

Networking through music in the 'long' 19th century: Preliminaries

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**The Challenges of Historiographic Research in Networking  
in the 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>- Century Habsburg Monarchy (an Overview)**

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The Habsburg Monarchy was a very pluricultural space, with various languages, histories, political traditions, religions and diverse and changing national loyalties. A historian who wants to address mechanisms of transfer of ideas and knowledge in the Monarchy in the premodern period and to interpret relations between certain individuals has to be prepared for a thorough and comprehensive research on archival sources of different provenance. This presentation is a brief account of the challenges faced by a researcher in Croatian history in his task to reconstruct the networking through music in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century and, specifically, to examine the impact of musical and extra-musical contacts of musicians Luka Sorkočević and Franjo Ksaver Kuhač.

The first challenge, often an obstacle, is the most obvious one if we bear in mind that Croatian Lands were under various forms of political government: relevant documents are scattered throughout the archives in the states that used to belong to the Habsburg Monarchy. The Kingdoms of Croatia and Slavonia were not only part of the Monarchy; their civilian part –counties and royal free cities – were also part of the Hungarian Kingdom within the Monarchy. On the contrary, the Military Frontier – a wide military administrative belt along the border with Ottoman Bosnia – was under direct rule of the Imperial Court in Vienna. The Monarchy also included part of inland Istria and the Littoral, under jurisdiction of Inner Austria. Coastal Istria and Dalmatia belonged to the Republic of Venice until 1797, when they also came under the Habsburg rule, but were administered separately from the Croatian-Slavonian Kingdom. In addition, the Republic of Dubrovnik – the birthplace of Luka Sorkočević – was an independent state until it was annexed to the Monarchy in 1808. The political and administrative fragmentation compels historians to conduct research in the Austrian national archives in Vienna, the Hungarian national archives in Budapest, the archives in Venice and Rome, as well as in the Croatian archives in Zagreb, Zadar and Dubrovnik. In addition, they have to master several languages and historical handwritings, particularly Latin, German, Italian, French, as well as Hungarian for the 19<sup>th</sup>-century sources. Furthermore, family archives of most prominent aristocrats who were patrons of musicians and at whose courts important social contacts were made, are also scattered throughout the archives in Vienna, Budapest, Bratislava, Zagreb, Varaždin, Zadar and Dubrovnik.

Another challenge researchers are faced with is customary nature of archival sources. The sources are often misleading, being generally non-systematic and fragmentary. The majority of them are of a financial nature, and their analysis has to include motives of their author(s)

and a broader context in which they came into being. Sources that explicitly explain individual relationships are extremely rare to find in the period in question, even among preserved egodocuments, as correspondences, memoirs or diaries. In addition, many protagonists that are mentioned in the sources – with the exception of those who held high positions or were prominent in society – remain unknown or limited to national historiographies, together with their career paths, education or social relationships.

On the other hand, analysis of a sizeable number of less intentional sources provides us with more 'objective' ties between individuals and offers insight into the conditions that shaped and influenced the 'network'. Let me present a few aspects that a historian could consider when analysing available sources.

First, travelling itself was an enterprise in the premodern period – and a very expensive one. A journey to any part of the Monarchy lasted several days and was extremely uncomfortable, often even health-threatening. It included frequent changes of means of transportation and periods of rest, and involved a number of people. Although many travel books were published in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, detailed accounts of travels were very rare. A good insight into the demands of premodern travelling was given by Count Franjo Oršić. Although Oršić travelled from Croatia to Graz and Vienna in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, his experience can serve as an example for similar journeys well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As a member of high nobility, he spent almost 500 forints on one of his four-month journeys. Expenses included horse care, preparation of carriages, cleaning of clothes and obtaining new clothing, accommodation, bedlinen, food, paper, ink, post services, barber's services, services of physicians, medicines, as well as services done by various groomers, coachmen, clerks or servants. If we know, for example, that annual salary for a higher public servant in Croatia's estates government was 100-300 forints, and that an average noble family did not earn much more than 300 forints on its estate, it becomes clear that travelling at that time was financially very demanding even for high nobility. However, individuals who travelled as delegates – and Luka Sorkočević was a delegate of the Republic of Dubrovnik in Vienna – enjoyed better conditions, since they usually received daily allowances from a public fund.

Furthermore, a stay in big cities was often governed by social norms that largely differ from those today. Use of language or belonging to a specific nation cannot always be considered significant in reconstructing social and intellectual ties among individuals. The concepts of 'nationalities' constantly changed throughout the 'long' 19<sup>th</sup> century, and they reflected a choice of language, as well as cultural or political choices. However, significance of these concepts for creating relationships ought to be determined on a case by case basis. Society in the Monarchy was generally multilingual and multinational and heavily relied on the system of patronage and various other forms of social and family ties. Individual successes or failures often depended on one's acquaintances and recommendations, or on the possibility to gain access to a place of influence.

This – almost without exemption – also implied certain financial investment. Count Oršić's already mentioned travel diary reveals that costs of 'gaining access' could even exceed travel costs: to obtain recommendations for reaching influential places or audiences with influential personalities, one had to 'donate' numerous acquaintances and family members, as well as secretaries, clerks and even doorkeepers or servants. Making a choice to donate or not sometimes directly influenced individual success. Thus, from today's point of view, the Monarchy's high society was extremely corrupt. But, from the historical point of view, this practice was not only legitimate, but also socially desirable, and it reflected much on forming networks.

Only a few people – and almost exclusively of noble origin – could cope with the demands of social life at an imperial or aristocratic court, which were also the centres of the Monarchy's music life. This is especially true of financial requirements. Travellers who travelled through Vienna, Budapest, Bratislava or other cities of the Monarchy in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century often emphasised tremendous luxury an individual had to accept if he wanted to be part of the society. This did not only imply presentable clothes, but also the willingness to take part in popular games, such as, for example, playing cards for money. The social importance of games played at the Court was often mentioned by travel writers of the period – Johann Georg Keyßler for example wrote around the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century: "He who is of old nobility and good fortune, and who is not afraid of a high card game, can find much pleasure in Vienna and be assured that he is not excluded from any society. At times, the game alone replaces what would usually be wanted in the first instance". That practice was copied by all aristocratic courts: In 1773, Count Ladislav Erdődy reported from his court: "There are more than a hundred people here ... we all live disorderly as much as we can. Various hunts, all-day dance and music are this society's entertainment." Such requirements were imposed by society even in the time of Emperor Joseph II, who liberalised the court etiquette.

Access to influential people also implied keeping up regular correspondence and sharing information that was not available in published newspapers or periodicals. Much of the preserved correspondence points to a great number of correspondents, but also reveals a more intimate tone than the one that would be expected from the nature of the relationship. Social and intellectual connections were extremely heterogeneous, and their complexity cannot always be applied to a group of people, or to longer periods. That is the reason why sources cannot be used only for providing data to detect models applicable to society as a whole in a certain period; the historian should aim at detecting individual network strategies (or possibilities), interactions between specific social connections or influences by the behaviour of others. Historical meaning must stay in the focus in order for us to be able to judge whether detected social or intellectual connections really had importance for the transfer of ideas and knowledge. That is why micro research, which builds the core of research conducted within the framework of this project, contributes to the understanding of complexity of networking in general.