

THE PRESENCE OF THE TERM *SCHLAGER* IN LATVIAN PRESS OF THE 1920S AND 1930S: A FOCUS ON NEWSPAPER COVERAGE IN *PĒDĒJĀ BRĪDĪ* (1926–1936) AND PUBLISHED *RIGA RADIOPHONE PROGRAMMES* (1926–1940)

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Summary

The press is a medium that actively documents all processes in a society. The press is a platform where new terms and notions are launched into everyday language. The aim of this article is to analyse the presence of the term *schlager* in Latvian press, identifying the music and extra-musical contexts implied in the mentioning this term. The case studies used for this publication come from the newspaper *Pēdējā Brīdī* and the published *Riga Radiophone programmes*. The publications from other newspapers and magazines are used in order to show the activities related to it by the distributors of operetta and film music.

The usage of the term *schlager* in the press is related to the changes in sound transmission. Additionally, it demonstrated the need for the press to use such modern terms in order to attract and maintain readership. In advertising, such words served to attract readers' attention. In the 1920s and 1930s, the term *schlager* was often included in the texts of the *Riga Radiophone programme* and the newspaper *Pēdējā Brīdī*, showing two tendencies: it was widely adapted by publishers as a keyword to inform the public about the novelties, including, but not limited to, music and films. The same effect was achieved by other success-describing words. In Latvian press, the term *schlager* (šlāgeris) was often replaced by the term *hit* (grāvējs).

The second tendency shows that both ads and thematic press articles understand the term *schlager* as a music already existing in Europe, but relatively new in Latvia, recorded in different media, starting from printed scores to shellac or vinyl discs, that were also played in cafes and ballrooms. These characteristics testify to the new and modern popular music genre entering Latvia.

In most cases, the term is used in plural to mark the quantity of countable units. In the press, the common musical stylistic features of *schlager* are mentioned, such as indications to party or so-called modern dance genres – tango, foxtrot or the valse. At the same time, the wide use of this term in the dance music context made it a synonym for popular dance music of all kinds.

The authors of articles at the time used words such as *the newest, modern, top-notch* to emphasize *schlager* as a term of contemporary music of the time, meanwhile, the *modern schlager* in the entertainment industry created a division of the understandings as the *old schlager* for German audiences mainly meant music and scores related to

operettas. Press testimonies show that the new, *modern schlager* in the 1920s and 1930s is something more. It is entertainment music distributed mainly through sound media – radio, shellacs of vinyl discs and films. At the same time, it means “dance music” in the entertainment places of Riga city. Therefore, the genre of schlager is not necessarily defined by the musical arrangement. The topical dance *schlagers* were played by ensembles, jazz bands or dance orchestras that accompanied the soloists. The difference is only in the origins of the melodies. Thus, among audiences, not only were the operetta *schlagers* very popular, but the melodies from films and recordings were as well.

The analysis of press materials confirms that advertising and news helped the term *schlager* to establish itself in Latvian press language. Even criticism legitimized the use of this term in language and music. The increasing diversity of sound distribution channels in the 1920s and 1930s allowed *schlagers* to be played everywhere. In the 1930s, sound film music became increasingly popular and reachable outside cinemas. They were published in scores and recorded on discs. Moreover, the *schlagers* played by dance orchestras in a cafe or replayed on gramophones by dance teachers, broke the link with the original genre – film or operetta – and became a new, independent popular music genre with specific style, with related social practices and distribution qualities. And these processes were covered by press.

In the 1920s, the press wrote about *schlagers* as being music by foreign composers, but in the 1930s, the number of translated and localized examples sharply increased, opening a new dimension for press articles regarding distributors and local composers. Thus, the press publications testify that the status of *schlager* as *imported music* gradually changed, becoming a *local genre* during the interwar period.