JAZZ AND POPULAR MUSIC IN ESTONIAN PERIODICALS IN THE 1920s AND 1930s

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This article aims to analyse the coverage of jazz and popular music in Estonian periodicals (such as the daily newspaper *Päewaleht*) in the 1920s and 1930s – a task facilitated by their inclusion in full-text databases (dea.digar.ee). In Section 1, a short overview of jazz and popular music in Estonia in that period is provided. The word "jazz" could be encountered in a variety of journalistic contexts, ranging from essays on modern culture to gossip and advertisements. In Section 2, I will describe how databases such as dea.digar.ee allow the use of quantitative methods of content analysis by means of which the number of occurrences of a musical term ("jazz", "tango", or "the Charleston") in a certain period can be determined. Although not all the miscellaneous mentions of jazz in periodicals are musically insightful, they nevertheless speak aptly for the status that jazz music had as a symbol of "the modern way of life" (Section 3).

Keywords: Popular music studies, jazz, Estonian journalism, databases, content analysis.

Periodicals provide valuable information about the dissemination and reception of jazz and popular music in the 1920s and 1930s, and, in some cases, are one of the very few sources available on these phenomena of culture. This is so partly because it was only in the late 20th century that popular music studies emerged as a discipline, and the preservation of sources on popular music in archives started to be recognized as worthwhile. At the same time, periodicals are useful only to a certain degree as a source. While symphony concerts and opera/operetta productions were reviewed regularly in Estonian daily newspapers and journals in the 1920s and 1930s, the journalistic coverage of jazz and other aspects of popular culture was much more erratic.

During the past decade, full-text databases (or "digital archives") of periodicals emerged as a resource useful in various scientific disciplines related to history, media studies, linguistics, etc. The introduction of such databases has made historical newspaper articles easily accessible to researchers as a primary source, enabling them to use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in analysing that content (for example, to determine when certain words first became part of the journalistic vernacular or to count the number of occurrences of certain terms/names in a period of time). This study is based on newspapers and journals accessible in the digital archive DIGAR. Thus, the usage of certain music-related terms can now be investigated from a quantitative point of view by employing content analysis, a collection of methods codified in various textbooks and increasingly relevant in the current "golden age" of content acquisition" (Neuendorf 2017, 212).

The collections of the Estonian digital archive DIGAR, hosted by the Estonian National Library (*Eesti Rahvusraamatukogu*), include, most importantly, periodicals and books, but also sheet music, photos and audio content (such as digitalized shellac discs). Digitalized newspapers, with optical character recognition applied, are available in dea.digar.ee (*Eesti Artiklid* [Estonian Articles]), while 1920s and 1930s journals can be found in digar.ee (*Digitaalarhiiv* [Digital Archive]). The collection of newspapers in dea.digar.ee has been available since 2014, its content being regularly updated and proofread. The pre-WWII era is well represented there, with all the major newspapers of the 1920s and 1930s, among many others, fully displayable.

An overview of Estonian jazz and popular music in the 1920s and 1930s provided in Section 1 will form the context for a quantitative analysis of the words "jazz", "tango", and "the Charleston" as they occur in Estonian newspapers up to the year 1939 (Section 2). Although databases of periodicals analogous to DIGAR exist in several countries (such as the Latvian archive of periodicals, periodika.lv, or the archive of Historic American Newspapers at chroniclingamerica.loc.gov), the technical peculiarities of DIGAR, as well as linguistic nuances and the journalistic context of that period, need to be considered in using it as a resource. While the data acquired in quantitative analysis helps to illustrate certain general trends in the dissemination of musical terms, that knowledge is useful only when viewed next to the discourses manifest in these instances (Section 3), concerning how jazz was described and what it was considered to represent.

While jazz studies and popular music studies generally tend to function as distinctive disciplines, despite many aspects mutually relevant for both (see Reimann 2013, 13), jazz in the 1920s and 1930s cannot be considered separately from the other manifestations of popular culture. In the period in question, "jazz", "popular music" (in Estonian: *lööklaulud* – meaning "hit songs", schlager) and "dance music" were largely overlapping terms, "jazz" being used, however, more narrowly for the kind of "new" or "modern" dance music (the Charleston, foxtrot, etc.) that became the centrepiece of the burgeoning youth culture in the post-WWI era and stood in contrast to the "old" dances, such as the Viennese waltz. According to Crease (2000, 696), "jazz dance and music are so intertwined that the origins and early history of each would be unthinkable without the other."

In his book on restaurant and café culture in Tallinn in the 1920s and 1930s, Kalervo Hovi (2017, 10) has described his field of study as "histories of marginalised groups": an investigation of those aspects of every-day life that, once perceived as mundane, have largely been neglected in historical narratives. The same classification can largely be extended to the kind of music-making, including jazz, for which restaurants functioned as one of the primary venues during that period. That said, references to jazz were rather frequent in Estonian periodicals in those decades: "jazz" was a fashionable word that appeared in advertisements and was mentioned in newspaper articles in a variety of contexts.

1. "What are our people's favourite dances?" Jazz and popular music in the 1920s and 1930s

As news about "jazz" spread from the US to Europe, it did not take long before a distinctive subculture of self-described jazz bands started to emerge in Estonia in the 1920s. In the Baltic region, the musical and technological innovations of that decade – often characterised as the Roaring Twenties in the American entertainment scene – appeared against the backdrop of radically new political realities. The Estonian Republic was declared in February 1918, followed by two years of defensive campaigns known as the Estonian War of Independence (1918–1920). Thus, the new developments in (popular) culture and technology coincided with a more general sense of renewal that was "in the air" in Estonia in the 1920s.

The history of jazz music in that period has been investigated thoroughly by Valter Ojakäär (1923–2016) in *Vaibunud viiside kaja* (2000, [*The Echo of Faded Tunes*]), the first volume of his four-volume series of books on Estonian popular music. Tiit Lauk in *Džäss Eestis 1918–1945* (2010, [*Jazz in Estonia*]) concentrated mainly on the emergence and dissemination of jazz, with an emphasis on the regional jazz music scenes outside Tallinn and "jazz concerts" organised in Tallinn and elsewhere in the 1930s.

The first half of the 20th century was an era defined, amongst other technological novelties, by gramophone records, cinema, and, perhaps most importantly, radio broadcasting. As radio broadcasting companies were established all over Europe during the 1920s, the age of mass media was truly born. Although the radio stations of that period, both in the US and European countries, declared themselves to be dedicated to educating the listener mostly with "serious" music (Hullot-Kentor 2009, 5–6), and radio programmes published in daily newspapers and specialised radio journals remained generic as far as popular music was concerned, it was namely then that the identity of popular music as "radio music" was forged.

The number of radio receivers owned in Estonia started to grow since the beginning of daily radio broadcasts in Tallinn on 18th December 1926. In the Baltic region, those who had access to a rather expensive vacuum tube receiver could listen to, in addition to the local radio station, tens of foreign radio stations, some from as far as Western Europe (Tool 2023, 135–136). European radio stations, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in particular, thus served as mediators of the new trends in popular music that had emerged in the US.

It was against this backdrop that jazz bands started to emerge in Estonia in the 1920s. According to the statistics by Lauk (2010, 196–197), in the period from the emergence of the first professionally employed jazz band (The Murphy Band) in 1925 to the end of the Estonian Republic in 1940, at least 110 ensembles and orchestras in Estonia who played jazz-influenced dance music existed, involving a total of approximately 750 musicians. While these ensembles typically adopted English-language names (The Murphy Band, Red Hot Ramblers, Merry Pipers, etc.), Central European models, manifested for example in the inclusion of the accordion in many of these bands, were no less noticeable. Performances by foreign jazz musicians in Estonia were then a rarity (Lauk 2010, 147–149).[1]

1 In this regard the situation was markedly different in Latvia, where performances by foreign musicians could be described as "a very important aspect in the development of Latvian jazz" in the 1920s and 1930s (Veitners 2014, 97).

Among the Estonian jazz bands in the late 1920s in Tallinn, The Murphy Band enjoyed a distinctive status. Its performances of "modern dance music" were broadcast weekly on the radio and, according to printed programme notes of the Estonia Theatre, the band was involved in several jazz-influenced operetta productions whenever the depiction of the "modern times" was required. Its leading members were the pianist Victor Compe (1895–1968) – "the author of the first Estonian foxtrot" whose speciality as an arranger was combining modern dance rhythms with Estonian folk tunes – and the percussionist Kurt Strobel (1904–1982).

The Murphy Band can be heard on several gramophone recordings released under trademarks such as *Columbia* and *His Master's Voice*. These discs, however, are probably not fully representative of the real scope of their repertoire, which, according to Ojakäär (2000, 103–106), included, in addition to operetta tunes and German schlager, songs by American songwriters. One of the more elaborate advertisements of their gramophone records is reproduced in Example 1, the text below the cartoon reading as follows: "The best creator of the atmosphere at a joyful party is *The Murphy Band* (from the White Hall of the Estonia [Theatre]) on gramophone records by Columbia." Thus, while listening to the syncopated folk tunes and operetta melodies, one could imagine being present at the prestigious place of entertainment the band was famously associated with. The repertoire of Estonian jazz bands in those days formed a mixture of everything required to entertain audiences of various backgrounds and musical tastes.

Parim meeleolu looja lõbusal kooswiibimisel on

The Murphy Band

(Estoonia Walgest saalist)

Columbia plaatidel

Hind kr. 3.—

8727. ***Haava Jaan*** — lauluga. Mälestus (V. Compe) Foxtrot lauluga.
8728. ***Labajala walss.*** Tõmba jüri — lauluga.

Marta Runge, sopran ja Konstantin Sawi, tenor-barlton The Murphy Band'i saatel.

8729. ***Wiise operettidest*** (seadn. V. Compe) I ja II osa.
8730. ***Wiise operettidest*** (seadn. V. Compe) III ja IV osa.

The Columbia Graphophone Co, Ltd. London

Ainueslndaja

A.-S. Karl Lemberg

Tallinn, Wiru tän. 3.

Example 1. An advertisement of gramophone records by the best-known Estonian jazz band of the late 1920s, The Murphy Band (*Päewaleht*, 3.11.1928).

In connection with the disbandment of *The Murphy Band* in 1931, an interview with Kurt Strobel was published in *Raadioleht* ([*Radio Journal*], 19.07.1931) where he characterises the situation with ballroom dancing and describes how new dance music was disseminated in Estonia. As Strobel described himself as a follower of the so-called English style of playing (akin to the "American style"), the article was titled "Kurt Strobel – The Estonian Jack Hylton":

> "What are our people's favourite dances? [..] Despite the laborious work of our dance tutors, our people have not yet learned to dance properly. Our only consolation is that, allegedly, they dance even worse in Latvia and Finland. And it is mainly because of the lack of skill that our dancers prefer foxtrot and the Viennese waltz. There are only a few of those who can dance tango, slow waltz, or slow fox. [..]It happens that now and then somebody requests something more vintage from the band – such as Pas d'Espagne – but for most people these old dances are something of a laughingstock. There's nothing one can do about it: *sic transit gloria mundi*. [..]
>
> The audience constantly requires something new from the orchestra. But how would one get hold of the latest music? Here is an example from my time with The Murphy Band. We all remember well the hit song *Valencia* [from the 1926 silent movie of the same name, recorded by Paul Whiteman's orchestra]. Interestingly this song came from London: the musicians listened to the London radio [BBC], where *Valencia* was being performed. They listened to it one evening and could not memorise it. Then they listened for another evening and put it on paper. Then, in the third evening they were ready to perform it themselves." (*Raadioleht*, 19.07.1931)

In the 1930s, Kurt Strobel continued to lead his own orchestra, some of its performances preserved in a series of amateur recordings made in 1933. The recording of *Bugle Call Rag* (see Ojakäär 2000, 457–459) displays the orchestra's familiarity with the early swing style, if not quite yet the soloistic prowess of its members. As revealed in comparing that recording with those by British and American bands of that period, Strobel's orchestra, interestingly, used the same arrangement of the tune as recorded also by, for example, the British orchestra led by Harry Roy. By the end of the 1930s, however, some ensembles had emerged, most notably *Kuldne Seitse* (*The Golden Seven*), who could be described as proficient in performing improvised solos in the swing style (Ojakäär 2000, 156).

In the 1930s, there were ever-increasing attempts in Europe and the US to introduce jazz to concert platforms. The Estonian contribution to that trend was a series of "jazz concerts" in Tallinn, starting in November 1936; they were organised by Priit Veebel (Friedrich Webel, 1910–1944), a classically trained pianist, conductor, and composer of popular songs as well as a member of Strobel's orchestra. These jazz concerts, although inspired by Paul Whiteman's "symphonic" jazz, were an important step closer to the introduction of big band jazz in Estonia. In the late 1930s, references to "swing" started to appear in periodicals. Veebel's *Fifth Grand Jazz Concert* (*Viies suur jazz-kontsert*) on

2nd November 1938 was advertised to include the performance of a "swing sextet!!!" (*Päewaleht*, 30.10.1938), and the advertisement of the concert on 3rd November 1939 stated simply "Swing, Swing, Swing" (*Päewaleht*, 01.11.1939).

While Strobel chose British orchestras as his main model, the nation-wide popularity of John Pori's (1906–1947) orchestra stemmed more from its pronounced focus on "good old-fashioned" dance music, various Estonian adaptations of American popular songs (*Oh, They're Tough, Mighty Tough in the West*), and arrangements of folk dances. Among Pori's greatest "hits" was a waltz tune called *Viljandi paadimees* (*The Boatman of Viljandi*), released by *Bellaccord Electro* in 1937 – in fact, a skilful Estonian adaptation of *Gaujas laivinieks* by Alfrēds Vinters.

The level of caution one needs to exhibit in using periodicals as a source in research on popular music is aptly demonstrated in the case of the songwriter and restaurant musician Raimond Valgre (1913–1949, born Raimond Tiisel). Valgre completely evaded the attention of the press during his lifetime, even with several of his songs having been published in a series of popular song editions called *Modern Hit Songs* (*Modern lööklaulud*) in the 1930s, and it was only posthumously that he emerged as the best-known personality in Estonian popular music by far in the first half of the 20th century. Even more than a reminder of Valgre's tragic fate in which his legendary status now largely lies, this fact should be taken as a description of the journalistic practices of the day.

2. Terms of popular music in periodicals according to quantitative content analysis

Knowledge of the Estonian dance and jazz music scene can be specified further by investigating the usage of certain keywords (jazz, tango, and the Charleston) in Estonian periodicals during that period. By using these words in a full-text search in newspapers (such as *Päewaleht*), it is possible to outline how references to certain cultural phenomena appeared in the Estonian language, when they were at their most influential and when they started to lose their ground. However, the quantitative data acquired in such inquiries is insightful only as far as the context (discourses) in which these words appear is taken into account.

As analysed by Hennoste and Kurvits (2019, 26–27), Estonian journalism during the period of the Estonian Republic (1918–1940) can be described as "versatile, differentiated, and modern", encompassing daily newspapers, weekly tabloid newspapers, periodicals addressed to the "common man" or Estonia's sizeable rural population, and provincial (regional) newspapers. Much of Estonia's journalistic scene became dominated by major publishing trusts, whose output included, in addition to their main daily newspaper, various other periodicals. The daily newspaper with the largest print circulation was *Päewaleht* (modern spelling *Päevaleht*, 1905–1940), its number of printed copies ranging from 30 000 to 50 000 in the 1920s and 1930s (Hennoste, Kurvits 2019, 55).[2] Among

2 The total population of Estonia, according to the 1934 census, was approximately 1.1 million people (presently, more than 1.3 million).

the other major daily newspapers of that period were *Waba Maa* [Free Land] (1918–1938), *Postimees* [Postman] (1886–1940), and *Uus Eesti* [New Estonia] (1935–1940); regional newspapers included *Sakala* (1878–1940), based in the town of Viljandi. After the military *coup d'état* in Estonia in 1934, as a result of which Konstantin Päts was installed as the authoritarian leader of the state, censorship was imposed on journalism, resulting in a steep decrease in the number of newspapers approved for publication (Hennoste, Kurvits 2019, 30–31); for instance, *Waba Maa* was closed in March 1938 due to censorship. This fact, in some cases, contributes to the downward curve in search results in dea.digar.ee during the second half of the 1930s. As Estonia was occupied by the USSR in summer 1940, Estonia's journalistic scene started to be thoroughly reorganised according to Soviet models, and, therefore, the period after 1939 lies beyond the scope of this study.

While using dea.digar.ee in research, one needs to remain mindful of its limitations, the impact of which can be minimised by carefully selecting suitable keywords for full-text search. Depending on the quality of digitalization, full-text searches can yield some false (or similarly spelled but irrelevant) results and, conversely, some of the keywords searched for will remain undetected. It is also important to note that dea.digar.ee presents the number of units (articles, columns or pages, depending on the accuracy of segmentation in the database) in which the search word was detected and is not suitable for analysing the total number of its occurrences. The built-in search engine of the user interface allows the use of logical operators AND, OR, NOT, and the results can be limited according to some specific criteria (names of the periodicals, period, etc.).

When choosing the search word(s), certain grammatical nuances of the Estonian language must be considered, especially those concerning the use of fourteen case forms both in the singular and the plural. Therefore, in searching for the word "jazz" in the database, an asterisk (*) can be added to the end of the word ("jazz*"). Thus, the various case forms of that word (for example, in the genitive: *jazzi*) are included in the results, as well as compound nouns (*jazzkontsert* [jazz concert]). Note that in the Estonian language the adapted spelling "*džäss*" can also be used, and this has been preferred by most editors since the 1940s up to the very recent. However, in the 1920s and 1930s this spelling was very rare.

2.1. Jazz in periodicals in 1919–1939

The word "jazz" seems particularly appropriate in demonstrating the possibilities of full-text search in dea.digar.ee due to its brevity and, at the same time, the specific way of spelling that excludes the possibility of coincidental matches with other words used in the Estonian language. According to Gerald Leonard Cohen (2015, 1), who analysed the usage of that word in US periodicals, "the term *jazz* designating a genre of music arose in Chicago, 1915".

In Estonian newspapers, "jazz" can be first encountered in 1919. In a short article titled "The urge to dance is growing among the English" ("*Inglaste tantsuhimu kaswamas*"; *Tallinna Teataja*, 11.12.1919), "jazz" is mentioned, along with the foxtrot and "Tango 1920", as one of the dances that many people, regardless of age and social class, are eagerly awaiting to learn in London and Paris. A more extensive description of jazz appears in 1921 in an article by Johannes Semper, a well-known Estonian literary figure. As he reports back from Berlin, jazz band music was being played in every restaurant, so that the whole city was "flooded with those exotic orchestras". He continues with a description of the instruments commonly used in jazz bands, mentioning that the piano was played "not only with fingers, but all the limbs, including arms, knees and feet" (*Tallinna Teataja*, 16.04.1921). Similar descriptions of "jazz" – a word used then also for modern dance music and bands in general, with an emphasis on their "exotic" qualities – remained common throughout that period.

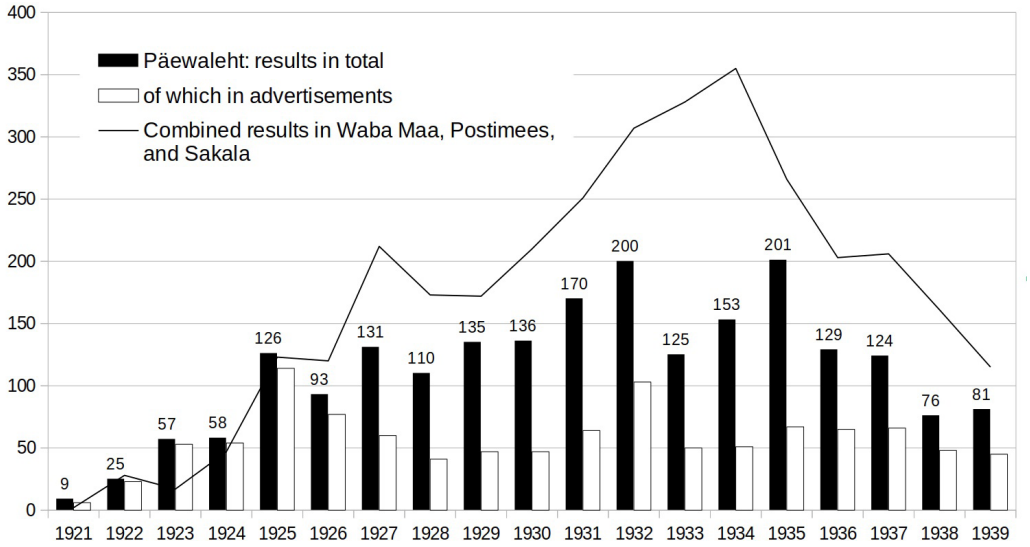
Reports about the exuberance of nightlife in major European cities stood in contrast to what had been the situation in Estonia. From late 1918 to early 1920, the newly founded Estonian Republic was preoccupied with a defensive campaign against the Bolsheviks and the Baltische Landeswehr in what is known as the Estonian War of Independence. The wartime ban on audience dancing in restaurants was, therefore, lifted in Estonia only in April 1920 (Hovi 2017, 97) and selling alcohol in restaurants was allowed in June 1920 (Hovi 2017, 77). Thus, it was only in the early 1920s that the entertainment scene in Tallinn recovered and dance orchestras started to be employed by better restaurants.

A search for "jazz*" in dea.digar.ee in the period from 1919 to 1939 yielded 13 235 results in total (number of articles, columns or pages where that word appears one or more times), distributed between at least 100 periodicals (all the results are presented here as of February 2024). The five periodicals with the most occurrences of "jazz*" (*Päewaleht* – 2139; *Waba Maa* – 1325; *Postimees* – 1179; *Sakala* – 792; *Uudisleht* – 549) amounted to a combined total of 5984 or 45% of all the results. An unequal distribution of the results between the periodicals has several reasons. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s *Päewaleht* was published 7 days a week (approximately 350 issues per year), whereas *Sakala*, for example, was issued 3 times a week (approximately 150 issues per year). There were also numerous short-lived periodicals, and some periodicals have not been fully digitalized. The amount of printed space dedicated to advertisements also plays an important role in this case.

2.2. Jazz in *Päewaleht*

In Example 2, the distribution of results for "jazz*" in *Päewaleht* in the period 1921–1939 is presented as a column chart. While there were only 9 occurrences in 1921, the results peaked in 1932 and 1935 at 200 and 201 matches, respectively. It is important, though, to distinguish between the occurrences of that word according to the types of texts in *Päewaleht*. The inbuilt search engine of dea.digar.ee allows to sort the results in *Päewaleht* according to whether they occur in "advertisements" (usually on the

final pages of each issue or on the first page, but sometimes also embedded among other texts) or "articles" (all other texts). Among the Estonian daily newspapers in that period, *Päewaleht* relied the most on advertising, which could occupy almost a half of its printed space (Hennoste, Kurvits 2019, 40). Of the 2139 results for "jazz*" in *Päewaleht*, 1081 are sorted as "advertisements" in dea.digar.ee, and this number of occurrences in advertisements does not include other announcements about concerts, theatre, and cinema in the culture section of the newspaper.



Example 2. Results for "jazz*" in *Päewaleht* in 1921–1939 (column chart), compared to the combined results in *Waba Maa*, *Postimees*, and *Sakala* (line chart).

For comparison, the combined results for "jazz*" during that period in three other newspapers – *Waba Maa* (last issue in early March 1938), *Postimees*, and *Sakala* – are presented as a line chart in Example 2. This curve mostly corresponds to the general trends in *Päewaleht*, highlighting the increase of results in 1926–1927, largely due to printed radio programmes being published in newspapers since the beginning of daily radio broadcasts in Tallinn in December 1926. Example 2 is informative mainly as a description of how the word "jazz" gradually appeared in the public sphere during the 1920s, while the fluctuations in the graph during the 1930s are due to a number of factors (including the existence of dedicated radio and entertainment journals) and should be interpreted with some caution.

As demonstrated in Example 2, the growth in results for "jazz*" in *Päewaleht* in the period 1921–1926 was powered by advertisements (dance classes, theatrical performances, cinema, and entertainment available at restaurants), while there were just a few mentions of jazz in other texts ("articles"). The latter, nevertheless, contain several examples that are descriptive of the turbulent situation in culture. In the weekly illustrated supplement of *Päewaleht* (*Päevalehe Lisa*; 11.02.1924), an introduction to jazz was published over two pages, in which the author argues over whether jazz

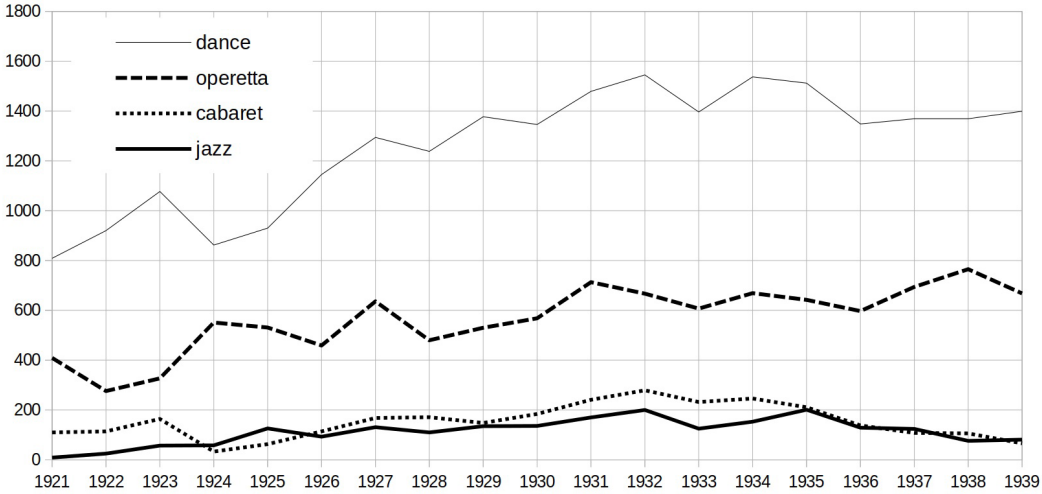
represented an "evolution" or a decline in taste in musical culture. Although mentions of jazz were rather few in number (58 occurrences, of which 54 in advertisements), jazz was described to be claiming ground vehemently in certain parts of Estonian society. For example, *Päewaleht* (26.03.1924) published a decree issued by public schools by which "jazz band music" on school premises and in classroom parties was henceforth forbidden in order to put a limit to "excessive merrymaking" among Estonian pupils.

Another mention of jazz stems from an article about how the world record for the longest dance marathon of shimmy was broken in America, and it includes an analysis of the "psychopathological" reasons that urge people to dance for such extended periods of time in a bout of "dance fever" (24.08.1925). Articles such as the one titled "How much money do jazz band leaders make" (25.01.1926) set the gossipy tone for much that would be written about jazz in the late 1920s and 1930s.

Radio programmes published in newspapers or specialised radio journals since the beginning of regular radio broadcasts in Tallinn in December 1926 are a major source of results for "jazz*". For example, the total number of articles mentioning jazz in *Päewaleht* in 1932 was 200, of which approximately 100 were in advertisements and 50 in radio programmes, whereas only the remaining 50 form what can be described as miscellanea: passing references to jazz in connection with various cultural events ("plays jazz [band]"), cinema, travelogues, novels published as a sequel, etc. Especially in advertisements, "jazz" was preferred to more neutral (and, to their disadvantage, longer) words, such as "*tantsumuusika*" (dance music). Thus, among the seemingly numerous results for "jazz" there is only a small percentage of "miscellaneous" articles which can be used as sources in analysing the opinions and attitudes surrounding jazz from a qualitative point of view. However, searching for some additional keywords in dea.digar.ee (such as the names of various dances or forms of entertainment) provides further insight into the trends of popular music in that period.

2.3. Some points of comparison: cabaret, operetta, and dance

To put the previously mentioned results for "jazz*" in *Päewaleht* (2139 occurrences) into context, certain other keywords, such as "*kabaree*" (cabaret), "*operett*" (operetta), and "*tants*" (dance), can be chosen as points of comparison (Example 3).



Example 3. Results for jazz (jazz*), cabaret (kabaree*), operetta (operet*), and dance (tants*) in *Päewaleht*.

The word "cabaret" ("kabaree*") lies roughly in the same league as jazz with a total of 2896 results in *Päewaleht* in 1921–1939. Cabaret, a form of musical and theatrical entertainment, was available at some restaurants in Tallinn. It fuelled fierce discussions in the 1920s and was even banned by the municipality in 1924–1925 (Hovi 2017, 109). Considered then a highly controversial phenomenon that undoubtedly represented "histories of marginalised groups", the number of results for "cabaret" yet slightly exceeded those for "jazz" in the 1930s, as demonstrated in Example 3.

A search for "operetta" ("*operet**"; includes the genitive "*opereti*", etc.) produced 10 789 results in *Päewaleht* during that period. The genre of operetta was highly popular those days, operetta productions serving as a crucial source of income for the Estonia Theatre in Tallinn and the Vanemuine Theatre in Tartu. The quantity of results for "operetta" – a form of theatre presented by major cultural institutions and covered regularly in newspapers – is, expectedly, much higher than in the case of "jazz" or "cabaret". This serves as a reminder that "jazz" formed just a fraction among the total mentions of musical or entertainment-related terms, and the number of occurrences alone does not fully reflect the cultural significance that was attributed to it in some of the texts. It is worth noting, though, that operetta productions then played an important role in popularising the jazz idiom, which was called for in "jazz operettas" in connection with depictions of modern urban milieu.

Furthermore, fluctuations in the occurrences of certain keywords must not be always interpreted as signs of change in the relevancy of the cultural phenomena they represent but can also be explained by shifts in the layout and focus of newspapers. To demonstrate this, results for a keyword as general and relatively neutral as "dance" ("*tants**") are included in Example 3; the graph displays a steady increase of its occurrences in *Päewaleht* in a period from the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s, as is also the case with several other keywords relating to music and entertainment.

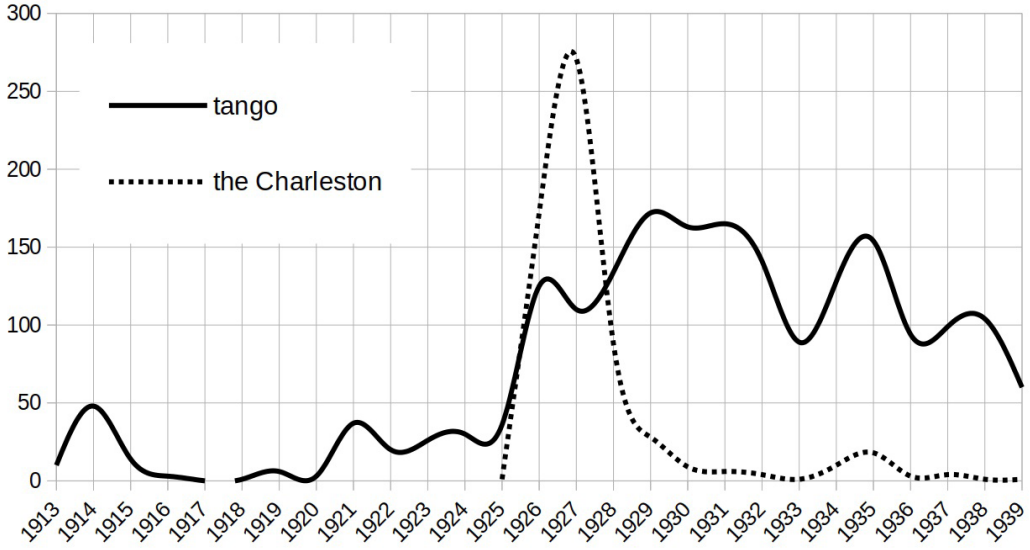
2.4. The cases of tango and the Charleston

To demonstrate how the above-mentioned method of quantitative analysis can be used for other terms of popular music, let us concentrate on two dances: tango and the Charleston.

While most of the dances introduced in the first decades of the 20th century did not remain popular for long, tango was an exception: known in Europe before WWI, it survived throughout the 1920s and 1930s, and, in the Estonian context, well into the Soviet era (1940s, 1950s and beyond). In 1911, it was announced in a German-language newspaper published in Tallinn (Reval) that "a new fashionable dance has appeared in the Parisian salons and high society overnight and has pushed the well-known Apache Dance into oblivion. [..]The young and the old alike are practising eagerly to dance the Argentine tango gracefully and temperamentally" (*Feuilleton-Beilage der Revalschen Zeitung*, 22.01./4.02.1911). A few years later, the original eagerness was reported to have turned into a "craze" in America, as in New York everybody was dancing tango "everywhere, regardless of gender and age, all day and night" (*Ajaleht*, 23.12.1913/5.01.1914) – an example of journalistic exaggeration not uncommon in the coverage of new dances.

The Charleston was invested with cultural implications no less powerful than those of tango. According to Susan Currell (2009, 94) the Charleston became "the emblem of the decade" in American popular culture after being featured in a 1923 revue *Runnin' Wild* with music by James P. Johnson. Reaching its peak of popularity in 1926, it could thus be described as "the signature dance of rebellious youth" that symbolised "the rejection of traditional social norms" and even the death-instinct of the Lost Generation (Currell 2009, 95–96). It was "rejected as ugly and vulgar by professional dance instructors and was condemned by civil, intellectual, and religious leaders as either the cause or symptom of a cultural decline" (Crease 2000, 700). In late 1926, the Charleston started to take hold in Estonia as well. "The dance of the future starts with the Charleston," was boldly stated in *Päewaleht* (4.11.1926).

In Example 4, the combined number of results for tango ("tango* AND *tants**") and the Charleston ("charleston* AND *tants**") in four newspapers (*Päewaleht*, *Postimees*, *Waba Maa*, and *Sakala*) are presented. The operator "AND *tants**" (dance) is added in each case to improve the relevance of the results in Estonian-language periodicals.



Example 4. Results for tango ("tango* AND *tants**") and the Charleston ("charleston* AND tants**") in *Päewaleht*, *Postimees*, *Waba Maa*, and *Sakala*.

The number of results for tango, reaching its first peak value shortly after its introduction in Estonia in 1914, sank in 1915–1920, that is during wartime, to the point of being negligible and began to recover in the early 1920s. The results for tango achieved their highest levels in the late 1920s when that dance was also favoured elsewhere in Europe. According to an article published in *Sakala* (27.04.1929; "What are the current dances" ["*Mida praegu tantsitakse*"]), tangos made up 50% of the dances requested by the audience in Berlin, and one particular tango song, *Ich küsse Ihre Hand, Madame* (*I Kiss Your Hand, Madame*) – title song from a 1929 German film starring Harry Liedtke and Marlene Dietrich – was described as particularly popular. In 1938, many of the results for tango in Estonian newspapers stemmed from advertisements for the German film *Tango Notturno* (released in late 1937, starring Pola Negri).

The journalistic fate of the Charleston was markedly different than that of tango: mentioned the most in 1927, the number of results for the Charleston steeply declined, truthfully reflecting the loss of interest in that dance in the ensuing "swing era" of the 1930s (in the mid-1930s, though, the New Charleston was introduced). The case of the Charleston seems to highlight the main strengths of the quantitative method described here: this method is most relevant when analysing the reception of cultural phenomena characterised by clear time boundaries. Thus, it can be used to illustrate 1) the kind of synchronicity in which certain phenomena of popular culture were spread in the public sphere in the US and European countries, and 2) the "passing nature" of new (popular) music as a distinctive thread in the discourses of modern culture in the 1920s and 1930s.

3. "*Sic transit gloria mundi*!" Jazz discourses in periodicals

The new trends in dance music that reached Estonia in the 1920s – their dissemination powered by gramophone records, cinema, and (since the late 1920s) radio broadcasts – gave rise to conflicting modes of reception. "Jazz" was then often used as a keyword to refer to the "modern times" both in a positive and negative sense. The various discourses that surrounded dance music and jazz in the 1920s and 1930s, some exemplified previously, can be classified under three main categories: estrangement, progress, and decline. Reactions of estrangement were mainly due to what was perceived to be "exaggerated" in dance music (dancing tango has become a "craze"; pianists playing "not only with fingers, but all the limbs", etc.). In many literary sources from the 1920s, jazz is mentioned next to symbols of technological progress, such as aeroplanes and radio broadcasting. Reports about the "dances of the future" (such as the Charleston) were then linked with a more general sense of technological optimism. At the same time, jazz was perceived as the epitome of post-WWI anxieties, as well as a reflection of the economic depression that started in the American stock market in 1929 and soon spread to Europe.

As was demonstrated in Section 2, while the word "jazz" appeared rather frequently in Estonian newspapers during that period, most of these occurrences were in advertisements or printed radio programmes. In articles, jazz was mentioned typically in a gossipy or sensationalist context, sometimes in connection with celebrity stories. The layout and tone of Estonian newspapers changed greatly in the 1920s compared to the previous period, producing much more variety especially in the form of tabloid journalism.

The gossipy tone of popular music coverage is exemplified by the context in which Oscar Strock (Strok) appeared in Estonian newspapers. In March 1931, it was mentioned that "the master of jazz music Strock, who resides in Riga, has composed a foxtrot dedicated to Miss Estonia" (*Postimees*, 01.03.1931). *Päewaleht* (2.03.1931) even published the Estonian lyrics of that song (*Miss Estonia 1931*) with sheet music (vocal + piano) included – undoubtedly a rare sight in daily newspapers – and then a longer feature story about Strock in connection with his performances in Tallinn (10.03.1931). Later that year, however, *Postimees* had a "scandal" to report from Riga: "The latest news of gossip in Riga is about the newest "schlager" by the schlager composer Strock – the scandalous bankruptcy of café *Barberina*" (*Postimees*, 20.11.1931). That story received a sequel a couple of months later: "While imprisoned, Strock continued to compose schlagers. [..] The new schlagers are titled *My Last Tango* and *Bankruptcy*" (*Postimees*, 16.01.1932).

As the economic depression reached Estonia in the early 1930s, these tales of woe certainly resonated with the local audiences. Later in 1932, a short article stated that jazz bands were on a decline in America due to the economic depression: "That is the opinion of the world's most popular composers and conductors. [..] American musicians believe that jazz was merely a phenomenon of after-war conjecture. As the days of high tide are over [in economy], so are those of jazz, knee-length skirts and women's bob haircut" (*Päewaleht*, 7.11.1932).

Among the various discourses that surrounded dance music and jazz in that period, those relating to "decline" or the "passing nature" of jazz can be regarded as particularly symptomatic of the tumultuous situation in culture. Since "jazz" was first described as one of the "modern dances" (Section 2.1), it did not seem unreasonable to assume that it would soon be, too, overshadowed by new and even more fashionable ones. The early 20th century saw a proliferation of dances advertised under various attractive names, and, indeed, the popularity of most of them did not last for long. In the 1920s, reports of the "death" of various phenomena of popular culture formed almost what could be described as a distinctive journalistic genre: "It sounds almost unbelievable, but according to a report from New York, the just recently praised Charleston, which began its way of triumph on the banks of the Mississippi and celebrated indescribable victories among the American [high] society, is now already among the dead" (*Päewaleht*, 24.01.1927). Foxtrot, tango and the Collegiate were reported as the dances now in fashion instead of the Charleston, while some were known to be campaigning to restore the long-faded popularity of the gavotte and the minuet – dances that the young found, however, too "lame".

Accusations over "indecency" were often uttered as far as dance music was concerned, but this was certainly not a new way of thinking. As demonstrated by Knowles (Knowles 2009, 3), "anti-dance sentiments" existed long before the 20th century. In the early 20th century, however, certain new factors contributed to dance-related scepticism: nocturnal activity (dancing late into the night) was then a novel urban phenomenon made possible by the introduction of artificial lighting, and the tensions and anxieties it created were "prominently reflected in newspaper coverage of urban nights" (Leivategija 2023, 9). In the 1920s the frivolity of the new dances, performed in "shady" places of entertainment, started to be explained as due to the influence of the "fast pace" and "superficial" nature of the traumatised modern times.

Reactions to new trends in music remind us that the 1920s were a decade characterised by, among other phenomena, Oswald Spengler's philosophy of history in *The Decline of the West* (published in 1918–1923), a work more multifaceted, though, than its title appears to suggest. Nevertheless, it became fashionable thereafter to detect the symptoms of *Untergang* in various manifestations of culture. It is important to note, however, that critical reactions to popular music on the one hand and modernist "serious" music on the other were in many aspects markedly similar. As popular music was then described as a symptom of social "anxiety" and the "highly unnatural state of affairs", so was much of modernist music criticised for its "superficial" appearance which was supposedly due to abandoning the concepts of coherence developed in the age of Beethoven. For many, "noise music" manifested by the Italian futurists – especially Luigi Russolo in the treatise *L'arte dei rumori* (1916, [*The Art of Noises*]) – became the very epitome of new music as such. It was all too common then to (mis)use the word "futurism" (or "music of the future") for various, often conflicting, concepts of modernist music. Discourses of decline were then intimately linked with visions of the "future".

The discourse of *Untergang* in connection with modernist music is exemplified in an article by the Estonian musicologist Peeter Ramul, best-known as the author of the first book on general music history (up to Beethoven) available in the Estonian language (1930). In an article published in *Muusikaleht* ([*Music Journal*], 1925, Nos. 1 and 2) he proposed a system of classification for the major trends in modern music, weighed against the legacy of the "great classics", as was common in the (German-language) musical historiography of that time. In conclusion, Ramul explains the social and cultural conditions that gave raise to Expressionism, Futurism, etc.:

> "As a matter of fact, the pronounced nervousness manifested in today's newest music is nothing to be surprised of. The character of modernism is due to the psychological conditions of our time. The current social, economic, and other living conditions are overall very abnormal. It is a period of crude materialism – one that suffocates the life-affirming way of thinking, so that the world succumbs to egoism. People mostly seek oblivion in the form of materialism and crude, "tickling" experiences. Instead of providing moral satisfaction, however, this weighs one's soul down even further, leading to the nervousness of the entire society" (Ramul 1925, 25)

At the same time, one could not deny that, along with anxiety, the modern world had brought about progress – if not in arts and entertainment, then at least in technology. Therefore, jazz-related dances, like shimmy, were often mentioned (rather admiringly) next to modern machines and cinema:

> "Jazz bands ramble now instead of [symphony] orchestras. More printed space is dedicated to cinema in newspapers than to literature, music, and theatre. Shimmy is being praised. Some of the more courageous dare to utter that time-honoured art, the one with a capital A, is altogether dead. It used to transcend life, covering it as a dome. Now the reverse has become a reality: new art grows from life itself. But since "life" means the major city with its machines, restaurants, bars, amusement parks, cinemas, and ball rooms, it is namely there that the seeds of new art should be looked for. And it exists there indeed in the form of cinemas, theatres for the masses, mass meetings, all kinds of jazz, shimmy, boxing, variety shows…" (Johannes Semper; *Kirjandus. Kunst. Teadus.* [Literature. Art. Science; supplement of *Päewaleht*] 03.07.1922).

The coverage of jazz in that period demonstrates that members of the musical scene were deeply divided in terms of their attitudes towards "serious" and "light" music. Apart from daily newspapers, new dance music and jazz were mentioned mostly in enthusiast-oriented journals in connection with radio broadcasts, gramophone records, and cinema, and there were also series of sheet music editions of schlagers published in the 1930s (e.g., *Modern lööklaulud* [*Modern Hit Songs*], *Helivõlu* [*Enchanted by the Sound*]). However, the most important music journal of that period *Muusikaleht* (*Music Journal*, 1924–1940), published under the auspices of the conservative Singers' Union, provided notably little insight into popular music and, for the most time, was rather meagre in

its coverage of modernist "serious" music as well. While the research by Ojakäär (2000) and Lauk (2010) provides ample evidence of a lively popular music and jazz scene in Estonia in the late 1920s and 1930s, the burgeoning jazz culture in Estonia inevitably functioned against the backdrop of pronounced cultural conservatism prevalent in much of Estonian society. In passing descriptions of jazz in various texts, motives of estrangement and prejudice (references to jazz as merely "making noise") tended to set the tone throughout that period.

Conclusions

The project of digitalizing Estonian periodicals in DIGAR has opened new opportunities to evaluate the usage of popular music terms in the 1920s and 1930s. By using full-text searches, it can be determined how many times certain terms occurred in newspapers during the period in question. This makes it easier than previously to focus on the journalistic "minutiae", such as advertisements or radio programmes published in daily newspapers, which are, nonetheless, descriptive of the general trends in the dissemination of "jazz" and other terms of popular culture. While the results gathered by using methods of quantitative analysis are not always informative on their own, they help to illustrate and specify the existing knowledge acquired by other means. This is exemplified in the case of the Charleston, a dance that defined the Roaring Twenties in American culture: in Estonian periodicals it appeared in the 1926 and was mentioned the most in 1927, roughly the same time as the peak of its popularity in the US. That kind of synchronicity in popular culture and its coverage in different countries and continents aptly illustrates, most of all, the effectiveness of the new means of communication that shaped the 20th century.

Defining the public image of jazz during that period remains a complicated task: although "jazz" was then undoubtedly a word of fashion, the coverage of jazz and other manifestations of popular culture in periodicals tended to be either understated (brief advertisements instead of more extensive coverage) or their impact exaggerated in a sensationalist manner (reports of various short-lived "crazes" in popular culture in Estonia or abroad). While the word "jazz" appeared rather consistently in Estonian newspapers from the mid-1920s onwards, the frequency of its occurrences was not significantly high compared to, for example, that of operetta. Nevertheless, many texts in periodicals attest to the significance that was then ascribed to jazz as a symbol of the "modern times" both in its positive (technological progress) and negative aspects (anxiety, commerciality, superficiality). Periodicals digitalized in DIGAR can be used as an important resource in determining the most general trends in the dissemination of music, and they provide a distinctive perspective on some of the attitudes that surrounded jazz and popular culture in the public sphere in the 1920s and 1930s.

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