Ideologies of Love at Concerts: Yugoslav Popular Music on Post-Yugoslav Stages

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INTRODUCTION: THE AFTERLIFE OF YUGOSLAV POPULAR MUSIC

In this article I deal with the ways Yugoslav popular music serves as a means for producing ideologies of love at concerts in the post-Yugoslav era. Less than a decade after the dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1991, several musicians from the territory of the former country gradually started giving concerts in Belgrade, the capital of the former country. Most of them had been quite popular in Serbia and most of them continued to perform there regularly after 2000; they included the singers Kemal Monteno, Boris Novković, Goran Karan, Massimo Savić, and Josipa Lisac, and groups such as Crvena Jabuka, Hari Mata Hari, and Magazin.

There were also many musicians who adamantly refused to perform in Serbia after the wars, the most well-known of them being

Oliver Dragojević, Tereza Kesovija and Dino Merlin. However, Tereza Kesovija and Dino Merlin decided to perform in Belgrade in 2011, thus provoking new reactions, especially in the nationalistic discourse, which was particularly (but not only) evident in the case of the supporters of Serbian extremist groups. The concerts were even classified as high-risk events. The reactions against these particular musicians were prompted due to both of them having supposedly promoted hate discourse against Serbs, since they were both directly affected by the war.[1]

Furthermore, some of the first comeback concerts provoked emotional reactions, most commonly of a nostalgic and Yugo-nostalgic nature. There were also a few concerts that included a significant number of performers and produced a moderate but clearly expressed (Yugo)nostalgic atmosphere, such as the concert in honour of Đorđe Novković, which I will discuss below.[2]

This article puts forward the thesis that audience experience is a relevant and appropriate part of certain musical events.[3] It draws on research that shows how the perception of the audience's role has changed. Instead of the understanding of the audience's role as being mostly passive, recent research has acknowledged that the audience also contributes to the production of the atmosphere[4] and the meaning of certain events (Petrov 2015a, 2016). Setting out to prove the thesis about the relevance of the audience experience, this article is based on research done through participant observation at popular music concerts in Serbia, in addition to discourse analysis of the press relating to particular events. Drawing on the recent tendencies

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1 Tereza Kesovija's house near Dubrovnik was ruined during the bombing of the city by the Yugoslav People's Army, while Dino was a participant in the war conflicts in Sarajevo (for more on this issue see Petrov 2016).

2 Among the performers, one specific musician profile has drawn the attention of the Serbian audience – musicians from Dalmatia whose music is recognized as "typically Dalmatian". This kind of pop music regularly elicits positive reactions relating to universal categories (love, the past, youth, and summer), and also can trigger specific Yugo-nostalgic recollections of the past. Two kinds of concerts of this sort have been held in Belgrade in the twenty-first century: those clearly labelled as Dalmatian, such as the "Evenings of Dalmatian songs", and those given by various singers from Dalmatia (Petrov 2015b).

3 In dealing with the musical event I draw on this concept as defined in Tia DeNora's approach – as an event that is equivalent to the concept of the social event in social theory (DeNora 2003).

4 Drawing on Teresa Brennan's concept of "affective atmosphere", I also want to point to the types of networking in the discourses on certain kinds of music, and the affective atmospheres produced through this networking. According to Brennan, atmosphere is the same as "environment" and it literally "gets into the individual" – something becomes present that was not there before, but it did not originate *sui generis*: it was not generated solely or sometimes even in part by the individual organism or its genes (Brennan 2004: 1).

in cultural studies, and especially memory studies, collective memory studies, and social memory studies, I wanted to identify the ways in which Yugoslav popular music is intertwined with ideologies of love in post-Yugoslav space and time. It is of crucial importance to emphasise that the concept of ideology is not considered as a hegemonic discursive narrative that is reflected in a society. Rather, ideology is here understood as a practice of producing everyday life by all agents in a society. With this in mind, this article probes the ways a certain ideology (here the ideology of love) shapes musical practices, and it addresses the issue of networking the concepts of love, Yugoslav music, and memories relating to the Yugoslav past. The audience is analysed as an entity which is capable of producing ostensibly intimate feelings and making them common and public. In this regard, I follow Sara Ahmed's approach to the analysis of emotions. She sees emotions as a capacity to secure collectives, through the way in which they read the bodies of others. Emotions that are carried through the body work to align subjects with some others and against others, playing a crucial role in overcoming the boundaries between the individual and collective bodies. Thus, emotions are not considered to be a "private matter", but rather, as Ahmed puts it, they "define the contours of the multiple worlds that are inhabited by different subjects" (Ahmed 2004: 25).

I also want to point to the relevance of the theoretical consideration of the ideological potential of sound in certain cultural politics. In this regard, it is relevant to emphasize that, although it is of great importance, it is not only the regional association that makes this music work as it does. I draw here on research that deals with the ways certain kinds of music sound (supposedly naturally, i.e. due to the characteristics of the music itself) in accordance with their cultural background.[5] In my research, I do not deal (or at least not only) with the ways in which music reflects a particular cultural politics, but rather focus on the productive ideological function of this sort of music, arguing that the common Yugoslav background contributes to the formation of a specific kind of post-Yugoslav collectivities.

From this perspective, I analyse the ways in which the collectivities are made in a specific space, at a certain time, as a result of listening to the same music. The focal question is how the audience is shaped

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5 Geoff Mann showed how "raced sound is surely among the more effectively imposed 'obviousnesses' that constitute ideology's 'effects': there is little in contemporary American popular culture more 'obvious' than the 'colour' of music". Because of the complex cultural and historical background, it is now literally possible to 'hear', as the author asserts, "the blackness of hip-hop or soul, the whiteness of heavy metal or country" (Mann 2008: 77).

through the music and what kind of collective feelings are being produced during the concerts. Furthermore, I address the issue of the role of the concerts in the construction of the sentimental remembrance of the past. In constructing love as a political concept, I also concur with Michael Hardt, who states that a political concept of love would, at the minimum, reorient our political discourses and practices in two important ways. Firstly, it would challenge conventional conceptions that separate the logic of political interests from our affective lives and oppose political reason to the passions. A political concept of love would have to deploy both reason and passion at the same time. Secondly, love is a motor of both transformation and duration or continuity. We lose ourselves in love and open the possibility of a new world, but at the same time love constitutes powerful and lasting bonds (Hardt 2011: 676). With this in mind, I argue here that love is not apolitical and anti-political, but rather a very powerful political force.

More specifically, I address a very specific concept of love – love for the former country. There is a large amount of research on the concept of Yugonostalgia. The most generally accepted thesis regarding this issue goes as follows: the past (Yugoslav) experiences – initially very familiar and strongly felt – are lost, but constantly returning to trouble the stable boundaries, representing something that challenges and resists the (spatial and temporal) dichotomies in the former Yugoslav republics.[6] Even though highly controversial and full of contradictions, the term itself can be in the broadest sense understood as "nostalgia for Yugoslavia" and for the lost "golden age" (Palmberger 2008: 359). I will use it in this connotation, and I will connect it with the issue of (re)producing feelings of love and thus creating new collectivities via the concert venues.[7]

YUGOSLAV POPULAR MUSIC AND LOVE?

The concept of love is very important in the production of the specific atmospheres at the Belgrade concerts. In order to underscore the relevance of the concept, I will single out two symptomatic indicators

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6 Yugonostalgia can be manifested in space (Petrović 2007), time (Volčič 2007, 2009), and people (Bancroft 2009).

7 The role of nostalgia in post-Yugoslav space has been discussed elsewhere, and there are numerous approaches to the concept. I draw here on the authors that understand nostalgia as a phenomenon with emancipatory potencial. See e.g. Velikonja 2009, 2010.

that drew my analytical attention, specifically to the problematization of the types of love (as well as the types of discourses on it) that were made via the concerts. The first symptomatic moment was Tereza Kesovija's statement at a press conference in Belgrade in December 2010:

> [...] it is not right that I have been punishing both those who want to hear me and myself for twenty-five years. I did not want to be punished. There is a cruel time behind all good people. There is no sense in digging through the past and punishing each other. I want to transmit the message of love and peace through song, because love is the most important of all. (Tereza Kesovija 2010)

Another relevant symptomatic statement was made by Doris Dragović on her official Facebook page four days after the concert given in Belgrade, on February 14, 2014:

> It was wonderful, a delightful experience, a meeting with the people that were sending their love directly to my heart. It is precisely because of that kind of pure and honest energy and love that it was worth coming to Belgrade and giving this magical and unforgettable concert. (Dragović 2014)

Two crucial questions are posed when analysing love at popular music concerts: firstly, what kinds of love are being produced through the music at the concerts; and secondly, how is this process possible?

Analysing the concerts given by famous (post)Yugoslav stars in Belgrade (such as Tereza Kesovija, Dino Merlin, Doris Dragović, Gibonni, and others), I concluded that there are narratives of the past according to which the audience experienced the concerts as simply a continuation of the perfect past in Yugoslavia. More specifically, there is also a seemingly neutral concept of love embedded in the memory practices of the Yugoslav past. However, there has also been a tendency, expressed by interlocutors, to ignore the nostalgic references to the former country, both by the performers and among the members of the audience. This refusal of nostalgia is evident in certain concert-goers' tendency to distance themselves from the past by claiming that the music is transcultural, transnational and trans-temporal. The non-nostalgic "loving atmosphere" was produced due to the fact that some of the performers gave concerts on St. Valentine's day, thus promoting the transmission of the message of love and peace, or they clearly referred to supposedly "universal" love produced during the concerts. The following sorts of love were mentioned by the performers and the audience both in the press and at the actual concerts: for the music, the performers, the former country, the past in general, youth, romantic

love or love among friends, as well as "universal" love among all people (for more on the issue see Petrov 2016).

There are two ways of producing the concept of love: the discursive and the affective. That is, the concerts themselves were sometimes labelled as being connected to love (such as Doris Dragović's concerts held on February 14), but there were also examples of this kind of labelling connected with the performers themselves, such as Tereza Kesovija's second solo concert in Belgrade after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, given in 2013 and entitled 'Gdje ima srca tu sam i ja' ('I Am There Where There Is Heart'). On the affective level, certain concerts act as triggers for affective atmospheres, so that the venues themselves can be transformed into the places for emotional reactions and the production of recollections of the past.

Having in mind the above-mentioned ways at which memories and feelings of love can be intertwined, I systematize the emotional charge of the concerts in the following fashion:

1. The concerts as channels for producing (Yugo)nostalgia;
2. The concerts as places for promoting love;
3. The concerts as places for dealing with war trauma and bad recollections from the Yugoslav past;
4. The concerts as places for new beginnings.

In all the above-mentioned categories, these concerts are construed as musical events that offer complex platforms for (emotional) dealing with the contested past. It is relevant to point out that the list of concerts does not imply that the events always appear as examples of one of the groups; rather, they are often mixtures of a few of the listed categories, being simultaneously places of healing and the places for producing some kind of love (romantic, universal, Yugonostalgic etc.).

CASE STUDY: THE CONCERT IN HONOUR OF ĐORĐE NOVKOVIĆ

I will now focus on the concert held in honour of Đorđe Novković, a famous Yugoslav pop music composer.[8] The concert can be taken as a typical example of the first and second concert types listed above:

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8 The analysis presented here is a part of my broader research dealing with the audience issue. See Petrov 2015.

it certainly served as a place for promoting love, namely love for the former country. Held on November 5, 2014 in the prominent Belgrade concert hall Sava centar, it drew a significant media and audience response, and it was sold out, possibly because it included some of the most famous Yugoslav musicians who rarely perform together. As was stated in the press, it was a "meeting of the great musicians from former Yugoslavia" (Ilić 2014),[9] including Boris Novković, Kaliope, Gabi Novak, Tereza Kesovija, Željko Bebek, Vlado Kalember, Tijana Dapčević, Goran Karan, Kemal Monteno, Neda Ukraden, and Hari Varešanović, as well as a few younger performers, such as Bojan Marović, Tijana Dapčević, and Nevena Božović. Bringing together such a large number of well-known performers, the concert attracted a great deal of media coverage and freely evoked associations with Yugoslavia, so that the dominant kind of love produced that evening was love for the former country, which was manifested through love of Yugoslav music. Furthermore, the love for the music helped (through suitable songs) to produce the impression that love was in fact transmitted among the people at the show.

The analysis of this concert brought me to the following conclusions. First of all, as I mentioned, the love narrative connected to the concerts was promoted on the discursive and affective levels. In accordance with that thesis, I would first like to point out that the concert was not politically problematic, and it was unequivocally discursively labelled as an homage to the whole of Yugoslav popular music. The process of connecting the past, the emotions and the music is clearly visible in an article entitled 'Emotivni muzički vremeplov' ('Emotional musical time machine'), which states that "the biggest Yugoslav stars are gathering in honour of Đorđe Novković" and that the evening represented "a kind of nostalgic time machine" (Ilić 2014), but is was also implicitly present in the ones such as 'Eks-Ju zvezde u čast Đorđu Novkoviću' ('Ex-Yu Stars Tribute to Đorđe Novković') (Eks-Ju zvezde 2014), and similar.[10] Furthermore, the press emphasised that the composer's greatest hits would be performed, and that these songs "defined the Yugoslav era, but are actually timeless". The concert was also promoted as a "real treat for all Yugonostalgic people" (Estrada peva 2014), but also for the younger

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9 It was regularly stated how many important performers were appearing, as can be seen in the article 'Skup velikana na jednom mestu: Koncert Đorđu Novkoviću u čast' (Skup velikana 2014).

10 As I mentioned in relation to the case of Tereza Kesovija, it is a common practice that concerts by former Yugoslav musicians are given titles, either by the performers themselves or by the media.

generation, since some of the songs were performed in modern arraignments by younger singers.[11]

Being the Yugoslav songwriter who truly defined the sound that has become recognisable as Yugoslav, Novković has posthumously became a symbol of the (Yugoslav) past. Similarly to the period of the war, when performers of different ethnic origins underwent a process of recontextualization in the light of the ethno-political conflict (Baker 2012), in the post-Yugoslav era there has been a revitalisation of the "great" names of Yugoslav popular music history. An especially touching moment was the performance of the song 'A gdje si ti' ('But Where Are You'), which Boris Novković composed for his father. It was announced by the performer as "very emotional" and "an unusual dialogue between a father and a son", because, as he stressed, "certain things had to be said". This scene is relevant because it triggered the remembrance of personal memories among the audience that were associated with the remembrance of the late composer.

The cult of personality which was created around Novković due to the presence of the composer's son, as a channel for the remembering process and a means for blurring the boundaries between the public and private feelings present that evening, was further empowered by another symptomatic moment – a scene in which all the singers present invited, in their own words, "a legend of Yugoslav popular music" to join them on the stage: Đorđe Marjanović.[12] Helping the singer up onto the stage, the performers almost stopped the whole concert, focusing on this single emotional moment. This moment was dedicated to the cult of personality – from the present Boris, through the implicitly present Đorđe Novković, to Marjanović, who served as a unique bond between all of the discourses and affects produced on the stage and in the audience that evening. The atmosphere in the audience was not overly emotional – a certain level of emotion was usual at these sorts of events, as already pointed out. However,

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11 There are numerous examples of this discourse in the press, since the concert was almost regularly labelled as an homage to the great Yugoslav composer. See e.g. the article entitled 'Đorđu Novkoviću u čast' (Koncert za 2014). It is indicative to note that this concert was not a unique event held solely in Belgrade, but a kind of a replay of a similar concert held in Zagreb in 2009. The announcements and comments in the Croatian press, however, did not promote the connecting of Yugoslavia and emotional reactions to this music. On the contrary, the concert was described merely as an homage to the late composer, with some comments on the emotional reactions of his son Boris Novković. A comparison of the discourses in the press also shows that the Croatian press wrote about Novković as a famous "Croatian composer", whereas the Serbian press regularly used the term "Yugoslav composer".

12 Kemal Monteno even committed a faux-pas during his performance, referring to Đorđe Marjanović instead of Đorđe Novković.

the choice of the songs was conducive to the creation of a warm nostalgic atmosphere, as well as similar commentary after the concerts. The escalation of the emotional reactions of the audience was obvious during the mentioned scene with Marjanović, as well as at the end of the concert, when the song 'Nek živi ljubav' ('Let Love Live') was performed. The combination of the channelling of the emotions through the cult of personality, and singing a song that is a prayer for peace, finally created a platform for the further strengthening of the collective. Leaving the concert hall, people talked about the past, the music that helped them feel better, and the last song they heard. "Let Love Live" was a sort of refrain in the conversations among the audience members after the show.[13]

While the collective of the audience was produced during the concerts as the result of common reactions, there were other types of listener networking both before and especially after the concerts.[14] Using social media, new virtual communities have been created, coalescing around the groups of fans and opponents of certain types of music. The headlines in the press also helped to connect the past, the emotions and the music; these could be formulated either explicitly or implicitly, but the connections were most certainly present. One typical example was the article entitled 'Emotional Musical Time Machine', whose comments section resonated with the discourse of the text. Thus, the people discussed how "timeless" the songs were and how they "defined the Yugoslav era". Furthermore, the comments on this concert mostly included expressions of gratitude, above all for the good performances and good music, often including labels such as "legends" of Yugoslav music, which referred both to the performers on the actual stage and those in whose honour the concert was organized. However, there were emotional reactions, as some people wrote about crying together with their partners and feeling emotional because of "going back in time" and "remembering their youth" thanks to the music.[15]

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13 The people in the audience commented upon the lyrics of the songs in question, connecting them with their current personal issues.

14 Unlike the usual sociological approaches to the analysis of audience, I do not pay particular attention to the issues of the age, gender and social background of the audience. Understanding it in the Latourian fashion – as the vibrant potential of the body – it is the capacities and actions of the body that are relevant here, rather than its social structuring (Latour 2004).

15 All the comments are available below the article mentioned above (Ilić 2014). However, there are some exceptions to this nostalgic atmosphere from the members of certain virtual communities, i.e. there are comments quesitoning the reasons for holding the concert in Belgrade, since the composer was from Croatia (Estrada peva 2014).

CONCLUSION: CONCERTS AND THE COMMODIFICATION OF MEMORIES AND EMOTIONS

In conclusion, I find it relevant to mention one fact, which at first I didn't consider to be of extreme importance to the issue at hand, but which appears to be a symptomatic moment for further analysis of concerts as sites of memories and producing ideologies of love. That is, from a musical perspective, the concert was bad: it was not well organized; one could tell that there was a lot of improvisation going on during the performances; there was no orchestral accompaniment to the songs, but just a small ensemble including keyboards, drums and guitar; the backing vocals were not very well prepared; and, most importantly, the performers themselves were clearly often improvising, the older and the more experienced ones managing to do it without being actually noticed (except from those in the audience with a musical background), whereas the younger ones often did not know the lyrics. The most telling example was Tijana Dapčević's performance, since she clearly forgot the words, and did not even manage to hide the fact that she was not handling the situation, as well as Kemal Monteno, who erroneously referred to "the late Đorđe Marjanović" (who was in fact present in the audience) instead of Novković.

Given this state of affairs, it seemes relevant to ask: how is it possible that a concert that was not musically representative was in fact successful? Have we reached the phase of commodification of emotions and banalization of memories through listening to music? In other words, is Yugonostalgia enough for the enjoyment of a concert and for its success, i.e. are we living in times when memories, combined with emotions and nostalgia (discursively promoted by certain events), are sufficient for meeting the needs of the audience?

As I mentioned, the usage of the concept of Yugonostalgia is both multifarious and ambiguous. Regarding musical practices in post-Yugoslav spaces, Yugonostalgia can refer to the capacity of (ex-Yugoslav) music to construct and (re)interpret the Yugoslav past (see Petrović 2007). Some authors have a more critical approach towards the promotion of the Yugoslav musical past, interpreting it as using the strongly-felt nostalgia as a means of manipulation. As Zala Volčič argues, even though Yugoslavia does not formally exist, it certainly exists in the memories of its last generation, together with the mix of nationalisms, globalizations and historical tensions that it contained. Volčič contends that the media and other cultural practices are mobilized in the former Yugoslav societies in order to attempt to remake the shared cultural memory, thus creating a sort of delusion.

She argues that the relevant aspects of this phenomenon are escapism and utopianism, since she deals with Yugonostalgia as a means of an imaginary escape to the Yugoslav past. Even though I do not concur with her critical approach to Yugonostalgia as a sort of consumerism, I do agree that certain practices can have such features, as well as an escapist potential.

The music I analysed obviously has a certain capacity to produce affective atmospheres leading to the construction of discourses on love, and that capacity functions as a way to preserve, reconnect, reconstruct and reinterpret emotions relating to the past. Still, that doesn't necessarily imply that there is nostalgia for Yugoslavia, since it can also be a general nostalgia for the past, for youth, for the times of "good old music" etc.[16] Thus, nostalgia is not only connected to the past, but rather, it is relevant to the present, since "when people are nostalgic about the past, it says so much more about their present than it does about the past" (Bancroft 2009: 6; see also Velikonja 2009: 367).

From this perspective, the concert discussed here suggests a need to address the question that Volčič posed: is there a need for Yugonostalgia as a means for the commercialization of Yugoslav products, including music? In this regard, the music is not just a product that has been used for the manipulation of feelings and memories, but it is quite commonly a crucial part of this process.[17] Regarding the audience comments, it appears that most of the people were aware of their own feelings and were ready to admit an emotional remembering of the past, despite certain aspects that clearly stood out during the concerts, such as the bad performances of the younger singers. This can be concluded from comments such as the following:

> I think that this is a concert that one will remember for a long time. I went back through time and I was again in my youth. I am grateful to the organizers for bringing these legends of the Yugoslav scene [to Belgrade]. My wife and I were crying, and there were also many people in the concert hall that had tears in their eyes that evening. As for the young female singers, I don't know what I should say. Tijana and Nevena are good singers, but Karić's daughter? Unfortunately, it is obvious that money makes the world go round [...].[18]

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16 Comments about the "good music from socialist Yugoslavia" were common during the concert as well as in the media discourse.

17 For a similar analysis regarding the concept of "Ostalgie" see Winkler 2011.

18 The comment was submitted to the comments section below the article 'Emotivni muzički vremeplov' (Ilić 2014).

Danijela Karić, a Serbian businessman's daughter, was one of the younger performers who visibly stood out from the group of older and more polished performers, as she was not on the level of the others in terms of both appearance and vocal ability. The comment addressing her performance points to one relevant aspect of both the concert in question and of the whole post-Yugoslav scene: on one hand, the concert represented the music of the past which obviously triggered (good) memories of the same past; on the other, a few younger singers, especially Miss Karić, were clearly not able to perform without having a great deal of preparation.[19] Thus, the comment points to the issue of quality of the old music and the singers that were the "legends" in the former country. Additionally, the comment pinpoints the moment of the production of feelings of nostalgic loss that was triggered due to this singer's poor performance: as if she at that moment represented the problematic present as being significantly different (on many levels: visual, vocal, and generally professional) from the good past.

In this regard, I would conclude by claiming that the concerts in fact do serve as places for nostalgia which certainly can have an escapist dimension, but this nostalgia does not, as Volčič argues, eliminate the potentiality for action; rather, it can offer a possibility for comparison of divergent practices (in this case, musical ones) from very different cultural backgrounds.[20] In doing so, they also offer the audience the possibility to make a change by choosing certain values from among the many that are promoted. This concert thus served as an opportunity for producing many ideologies and for addressing the musical values of the past and the present.

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19 As I mentioned, the concert included many very famous performers and they certainly did not have time to get together to practice adequately for this occasion, which, however, did not matter for the more experienced singers.

20 On the approach that addresses the potential capacities of Yugonostalgia see Petrović 2012: 122–154; Velikonja 2009, 2010.

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