslav cultural space, was apparent both

from the concept of the program itself and from the ways that the repertoires and performance standards were set during the entire period between the two world wars, regardless of the changes of editors within the radio, and the changes of external socio-political circumstances.

Aside from the fact that political circumstances undoubtedly played a part in the foundation of folk music program within Radio Belgrade, one should not overlook the importance of economical, technical and organizational factors that, judging by the available data records, also governed the selection of musical contents. An analysis of the Radio Belgrade program between 1929 and 1940 has revealed some important facts.² Firstly, several factors contributed to the profile of folk music broadcasts: 1. the underdevelopment of Yugoslav music industry, 2. the accessibility of radio signal and its reach, 3. the number of subscribers, 4. the level of success in collecting the radio license fee from the subscribers (M. M. 1934; Коцић и Миљковић 1979; Николић 2006). All these factors directly or indirectly influenced folk music presentation and prevented different editorial teams from achieving their goals. Given that they were largely independent from the activities of Radio Belgrade managers and experts, it is obvious why there was continuity in the general profile of folk music program, in spite of the editors' aesthetic and ideological differences. In other words, due to the specific financial and technical circumstances, the editors could not introduce significant changes to the folk music program, which resulted in the survival of certain modes of presentation in an extended period of time. This continuity in the general profile of folk music program was counterbalanced by a discontinuity of broadcasting formats and the selection of repertoires and performers. It is

² The analysis was based on the overview of the entire weekly program of the Belgrade radio station published in the journal *Радио Београд* [*Radio Belgrade*] between March 1929 and July 1940. The journal was not published during the second half of 1940 and the first few months of 1941. Hence I did not have insight into the folk music program broadcasts during this period which lasted for less than a year (ending with 6 April 1941, the date when Yugoslavia was invaded by Germany). During this period music program was edited by Stevan Hristić, Svetomir Nastasijević and Kosta Manojlović. Aside from the lack of published weekly programs that would enable me to reconstruct the status of folk music, I have not found substantial testimonies that could have made up for the missing data.

noticeable that certain editorial teams, most notably Petar Krstić and Vladimir Slatin (1930–1937), followed by Mihailo Vukdragović and Vojislav Vučković (1937–1940), constantly tried to improve and change certain aspects of folk music presentation, by diversifying the form and content of radio broadcasts dedicated to this type of music.

Already in 1929 Lovro Matačić, the music editor-in-chief, set foundations for the general concept of presentation of folk music that would remain constant until the beginning of World War Two, with very slight modifications. He established the following ways of presenting it on the radio: 1. folk songs with piano accompaniment performed live in the studio by the singers from the opera and drama departments of the National Theatre, 2. folk songs with piano accompaniment sung live in the studio by the popular “kafana” (tavern) singers, 3. instrumental folk music performed by soloists on traditional folk instruments (live in the studio), 4. instrumental folk music performed by small or large ensembles of well-known tavern musicians or folk music amateurs (live in the studio), 5. direct broadcasts of the musicians’ live performances from Belgrade taverns, 6. folk music played from the long play records released by “Edison Bell Penkala”, “HMV” and “Odeon”.

An overview of the folk music programs during Matačić’s editorship reveals that the most common ways of presenting folk music were live broadcasts of performances of small orchestras, either from the studio or from various taverns and restaurants. These were occasionally joined by singers from the National Theatre or amateur singers, while the soloists’ performances and singing with piano accompaniment were much less common. Several ensembles performed regularly: the orchestras led by Ante Grujić (The Orchestra of Serbian Gypsies) and Steva Nikolić (The Gypsy Orchestra), the Todorić–Milenković Ensemble, the Tambura Orchestra of Students from Vojvodina. The soloist who performed regularly was an accordion player Milanče Dimitrijević (also known as Milanče Cincarče, “the little Tsintsar”). Ante Grujić’s orchestra played regularly within the show called “Peasants’ Hour”, which aired on Sunday afternoons; that was the only regular time slot for this type of music. Other types of folk music performances did not have regular time slots.

During the years of Krstić's editorship the representation of the aforementioned types of folk music was shifting constantly, which was followed by other changes. For example, the period of Krstić's editorship was characterised by the desire to gradually lower the number of folk songs played from LP records, in favor of studio performances and live broadcasts. Compared to the period of relative balance between the amount of recorded music and the music performed live (1930–1933), starting from 1934 live performances and broadcasts were given much more space. Moreover, compared to the first few years of Krstić's editorship, in the period between 1934 and 1936 one could notice a diminishing number of solo performances on traditional folk instruments in favor of the performances by singers and orchestras.³ A tendency to insist on live music performances continued during Vukdragović's era, however he did reintroduce the soloists on traditional music instruments, who had all but disappeared from radio programs during the last few years of Krstić's activity.⁴

Several novelties introduced into the folk music broadcasts during the first twelve years of Radio Belgrade's activity had a long-lasting impact. These included introduction of songs performed with orchestral accompaniment and giving an opportunity to perform to a large number of young and talented singers, in order to increase the quality of performances of folk songs. In

³ For example, in 1931 the following musicians performed live in the studio: Aleksandar Fesenko (accordion), Vaso Punošević from Njeguši (gusli), Dragoljub Jovanović (bagpipes), Jovan Tebaković (gusli), Joca Crvenko from Krstur (accordion), Žika Mali (violin), Lazar Nolić from Perlez (accordion), Milan Barjaktarević (gusli), Milanče Dimitrijević Cincarčev (accordion), Milan Petrov (accordion), Milosavljević (accordion), M. Vuković (gusli), Rada Šamovac (accordion), P. Jovanović-Petruš (accordion), Sima Tarabak from Begej (bagpipes), Slavomir Živković-Moravac (accordion). On the other hand, in 1934 only a few players on traditional instruments had the opportunity to perform live: Arkadije Terzin (accordion), Dragoljub Jovanović (bagpipes), Mile Jelić from Ljutica (accordion) and Pavle Nikolić (cymbal).

⁴ A sheer number and diversity of soloists on traditional instruments during Vukdragović's era testifies to the renewed interest in this type of performance. The following musicians performed in 1939: Aleksandar Milošević (accordion), Bora Savić (accordion), Vlada Sretenović (*frula*), Voja Trifunović (accordion), Vujica Čebac (bagpipes), Dragoljub Jovanović (bagpipes), Jovan Antonijević (gusli), J. Gavrilović (accordion), Ljubinko Jovanović (accordion), Milan Buzin (zither), Miodrag Mihailović (accordion), Naum Dedijer (gusli), Rafailo Blam (accordion), Radojka Tomić (accordion), Sima Taraban (bagpipes), Stanislav Jevtić (accordion), Živan Irić (*frula*) etc al.

1933 the Tambura Radio Orchestra led by Aleksandar Aranicki (later renamed as the Tambura Radio Orchestra) became a regular ensemble, which helped increase the diversity and dynamism of radio broadcasts. Similar tendencies continued during Vukdragović's rule, however, the number of tavern singers and amateur singers increased remarkably, compared to the number of performances by the opera singers and singers from the National Theatre.⁵

Aside from the changes in the amount of radio hours allocated to certain types of folk music, another change took place in the 1930s, namely, introduction of various types of presentation of folk music. As the head of music program, Krstić introduced several radio shows with an aim to showcase folk music singers, players and ensembles from various Yugoslav regions: "Serbian Evening", "Macedonian Evening", "Vojvodina Hour", "South Serbian Hour", "Šumadija Hour", "Niš Hour" etc.⁶ Such shows aired occasionally, except for the show "Serbian Evening" which was a regular part of radio program in 1935 and 1936, due to the fact that it was clearly formatted and presented. This complex show, fronted by Sima and Lela Begović, both notable performers and collectors of musical folklore, encompassed live performances by tavern singers and instrumentalists, opera singers, amateur musicians and various ensembles. A similar format was kept during Vukdragović's rule, with shows such as "Folk Evening" and "Skadarlija Evening". These shows relied on the radio ensembles such as the Folk Radio Orchestra and Tambura Radio Orchestra, and a host of singers and instrumentalists specializing in performing songs and dances from almost all parts of Yugoslavia.

Some of the most important breakthroughs were made when Vukdragović was in charge of folk music program, initially as an editor (1936), and then as the Head of Music (1937–1940). These included a clearer profile of folk music shows and an allocation of fixed time slots; an extensive search

⁵ For example, in 1938 the folk music program on Radio Belgrade showcased over 70 amateur singers and tavern singers, in comparison to five singers from the National Theater. In 1939 this disbalance was even more obvious, with over 90 amateurs and tavern singers compared to only two singers from the National Theatre.

⁶ The parameter of the region of origin of folk material was crucial in establishing many shows dedicated to the performances of folk songs such as "Pesme iz Šumadije" [*Songs from Šumadija*], "Narodne pesme iz Vojvodine" [*Folk songs from Vojvodina*] (1931), "Crnogorske pesme" [*Songs from Montenegro*] (1932), "Bosanske pesme" [*Songs from Bosnia*] (1939) etc.

for talented performers; and, last but not least, activities aimed towards establishing artistic criteria that would govern the choice of repertoire and improve the quality of performances (Vukdragović 1983).⁷ For example, in 1937 he introduced regular shows dedicated to accordion and bagpipes (“Folk music for accordion”, “Folk music for bagpipes”), then, to instrumental folk music (“Folk Show”), as well as vocal music with orchestral accompaniment (the Folk Radio Orchestra and Tambura Radio Orchestra). These shows constituted the core of this segment of radio program for several years, i.e. until the change of the editorial team in the second half of 1940. Furthermore, starting from 1936 the radio organized regular auditions for singers and instrumentalists, in order to provide talented individuals with an opportunity to perform for the broad auditoria of radio listeners, but also to increase the overall quality of folk music performances.⁸

Aesthetical and ideological positions of the music directors of Radio Belgrade and their role in the symbolic delineation of musical folklore

While it is possible to reconstruct Mihailo Vukdragović’s approach to the folk music program on Radio Belgrade, due to the fact that both his memoirs (Vukdragović 1983) and the comments and reviews written by his collaborators and published in Radio’s weekly magazine have been preserved, Petar Krstić’s position is more difficult to discern. Still, the fact that both composers had a lot of experience with composition, music pedagogy, performance and criticism before they had been appointed to the positions of music directors in Radio Belgrade indicates that the music policies that they were implementing were a result of already established views on the local and global tendencies in music production and the different aspects of music

⁷ In designing the folk music program of Radio Belgrade Vukdragović was, by his own admission, greatly assisted by Branko Čobanić, whom he named the correspondent for folk music in 1937. Because of Čobanić’s extraordinary knowledge on folk music, Vukdragović gave him the freedom to create folk music program following certain norms (Vukdragović 1983: 63–64).

⁸ On the auditions for folk music performers see: „Први кораци” [First steps], *Радио Београд*, 19 April 1936, 7; „Аудиције пред микрофоном” [Auditions in front of the microphone], *Радио Београд*, 27 August 1939, 3.

practices that existed in Belgrade after the World War One. Accordingly, it is important to point to Krstić's and Vukdragović's understanding of music as a social and aesthetic phenomenon, since it influenced how both these composers understood, interpreted and evaluated Serbian folk music.

Although they belonged to ideologically opposed factions – Krstić was a representative of a conservative current that advocated the continuity with the national and Romantic conception of music creation developed in the late nineteenth century,⁹ while Vukdragović was close to the leftist circle that promoted the application of the principles of socialist realism in music including the amalgamation of local folk music, Western tonal system and vocal-instrumental or multimedia music genres (Vesić 2012: 37–44) – it did not create large differences in their understanding of folk music. Despite the fact that these two factions had conflicting political, cultural, and artistic “worldviews”, with different criteria for evaluation of particular music genres, composers, styles and practices, both composers advocated the preservation and cultivation of folk musical practices in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. This included systematic collection, theoretical interpretation and popularization of folk music, but also its employment for the purpose of revitalising art music. While the wider political and cultural goals that governed their approach to folklore were significantly different, the methods and principles that they applied to research and artistic transformation of folk music were very similar. The possible explanation for this can be found in the common musical, aesthetical and compositional background of these antagonistically oriented factions. Despite the fact that both groups held critical views on the Western art music practice and its main compositional and sound patterns and genre conventions, they still relied upon the Western tonal system, instruments, musical idioms, compositional procedures, sound material and aesthetic norms.

⁹ The different creative positions in the domain of music, discernible at the beginning of the twentieth century, were a result of the differences of opinions regarding, on the one hand, the understanding of the role of folk music material in art music, and, on the other hand, the absorption of musical modernism. I have argued that there were four dominant factions, with several sub-factions (Vesić 2007). Thus, Petar Krstić shared his artistic beliefs with the likes of Stanislav Binički, Božidar Joksimović and Kosta Manojlović, who advocated the continuation of principles established by Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac, resulting in a national style based on Romantic premises.

Their dependance on Western concepts of music and musical thinking manifested itself in the fact that the adherents of these supposedly opposed factions applied a similar methodology of research and popularization of folk music.

In the realm of music both the conservative and leftist groups in Serbia and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia shared a common Western musical and aesthetic basis that served as a framework in the processes of understanding, appropriation and expansion of local folk music. Additionally, both groups actualized the concept of authenticity in similar ways. The concept of folk music as a separate musical practice that should be clearly differentiated from its “distorted” or “degenerated” versions emerged among the Serbian composers and music experts at the end of the nineteenth century¹⁰ and gained many followers among the musicians of both leftist and conservative orientations in the period between the two world wars. The importance of this concept for establishing the assessment criteria for folk music, but also in the modalities of its definition and application, shows many parallels between the members of these allegedly opposing factions. For instance, both conservatives and left-

¹⁰ Emphasizing the distinction between the authentic folk music and its inadequate versions started with the generation of composers who were active at the end of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century. Among them the most prominent were Stevan Mokranjac and Isidor Bajić and also Petar Konjović and Miloje Milojević. One of the first authors who reflected on that phenomenon in detail was Isidor Bajić. In his address to the Congress of Hungarian players, composers and music teachers in 1901 which was later published in the magazine *Бранково коло* [*Branko's round dance*] (Бајић 1902) he observed the following: “One of the obstacles to discovering our true folk melodies lied in the fact that the the songs known worldwide as the Serbian folk songs were either non-authentic or the distorted variants. For instance, I will refer to the well-known song ‘Без тебе драга’ [*Without you my precious*] that you may assume is a fine example of Serbian songs. But that song, let me say, is not a Serbian song at all, its melody has nothing in common with typical Serbian melody! Therefore, whoever wants to comprehend our folk tunes ought not to focus on the melodies of those Serbs whose music was highly influenced by the music of other ethnicities and should observe the melodies of the Serbs that bear no trace of foreign impact exclusively, because these ones are truly authentic Serbian melodies; only those melodies can faithfully manifest the spiritual life and musical gift of the Serbian people” (Бајић 1902: 242). As an example of the authentic Serbian music, Bajić pointed to the folk material that was collected and artistically transformed by the composer Stevan Mokranjac. His classification of folk music to two categories (authentic / non-authentic) using the criterion of authenticity became very influential, especially among the younger generations of Serbian composers and music experts who inclined toward the so-called national style between two world wars. The given classification had significant role not only in the process of their creative work, but also in the process of popularization of folk music.

ists tried to point to the necessity of distinguishing the “true” folk music either from its unacceptable forms of manifestation, or other types of music created through different activities (music production, music criticism, pedagogy, public debating, cultural work etc.). In this regard, it is important to observe the tendency to define the concept of authentic folk music by marking off the music phenomena that could *not* be related to it.

Of special importance is the fact that the so-called salon music that could contain some elements of musical folklore (specific intervals, rhythmical structures or scales) was considered inappropriate to be categorized as authentic folk music because it did not conform to the norm of anonymous authorship; moreover, it and was influenced by the musical patterns of foreign origin that were applied in a stereotypical manner. In the process of exclusion of the salon music pieces from the family of authentic folk musical practices and artifacts, two distinct criteria have been significant, one that originated from the high-art music aesthetics and the other one from the discipline of Folkloristics. The ideas of collective (unknown / anonymous) authorship as well as the manifest ethnical distinctions in music were taken from the folkloristic research, while the classification of music genres, styles and compositional methods was borrowed from music aesthetics. The same theoretical construct promoted a strict distinction between the salon type of stylization of folk music and the artistic type that was believed to be embedded in the proper interpretation of aesthetic, expressive and sound qualities of folk material through the application of divergent compositional methods. Although the perspectives of composers on the problem of artistic stylization of folk music differed enormously especially if we consider their views on the selection of compositional methods and types of music discourse regarded as proper in the given process (for instance, part of them insisted on the Romantic music basis, but the others showed the affinity toward the Neoclassicistic or Expressionistic models), there are some common threads that can be perceived.

Actually, it is the approach to the folk music material not only as a musical artifact, but also as an incarnation of the psychological characteristics of the ethnic group to whom it belonged that was shared by the composers of conflicting ideological viewpoints. This approach was thoroughly elaborated

by Miloje Milojević in his article “Artistic stylization of our folk melodies using the modern compositional methods” [„Уметничка обрада наших народних мелодија помоћу модерних техничких средстава”] (Милојевић 1933). Milojević opposed the so called “Classicistic” approach to folklore that manifested itself, in his opinion, in the “conventional harmonizations of folk melodies and folk dances” (Милојевић 1933: 21), propagating instead its more profound and comprehensive overview. It should be established through the endeavor of composer to “trace the emotional momentum that inspired the peasant and to emphasize with it in order to recognize the same momentum in his own soul”, and then “guided by the folk melody, inscribe in it all complex, emotional accents of his own, more elaborate and layered artistic intuition” (1933: 22). Similar views were held by the composers of the leftist circle except for the idea of the prominence that should be given to discovering the common thread between composer’s consciousness and the collective, folk spirit (*Volksgeist*) or his psychic resonance with the ethnic group it belongs to. These composers focused on the social class dimensions instead of ethnic dimensions of folk music (compare with Живковић 1933; Živković 1934; Markovac 1957: 34–58).

The styles of performance of folk music popular in the boroughs and towns of that time which were based on the fusion of vernacular musics from different regions and on the extremely virtuosic and embellished stylization of music material were considered equally inappropriate as salon music concerning the departures from the authentic folk music tradition. The distastefulness of these types of creative transformations of folk music was emphasized mostly by the composers and music experts close to the leftist circle. For example, Josip Slavenski, Vojislav Vučković and Mihailo Vukdragović, each in their own way, commented on the detrimental effects of these practices to the preservation of authentic forms and sounds of local folk music.¹¹

¹¹ Mihailo Vukdragović’s views on folk music were presented in his article “Музички живот Београда тих година” [*Musical life in Belgrade of that period*] which is a part of two volume edition *Београд у сећањима: 1930–1941* [*Belgrade in memories, 1930–1941*] that contains testimonies of the key figures in cultural and political life of the capital of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (Вукдраговић 1983). Among other things, Vukdragović remarked that “folk music on

Exclusion of salon music based on the elements of folk music from the concept of “authentic folk music” as well as aforementioned performance practices popular in urban areas had a crucial role in the process of its definition. However, in spite of a consensus between the adherents of both conservative and leftist factions on what should *not* be regarded as authentic folk music, there was an apparent disensus with respect to what *should* be included within its conceptual frame. There was a noticeable lack of precise criteria that would have enabled firmer separation of authentic from non-authentic forms of folk music in the discourse of both conservatives and leftists. Without these criteria, the possibility of establishing the boundary between “proper” and “improper” types of folk musical practices was questionable. There was an obvious fusion of epistemologically incompatible parameters, for instance, the ones that emerged from the ethnonationalistic concepts of culture and music, which pointed to the possibility of perceiving ethnic qualities in formal and spiritual dimensions of music, with the ones that originated from aesthetical norms of art music which included the notions of originality, peculiarity, uniqueness, sublimeness etc. As a result of this, the concept of authentic folk music was ambiguous and changeable and so was the definition of what the folk music of specific ethnic groups actually represented.

The fact that in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia folk musical practices from urban and rural areas came in contact with various popular music genres and the “profane” and “serious” forms of art music falling under their influence, rendered the designation of authentic folk music even more complicated. Apart

the radio perceived from aesthetical, social and ideological aspects, has its significance either as an authentic sound picture from the field where it originated or as artistically transformed creation with absolute respect of its original form. All other versions of it, like the so called improvised practice that is influenced by foreign vernacular music – Gypsy-Oriental one or urban, leads toward the annihilation of the indigenous expression” (Вукдраговић 1983: 64). Close to Vukdragović’s notions on the necessity of preservation of authentic sound of folk music and marginalization of its “distorted” forms stood the composer Josip Slavenski whose harsh criticism of the popular styles of performance of folk music in interwar period was published in a weekly *Радио Београд*. While evaluating in an affirmative way the efforts of (at that moment) the correspondent for the folk music program on Radio Belgrade, Mihailo Vukdragović, Vojislav Vučković observed the following: “On the folk music program we cannot hear anymore the *Gypsy-like distortions* (Italic by I.V.) even when the very banal songs are performed [...] or when the artificial accompaniment is not on the proper artistic and technical level [...] or when the orchestra resembles the types of ensembles typical for taverns” (Вучковић 1936).

from the music experts from Radio Belgrade, the consumers and performers of folk music played an important part in this process. Because of the discrepancy of the interests of consumers and performers in the field of folk music with the interests of composers and experts, their attitude towards this type of music was irreconcilable with the perspectives of music professionals.

The obscurity of boundaries of folk music between the conservative and leftist factions became apparent in the process of creation of folk music program in Radio Belgrade including the selection of the repertoire, singers, players, ensembles and types of performances or, precisely, in the extended disagreement on the presumed qualities that certain music material, style of performance or vocal and instrumental interpretation must possess in order to be seemed as appropriate for broadcasting. The conflict emerged among the music experts, listeners and musicians due to their incompatible perspectives not only on the choice of repertoire, but also on the standards of interpretation. Although its indirect outcome was the fluidity of the boundaries of folk music, it was not the effect that those groups were striving for. On the contrary, their primary aim was to erect the boundaries by grounding them in the specific aesthetic and ideological premises.

The role of music directors and their collaborators in the process of boundary construction pertained to a realization of the aforementioned understanding of folk music as equal to authentic musical folklore. This was achieved by the shaping of the repertoire and its materialization in sound, notwithstanding the limitations that were set by the musical preferences of the listeners, the tendencies in the realm of performance practices and the financial resources available to the radio station. Several important phenomena could be observed during the editorship of Krstić and Vukdragović. Firstly, there was a need for a clear distinction between the “authentic” folk music, on the one hand, and on the artistic stylization of folk music or artistic creations based on folklore elements, on the other hand. In the published program of the Radio Belgrade, the music of the Yugoslav composers inspired by folk material or the artistically stylized folk music pieces were separated from the performances of folk music. Secondly, there was an evident predominance of the urban types of folk music compared to the rural ones. This ratio can be

observed throughout the period of both Krstić's and Vukradović's reigns, with the exception of the more systematic approach of Vukdragović and his team to the inclusion of musical practices typical for rural areas in the folk music program. This was achieved starting from 1938 by means of an introduction of regular performances of players on traditional instruments (*frula*, bagpipes, accordion) in the shows known as "Emisija za narod" [*Show for the people*], "Narodna muzika na gajdama" [*Folk music on bagpipes*], "Narodna muzika na harmonici i gajdama" [*Folk music on accordion and bagpipes*] and "Narodna muzika na harmonici" [*Folk music on accordion*]. The older types of folk musical practices such as the performing on *gusli* were rarely represented in the program of Radio Belgrade – on average, only several times per year.

Considering the standards of performance in the folk music program, it is possible to observe specific trends during the periods of Krstić's and Vukdragović's directorship. Unlike the earliest period of Radio Belgrade broadcasting (until 1931) when the folk music was normally taken over by the opera singers accompanied by the pianists, as time went by the amateur-singers started to dominate the program, while the types of instrumental accompaniment evolved. Except for the continual increase in the number of amateur-singers during the 1930s, there was also a more consistent approach to the instrumental segment of the performances of folk music through the incorporation of the orchestral ensembles of different types (since 1934). Moreover, the specialized radio orchestras were founded for that purpose and, gradually two full-time radio ensembles – the Folk Radio Orchestra and the Tambura Radio Orchestra of Aleksandar Aranicki gained special prominence.¹² These ensembles accompanied the singers and performed instrumental folk music.

¹² During the 1934 the performances of amateur singers were accompanied by the orchestras of Duško Popaz, Milan Urošević and the radio's Folk orchestra, while in 1935 they were joined by the Orchestra of Sima Begović and the Orchestra of Mandolins. The following year (1936) the accompaniment was provided regularly by the Folk Radio Orchestra and the Orchestra of Sima Begović, and from 1937 on the Tambura Radio Orchestra of Aleksandar Aranicki was also added. Since 1938 the orchestral accompaniment in folk music program of Radio Belgrade involved only two ensembles – the aforementioned Tambura Radio Orchestra and Folk Radio Orchestra.

Concurrently with the inclination towards a more “authentic” profile of folk music, the Radio Belgrade officials also worked towards increasing the standards of interpretation in that segment. This crystallization led to tightening the process of selection of singers and players; it culminated in the period of Vukdragović’s leadership with the introduction of regular auditions before a jury consisting of music experts and the initiation of professional collaboration with performers with an aim to regulate the stylistic aspects of interpretation.¹³ It is not known whether the same kind of collaboration existed during Krstić’s period, but it is possible that the ideal of setting a high standard for the performances of folk music, typical for art music including the exceptional technical capability of performers, an emphasis on virtuosity and expressivity, avoidance of mannerism etc., persisted for a long time. The accomplishment of this goal depended on the available financial and organizational resources and the consistency of policies promoted by the music directors and their teams. Vukdragović and his colleagues demonstrated a higher affinity towards structuring the folk music program in a systematic manner compared to Krstić and his music experts; still, it is not possible to speak of drastic discontinuities and transformations.

¹³ In his published memoirs (Вукдраговић 1983), Vukdragović pointed to the problem of the quality of interpretation of folk music on Radio Belgrade during his leadership. Among other things, he noticed the following: “there were male and female singers who performed improvised folk music with taste. Speaking about the orchestras and their accompaniment of the vocal soloists, the brilliant technical mastery of the Tambura Radio Orchestra with its fascinating harmonic and poliphonic support of the vocal parts contrasted enormously to the monotonous and, at times, harmonically dubious performance of the Folk Radio Orchestra. His conductor and director Vlastimir Pavlović-Carevac was a very skillful player of our *kolos* and that was his greatest achievement.” (1983: 64). Vukdragović was very proud of the interpretative skills of the Tambura Radio Orchestra and the work of its conductor and director Aleksandar Aranicki, supporting his judgement with the appraisal of Czech composer Karel Jirak made during his visit of Radio Belgrade: “He nodded with suspicion while listening to Carevac and Folk Radio Orchestra (he liked the interpretation of one *kolo* both in terms of its tune and the Carevac’s masterful performance). But the tambura players left him in awe. ‘I have never heard anything similar in my life. They are truly inspired masters – the virtuosos of their music’” (1983: 64). Summing up his memories on the establishment of folk music program on Radio Belgrade Vukdragović underlined that, during his directorship, the great improvements “were made in the quality of folk music broadcasts” which included the “elimination of some rough distortions of the folk tunes” and the advancement of the performances of the Folk Radio Orchestra through the installment of “more neat and precise accompaniment of the soloists” (1983: 64).

Regardless of the aspiration towards a more disciplined and consistent approach to folk music program that characterized Vukdragović's team, it is important to note that both teams were very limited in their actions concerning the promotion of the authentic folk music towards the artistic level of performance. This was due to the fact that Radio Belgrade was a privately owned company until 1940 and, thus, it depended on the number of subscribers and their musical needs and choices. The tastes of the radio consumers and their affinities towards certain genres of folk music and certain performance styles collided with the intentions of expert teams to establish the high aesthetical and performance standards for folk music program and to define folk music in a strict manner. Hence, despite their determination to reform the Radio Belgrade's folk music program, even Vukdragović and his collaborators had to make concessions to the tastes of radio listeners.

*Preferences of the listeners of radio belgrade
concerning the folk music program*

During the first years of Radio Belgrade broadcasts, the management of this radio station only had informal insight into the listeners' opinions on the quality of music program and the possible ways to improve it. The insight was based on the telephone or written accounts of the listeners addressed to the radio editors in which they expressed their views on the music program. Considering the reports from the radio weekly (*Радио Београд*), the listeners used to comment on the quality of the sound transmission of Belgrade's radio station, but also on the quality of music shows including the ones dedicated to folk music. Apart from the judgements of anonymous consumers that were published occasionally in both popular or more expert-oriented press, there are many published accounts written by music experts of that time who were devoted to the analysis and evaluation of the music program of Radio Belgrade.

The regular and more comprehensive research of the listeners' music preferences started at 1934, when the radio station management initiated the first pilot survey. In the first issue of the radio's weekly in 1934 the subscribers

were invited to participate in the survey by filling a form that consisted of the questions about “the radio shows that they prefer to listen to, their interests, the type of program they would like to hear, the program that is overrepresented or underrepresented”; they were also asked to include their general remarks and recommendations (Nikolić 2006: 72). The aim of this survey was to obtain more information on the needs and affinities of radio listeners in order to adapt the form and content of radio program to their preferences. Thus, the management of radio station acknowledged their aspiration to shape the program in accordance with the taste of consumers; it was probably part of the strategy to increase the number of subscribers and the popularity of radio shows.

In December 1934, during the exhibition at the Belgrade’s Fair, radio officials organized a small-scale survey with 400 respondents, while at the end of 1936 they conducted a massive survey with 60.000 questionnaires sent to subscribers by mail. Despite the fact that these surveys had some methodological deficiencies – for instance, they were not modeled on the up-to-date statistical sample techniques, they took into consideration only the opinions of the subscription holders which were mostly the male members of family, and the majority of questionnaires were left unanswered – the acquired data enabled the more detailed insight into the popularity of certain types of music, music genres or music shows.

The surveys pointed to many important tendencies considering the preferences of the listeners of Radio Belgrade’s folk music program. First of all, the popularity of the live broadcasting from the taverns among the listeners was enormous throughout the 1930s. Apart from that, the results of the 1936 survey showed a great affinity for the show “Srpsko veče” [*Serbian evening*], as compared to the shows such as “Narodno veče” [*Folk evening*], “Šareno veče” [*Medley evening*] and “Boemsko/Skadarlijsko veče” [*Bohemian/Skadarlija evening*] (Anonymous 1937). At the same time, the consumers expressed lesser interest in the artistically stylized folk music, performances of folk songs with the piano accompaniment and the performances on bagpipes or gusli.

Testimonies of the radio officials from the interwar period confirm the results of the surveys concerning the habits and needs of the consumers of

folk music program. For example, in the Radio Belgrade's tenth anniversary memorial book (*Споменица*) published in 1938 the following account can be found:

“Improvised urban folk music (the so-called *sevdalinka*) was the most popular music genre since the inception of Radio Belgrade. At that time, and even more so today, it represented one of the most problematic parts of our music program. Including the *sevdalinka* in Radio Belgrade's music shows was, undoubtedly, a result of a great concession to the largest strata of radio consumers. The effects of this inclusion could not be foreseen at that time in the light of its later expansion within the program, not to mention the difficulties the officials faced in order to elevate this improvised folk music to the level where its music qualities, at the same time primitive and artistic would become acceptable for the standards of radio program” (Вукдраговић 1983: 63).

Except for the great popularity of urban folk songs on the Radio Belgrade during the interwar period, the account quoted above also points to the collision between the taste of the average radio listeners and the aspirations of radio experts, and the effect that this collision had on the process of creation of music program. It confirms the assumption that music directors made many compromises, but also reveals that at the core of the process of “meeting half-way” with the listeners there stood the idea of elevating the existing folk musical practices to the high artistic standards.

Both these quotes from the Radio Belgrade's anniversary book and the results of the surveys stress the importance of understanding the role of the listeners in shaping the music program. According to the insights of Radio Belgrade's music directors and music experts, the folk music program would probably have had a completely different form and content, had the radio officials not been forced to take into consideration the opinions of the consumers. Had it not been so, it is likely that the popular folk musical practices of that time such as the music from taverns, would have disappeared from the radio program, while the artistic stylization of folk music material would have dominated the program. This scenario was hoped for by Mihailo Vukdragović

as well as some commentators who expressed their opinions on the program of Radio Belgrade in the published press. Vukdragović's ideal was to gradually eliminate the so-called improvised folk music and to replace it with the artistic stylization of folk music "with a wide range of possible arrangements from the simplest, but artistically skillful ones to the most complex" (Вукдраговић 1983: 65). The same aspirations were shared by certain anonymous music critics who wondered whether folk songs were "more interesting in the harmonizations and stylizations of Mokranjac, Milojević, Manojlović, Konjović, Gotovac, Odak, Grgošević, Papandopulo" and other Yugoslav composers or in the form of "distastefully selected and primitively arranged examples, based on the simplest chord progressions and conventional instrumentation, combining the string and wind parts with the overwhelming droning sound of double-bass" (Radio amater [Radio amateur] 1935: 69–70).

Conclusion

The process of construction of symbolic boundaries in the fields of music and culture, analyzed here by focusing on the example of the process of establishment of the folk music program on Radio Belgrade, was a complex social phenomenon that included: 1. the elaboration of the concept of authentic folk music in the expert circles, 2. the utilization of the new mediuma (radio) as an instrument for cultural emancipation of lower strata, 3. the hostility of music experts towards the taste of the masses, 4. the overview of different musical practices through the prism of art music and its aesthetical norms. Fusing these phenomena led to an antagonism between diverse discourses, norms, worldviews, protagonists and institutions; this, in turn, created the basis for the symbolic demarcation of folk music as authentic practice in aesthetical and ideological terms, analogous to the art music but originating from the masses.

The process of symbolic delienation of folk music was characterized by the clashes of music experts and consumers on the one hand, and experts and musicians on the other hand, resulting in the boundaries of this type of music being constantly redefined. The fact that Radio Belgrade had a dual

role in the cultural life of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia – both emancipatory and entertaining – but the balance between these roles was constantly shifting throughout the period between two world wars, further complicated the position of music directors and their collaborators who needed to impose certain aesthetic views upon listeners and musicians. Unlike them, the listeners and musicians perceived folk music as a medium for entertainment, pleasure and material profit.

The effects of the process of symbolic delineation of folk music through radio practices in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia seem important not only in the context of trends in the fields of music and culture of that time, but also in the period after World War Two. The shaping of the folk music program on Radio Belgrade in its first twelve years of existence established a model for all succeeding creators of this type of program due to the fact that, for the first time, the views of music experts came closely in contact with the living tradition and with the attitudes of consumers. This, in turn, clearly exposed the problems surrounding the implementation of the idea of emancipation of masses and their musical tastes. Moreover, it is impossible to overlook the influence of repertorial and performance standards of folk music set on Radio Belgrade in the interwar period on the subsequent developments in that field, especially in the light of the fact that many music experts continued to work there after the end of the World War Two.¹⁴

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¹⁴ For example, Mihailo Vukdragović renewed his contract with Radio Belgrade in 1946.

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РАДИО БЕОГРАД У ПРОЦЕСУ КРЕИРАЊА СИМБОЛИЧКИХ
ГРАНИЦА: СЛУЧАЈ ПРОГРАМА НАРОДНЕ МУЗИКЕ У ПЕРИОДУ
ИЗМЕЂУ ДВА СВЕТСКА РАТА (1929–1940)

(Резиме)

У овом раду разматраћемо процес креирања симболичких граница у контексту обликовања програма народне музике на Радио Београду од његовог оснивања до почетка Другог светског рата. Детаљним увидом у музички садржај емитован на Радио Београду, а потом и у текстове о народној музици објављене у радијском недељнику (*Радио Београд*), те у постојећу мемоарску грађу, покушаћемо да издвојимо чиниоце и механизме који су имали кључну улогу приликом дефинисања граница народне музике, указујући на њихов шири социокултурни и социополитички значај. Том приликом анализираћемо делање различитих уредничких тимова до Другог светског рата, а уједно ћемо се осврнути и на културне преференције претплатника и слушалаца Радио Београда. Укрштајући специфичне естетске, политичке и економске позиције радијских уредника и стручњака који су учествовали у стварању програма народне музике са позицијама слушалаца и, делимично, извођача, покушаћемо да истакнемо како се одвијао процес симболичког разграничења народне музике као посебног ентитета, дистинктивног у односу на висоуметничку и популарну (комерцијалну) музичку праксу, и уједно, на специфичан начин постављеног у односу на фолклорну.

