

# ALFRĒDS VINTERS (1908–1976): AN ARTISTIC PROFILE OF A 1930s MUSICIAN

Alberts Rokpelnis

## Summary

**Keywords:** 'schlager', popular music, Latvianness in music, *Bellaccord*

This year we are celebrating the 110<sup>th</sup> birthday of Alfrēds Vinters (1908–1976), the composer and popular Latvian performer of the 1930s. Following the collapse of the tsarist social order, the fragmented market of the newly formed multiethnic and poly-linguistic society of Latvia was challenging for the striving singer-songwriter. He was one of at least a dozen musicians of the emerging 'schlager music' genre who struggled to find an audience in 1930s Latvia.

This research paper aims to analyze the most important issues that are pointed out by several authors in publications.

Alfrēds Vinters did not belong to the so called creative intelligentsia or the cultural elite of that time. Therefore, there are not many references about his work. The relevance of this research arises from the lack of academic studies on the matter. Considering all this, the major publications establish a set of the important issues that should be discussed.

The first refer to the sum total of the opuses that Vinters composed. There is a difference between the number of his published works and those that are attributed to him. At that time, it was quite common to perform or arrange and localize melodies from foreign movies, operettas, etc. However, Vinters' compositions were always described as originals, though stylistically close to the famous foreign examples. About 150 published records performed by Vinters' orchestra were identified. At least 74 of them are Vinters' original compositions that were published prior to the second Soviet occupation in 1944. Also, about 40 recorded scores of Vinters were published.

The second issue deals with self-identification. Some of the authors refer to him as a 'schlager' composer or the initiator of the Latvian 'schlager music' genre, but there is no clear evidence that this title is appropriate. More importantly, there is no valid theoretical research about the evolution of 'schlager' as a genre in Latvia in general.

The third issue is the stylistic of Vinters' music. Some authors refer to him as being particularly 'Latvian'. What arguments do the authors provide to prove this statement? Vinters found his supporters mainly in the Latvian-speaking audience, producing popular dance music (waltz, polka, foxtrot, tango), as well as selling records and sheet music. His lyrics were only in Latvian. It is crucial to note that the popularity of

his naive and patriotic lyrics was well adopted in the context of ethno-nationalist propaganda following the *coup d'état* of Kārlis Ulmanis in 1934. After the Second World War and under the Soviet occupation, his music was not publically performed until the end of the 1950s. It was only maintained in Latvian singing repertoires in private homes. Over the course of time, his patriotic motives became attributed to all of his work making him seem more national or 'folksy'.

### Literatūra un citi avoti

- Bellaccord Electro skaņu plašu katalogs* (1936). Rīga: Grāmatu Draugs
- Bellaccord-Electro skaņu plates* [1932]. Firmas katalogs. Rīga: Grāmatu Draugs
- Bērtiņš, Atis Gunivaldis (1996). Reiz spēlēja muzikanti. *Lauku Avīze*, 21. jūnijs, 31. lpp.
- Bērtiņš, Atis Gunivaldis (2008). Dziesmas – kā liepas, ozoli un rudzupuķes. *Latvijas Avīze*, 15. septembris, 13. lpp.
- Bērtiņš, Atis Gunivaldis (2015). *Latviešu skaņuplašu vēsture*. 1. sējums. Rīga: Vesta-LK
- Bērziņš, Valdis (2003). *20. gadsimta Latvijas vēsture*. 2. sējums. Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds
- Bleiere, Daina (2005). *Latvijas vēsture – 20. gadsimts*. Rīga: Jumava
- Bolgzds, Ivars (1993). Alfrēdu Vinteru pieminot. *Laiks*, 22. decembris, 7. lpp.
- Bolgzds, Ivars (2008). Mūzika mīlai un jaunībai. *Laiks*, 11. oktobris, 14. lpp.
- Currid, Brian Patrick (1998). *The Acoustics of National Publicity: Music in German Mass Culture, 1924–1945*. Dissertation to the Faculty of the Division of the Humanities, Department of Music, Chicago, Illinois
- Darkevics, Arvīds (1960). "Trīs vītušas rozes" un ilgas pēc dzimtenes. *Dzimtenes Balss*, 30. oktobris, 1. lpp.
- Daugulis, Ēvalds (2012). Party music in Latvia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. *Tradīcija ir Dabartis* 7, pp. 94–110
- Der Schlager. Bühnenplauderei von Albert Borée (1909). Feuilleton Beilage zum Nr. 144 der *Diāna Zeitung*: Für Haus und Familie, 27. Juni, S. 155
- Dovgjallo, Georgs (1993). *Tās acis, tās acis. Alfrēda Vintera dziesmas*. Rīga: Sprīdītis
- Gimmervert, Anisim (2006). *Oskar Strok – korol' i poddannij*. Nizhnij Novgorod: Dekom