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Forms of Sociability and Entertainment in the Principality of Serbia: Princess Anka Obrenović's Salons

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INTRODUCTION

When exploring the 19th Serbian culture it is necessary to bear in mind the existence of cultural pluralism, conditioned by complex and dynamic socio-historical movements, as well as by the fact that the private and public life of the Serbian people took place in different social and state systems: the Habsburg or Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the Ottoman Empire and the Principality/Kingdom of Serbia. From the fall of the last territories of the Serbian medieval state under Turkish rule (1459) until the early 19th century, Serbia did not exist as an independent state. In the period from the 16th to the 18th century, during the Ottoman-Habsburg wars, there occurred large migrations of Serbs to the north (Southern Hungary) and northwest (Croatia), with the largest one taking place in 1690 under Serbian Patriarch Arsenije III Čarnojević. Thus, the Romano-German emperor in Vienna became the sovereign of 100 000 Serbs in the imperial military border between the upper Adriatic and the Southern Carpathians, as well as in areas ruled by the Habsburgs (Banat, Bačka and Srem) (see more in Petrović 2002-2015). The liberation struggle of the Serbs in the Ottoman Empire particularly took hold in the early 19th century, erupting in the First (1804) and the Second Serbian Uprising (1815), after which the Principality of Serbia was formed, and was proclaimed to the Kingdom in 1882.¹

¹ The Principality of Serbia was completely liberated from the Ottoman military presence by Prince Mihailo Obrenović, son of Prince Miloš Obrenović, in 1867, when

By liberating from the Ottoman rule, the Serbs raised not only a national but also a social revolution, thus enabling the essential transformation of society within the ideological coordinates on which modern Europe of that time was based and developed. The Serbian middle-class elites in the Habsburg Monarchy, which had been built since the 18th century, had a significant influence on citizenry in Serbia. Thanks to trade contacts, family ties, as well as the migration of a significant number of educated citizens from the Habsburg Monarchy to the Principality and then the Kingdom of Serbia, cultural habits and ideals of civic privacy were transmitted (Ivanović 2006: 5-8).

Serbian culture and art had a significant development in the 18th and 19th centuries within the Habsburg Monarchy, and it was through southern Hungary that numerous influences, primarily from Central Europe, but also from Russia, came into Serbian culture at the time when the Serbian population lived in quite different socio-historical conditions under the Ottoman Empire. The first educated Serbian musician, pianist and composer Kornelije Stanković (1831-1865), born in Buda, received his initial music education in Arad, Szeged and Pest, and continued in Vienna, where he studied music theory and composition with Simon Sechter. Due to the lack of local musicians, Czech musicians were influenced by Slavophile ideas, and they worked hard in the second half of the 19th century to advance musical life, especially in the province. A significant contribution to the rapid development of musical life was made by prominent performers, as well as numerous church choirs and singing societies, which, after the founding of the first Serbian Singing Society in Pančevo in 1838, were formed in other cities as well (see more in Kokanović Marković 2017: 127-128).

Among the Serbs in the Ottoman Empire, the first steps in cultural life appeared after the Second Serbian Uprising, during the first reign of Prince Miloš Obrenović (1783-1860). The first pianos arrived in the Principality of Serbia in the 1820s for the needs of the princely family Obrenović. The first piano was brought at the request of Prince Miloš Obrenović and was placed in the home of the Prince's personal physician, Vito Romita, from whose wife, in addition to piano lessons, Princess Jelisaveta Obrenović received "a European education". From the musico-sociological point of view, a very important fact is that piano was "acquired by a member of the richest and most powerful

he secured the withdrawal of the Ottoman army from the garrison on the territory of the Principality of Serbia. The Principality of Serbia became an internationally recognised independent state by the decisions of the Berlin Congress in 1878.

family in Serbia, in order to allow his daughter, a representative of the newly formed courtly elite, to further emphasise her privileged status by playing on it" (Jeremić-Molnar 2006: 35). The piano was very quickly integrated into the upper classes as well, and became an integral part of the salons of wealthy merchants, civil servants, intellectuals, as well as the settled foreigners, who were of great importance in nurturing home music-making (Kokanović Marković 2014: 116-135).

After 1830, Josif Šlezinger (1794-1870), Alojz Kalauz² and Milan Milovuk (1825-1883) came from the Habsburg Monarchy to the young Principality of Serbia and made a significant contribution to the founding of the first musical institutions and the spread of musical literacy. Prior to moving to the Principality of Serbia, Šlezinger was engaged as a civilian guard chapel master in Novi Sad. He had contacts with Viennese music circles, most notably with Simon Sechter, pianist Joseph Fischhof and Johann Strauss the Father (Kuhač 1897: 126). In addition to giving piano lessons to the children of the princely family Obrenović, he made significant contributions in many segments of musical life in Serbia. He founded the first orchestra (1831), and for the Princely Serbian Theatre he composed music for the then-favourite genre of semi-opera (a kind of national Singspiel). Thus, the German Singspiel, which was very popular with the Serbs in Hungary, was also enthusiastically accepted in the Principality of Serbia. Šlezinger composed primarily marches and salon social dances for balls and various national occasions, as well as music for theatrical plays. Since 1843, the Czech Alojz Kalauz was also actively engaged in Belgrade performing as a pianist and giving private piano lessons. Upon his arrival in Belgrade, Alojz Kalauz first distinguished himself as a pianist and private piano teacher, and soon began to compose salon pieces for piano, in which he most often covered tunes of Serbian folk and civic songs. These are international salon dances (polka, quadrille, march), variations and fantasies. He collected and recorded tunes of Serbian folk songs and dances. Kalauz published the first collections of Serbian folk songs and dances for piano in Vienna under the title *Srpski napjevi* [Serbian Songs] (Kalauz 1850, 1852). Milan Milovuk, who came to Belgrade from Pest, founded the First Belgrade Singing Society in 1853. Within this singing society, the first music school in Serbia was opened in 1899, and all major Serbian composers from the second half of the 19th century were engaged in this society (Kokanović Marković 2017: 128-129) (Fig. 1).

² Birth and death years are unknown.



Fig. 1. *Milan Milovuk, Au bord de la Save, Polka pour le Piano.*

ANKA OBRENOVIĆ'S SALONS

Salons in the young Principality of Serbia first appeared in Belgrade and date back to the late 1830s (Timotijević 2006: 177). The gradual repression of the Oriental lifestyle changed the appearance of the then family homes, as well as their interior design. Under the influence of Central European understanding, buildings were being constructed, characterized by representative salons, and instead of the Oriental system, which kept privacy in the strictly closed blocks of individual houses, the doors of homes were opened for a new form

of communication, socializing and relaxation.³ In the period from the mid-19th century to the First World War, every finer civic house in Belgrade had a salon, and salon gatherings were an integral part of the civic lifestyle. The salon represented the social and gravitational centre of the house, while the salon furniture most often indicated the social position and the taste of the owner. The most precious and representative item in the salon was the piano, while through illustrated catalogues, Viennese fashion innovations in decorating and furnishing salons came to Belgrade.

Court salons in princely houses in the Principality of Serbia had a similar function as civic ones. On well-defined days, guests were welcomed in court salons, which made it possible for “a ruler to appear before the people with, conditionally speaking, less authoritative identity” (Stolić 2006: 343-346). But the larger number of salons and guests, as well as the way they were equipped, indicated that they were going beyond the civic concept of salons. Salons played a significant role in organising social and cultural life, and in achieving various aspects of education, as well as national and political goals.

There were a number of occasions for socializing in the salons, which varied in relation to: the time of the day or the season when they were organised; visitors (women, men, or both sexes); type and extent of socialising (regular weekly visits and salon evenings for large numbers of guests). While weekly visits were organised throughout the year, salon evenings with more guests were held during winter and fall. Balls and gatherings in the salons, both in the court and in the homes of wealthy Belgraders, were most often organised in winter (Paunović 1968: 509). For the guests to have a good time and to relax, it was necessary to provide a whole range of different types of entertainment. Friendly conversation was a key point of socialising. In addition to enjoying the poetry and prose of contemporary foreign and national writers and poets, a significant portion of the “program” was filled with music, with the piano being given priority and four-handed playing being a favourite. However, in the salons music was played on other instruments, too, and people also gladly sang. As a rule, salon gatherings ended with dancing national and foreign dances, and a buffet in the form of small refreshments was a common practice (Kokanović Marković 2014: 145-147).

³ It was not until 1860, during the reign of Prince Mihailo Obrenović, that the Europeanisation of Serbian architecture and urbanism took root, which brought more significant results and had an impact on private life only in more culturally developed areas. Needs for socialising, cultural content and entertainment, influenced the development of public buildings: taverns, hotels, theatres, buildings of merchant and cultural educational associations (Kadijević 2006: 251-258).

During the second reign of Prince Mihailo Obrenović (1823-1868),⁴ in the 1860s, his cousin Princess Anka Obrenović (1821-1868) organised salons that represented significant social and cultural gatherings in the capital. Anka Obrenović was a daughter of Jevrem Obrenović (1790-1856), brother of Prince Miloš Obrenović. She studied French and German at a young age and had also music education. She played piano and guitar, and published translations of short stories from German in the Serbian press. She married a sipahi and financial magnate from Timișoara, Aleksandar Konstantinović, in 1842 (Vojinović 2010: 29-30, 132).

In her salons, decorated in a “European way”, dressed in the latest Viennese fashion, she brought together the most respectable fellow citizens and foreigners who lived in Belgrade. She organised: women’s salons, women’s art salons, and the so-called “mixed” art salons, attended by members of both sexes (Dimitrijević-Stošić 1965: 68-69). This division was “carried out” by Anka upon the arrival of Ali Rizâ Paşa (?-1876) in Belgrade in 1862, so that his wife Meira could visit her salons. Ali Rizâ Paşa was appointed Vizier of the Pashalik of Belgrade in 1862 and was the last Ottoman commander of the Belgrade Fortress.⁵ His arrival marked a change in Porte’s official politics towards the Serbs, a politics of indulgence and good relations.⁶ During his stay in Belgrade, he often went to the theatre, as well as to the balls organised by Prince Mihailo (Paunović 1968: 512-513). Shortly after her arrival in Belgrade, Meira became a close friend of Anka Obrenović, and they often visited each other. Greek by her father and French by her mother, Meira was born on the Greek island of Tinos, where she was educated by French teachers. In addition to her knowledge of Turkish, Greek and French, she studied Serbian and German in Belgrade.

Gatherings in the “women’s” art salons of Anka Obrenović started at 2 p.m. and ended in winter at 5 p.m. and in summer at 6 p.m. at the lat-

⁴ Prince Mihailo Obrenović was the Prince of Serbia from 1839 to 1842 and from 1860 to 1868. The first reign ended with the overthrow, when Prince Aleksandar Karadorđević (1806-1885) was brought to the throne. The second reign ended with his murder in 1868. During the reign of Prince Mihailo, Serbia assumed control of the remaining fortified cities (Belgrade, Smederevo, Šabac, Kladovo, Užice, and Soko).

⁵ Mehmed Süreyya states that he served as military commander of the Belgrade Fortress from August 1864 to March 1867 (see Ali Rizâ Paşa’s biography in Süreyya 1996: 301-302).

⁶ Ali Rizâ Paşa arrived in Serbia after the Turkish bombing of Belgrade, at a time of very tense relations between Serbia and Turkey. Through his wise politics he made a significant contribution to improving relations between the two countries (Paunović 1968: 510).

est. On the other hand, in Anka's "mixed salons" the parties ended at dawn, as "the women sat tranquilly beside their husbands" (Dimitrijević-Stošić 1965: 77). In addition to prominent women of Belgrade, Anka also used to invite wives of foreign diplomats, accredited to the Serbian court, as well as the wives of senior officers from the military garrisons (from Vojvodina, the Habsburg Monarchy), mainly women of Serbian and Croatian origin. In terms of clothing, the presence of traditional and modern, i.e. European, is evident. Anka and her mother Tomanija, the wives of foreign diplomats and Austrian officers, were dressed in European fashion, although Anka sometimes used to wear even the "luxurious Serbian folk costumes". Guests were served "from the finest porcelain" and chefs, brought from Vienna, Pest and Timișoara used to prepare "the most exquisite savory pastries and cakes" (Dimitrijević-Stošić 1965: 73-74).

The gathering used to begin with courtesy stories from everyday life of the guests, and then the salon host Anka Obrenović read in the original and translated poems by French and German romantic poets, but she also always read one Serbian folk poem or story. In addition to their favorite poetry, guests also enjoyed reading short stories by German and French writers. An important segment of the salon gatherings was the musical part of the program. Guests from Vojvodina, wives of Austrian officers, gladly played the piano in four hands. Ali Rizâ Paşa's wife Meira, as well as Princess Anka Obrenović, also often played the piano in four hands with other guests. The wife of the Italian consul Scovasso very often played piano solo, and it was noted that she gladly played the then popular Italian patriotic song *Viva l'Italia*. In addition to the favourite piano, violin, harp and guitar could also be heard in Anka's salons. Popular salon music by foreign and local authors dominated the repertoire, as well as covers of Serbian folk and civic songs. The salon gatherings ended with dancing Serbian folk dances, followed by waltzes and csárdáses, which were very modern in Belgrade in the 1860s (Dimitrijević-Stošić 1965: 70-71; Kokanović Marković 2014: 151-153).

It is significant to remark that in addition to women's art salons, Anka also organised women's salons, which had a primarily practical educational function. At gatherings like this, she brought together wives of higher ranked officials, as well as of wealthy merchants. The guests were accompanied by their daughters wanting for them to learn "instructive European things": good manners, home decorating, flower growing and gardening. Princess Anka Obrenović advised her guests to read and visit theatre performances as much as possible. As the aforementioned gatherings offered girls an applicable, practical education, their parents found them useful, and on the other

hand, it was a matter of prestige to be Anka Obrenović's guest. However, in a patriarchal society, men also feared that visits to these salons would have a negative impact on their wives and daughters (Dimitrijević-Stošić 1965: 69-70; Kokanović Marković 2014: 149-150).

Anka Obrenović, on the other hand, gladly visited the women's salons of Ali Rizâ Paşa's wife Meira. These salon get-togethers open a window to the semi-private world of a high-ranking Ottoman official's wife. In lavish Oriental salons, from early November to June, Paşa's wife Meira also hosted women's art salons. In addition to the Serbian women from Belgrade, her guests were also wives of Austrian officers from Vojvodina. Guests in her salons stayed from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. and were served traditional Turkish dishes. As a salon host, Meira led a conversation, mostly in French, but sometimes also in Serbian, which she learned during her stay in Belgrade. She was fond of French romantic poets and writers, whose works she read in the original language, while works of German literature could also be heard in her salons. When it comes to the musical part of the program, the characteristics of Meira's salons were performances of "girly songs and *čoček* dances".⁷ Meira played piano excellently, but also the violin and the guitar, and she gladly sang. Her favorite song that she sang was *Sunce jarko, ne sijaš jednako* [Bright sun, you do not shine equally]. The lyrics of this song were written by Isidor Ćirić (1844-1893) and it was published by Kornelije Stanković in the first book of *Srbske narodne pesme* [Serbian folk songs] dedicated specifically to Prince Mihailo III Obrenović, in Vienna in 1862. The beauty of this folk song also attracted P. I. Tchaikovsky, who used it in the *Marche Slave* in B-flat minor, Op. 31. The women from Belgrade sang songs that were popular in Serbia at that time, and guests from Vojvodina, in addition to old Serbian and Croatian songs, also gladly performed German and Hungarian ones. The gatherings ended with dancing *čoček*, as well as the lively European dances, which were especially loved by guests from Vojvodina. Their favourite one was the waltz, which Meira danced very well (Dimitrijević-Stošić 1965: 66-67; Kokanović Marković 2014: 153-154).

The fact that they were visited by distinguished women who stayed in Belgrade, testifies to the importance of Meira's salons. During their stay in Belgrade, Meira's salons were also visited by actresses from Novi Sad:

⁷ In *čoček*, dancers make movements with their bellies. *Čoček* came to Serbia with Ottoman conquests. Vasić states that it was customary for "the Gypsies at that time to dance *čoček* all around the small towns" (Vasić 2005: 51-52).

poet and suffragette Draga Dejanović (1843-1871), who was educated at the Vincikov Institute in Timișoara,⁸ and Draginja Dankulov (1841-1890),⁹ as well as the English missionaries Adeline Paulina Irby (1833-1911) and Georgina Muir Mackenzie.¹⁰ For example, actress Draginja Dankulov, who was known in the theatre for her singing skills, sang and played the piano in the salons. She also recited the patriotic and love poetry by Serbian poets Jovan Jovanović Zmaj (1833-1904) and Đura Jakšić (1832-1878), as well as verses by German Oriental poets that were very popular at the time, such as Friedrich Martin von Bodenstedt (1819-1892), Georg Friedrich Daumer (1800-1875) and August Hellermund Platen (1796-1835) (Kokanović Marković 2014: 154).

Unlike women's salons, the "mixed" salons of Anka Obrenović had a more pronounced artistico-political character. In addition to the obligatory literary and musical part of the program, there were serious discussions about domestic and foreign affairs. Although these conversations were primarily conducted by men, it is known that women also participated in them. In addition to Anka Obrenović, an active participant in such talks was, for example, Katarina Đorđević Milovuk (1844-1913), the first female principal of the Women's Grande école in Belgrade and wife of Milan Milovuk. These gatherings were attended by professors of lyceums, writers, artists, officers, and diplomats. Ali Rizâ Paşa also visited mixed salons of Anka Obrenović, but without his wife (Kokanović Marković 2014: 154-156).

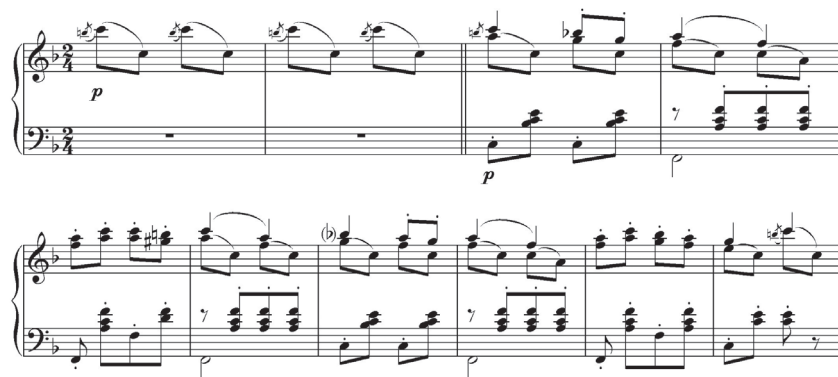
When it comes to the music content of these salon gatherings, as well as of the aforementioned ones, in addition to singing and playing the piano solo and in four hands being the favourite ones, it was also a joy to play the violin, harp and the guitar. Members of the courtly elite could afford to have acclaimed artists in the salon. Anka Obrenović hosted Kornelije Stanković in her salon during his stay in Belgrade, in May and June 1861, with whom she

⁸ Due to illness, she left acting and devoted herself to educational and literary work. As an active suffragette, she gave public lectures and published articles in magazines (Stojaković 2001: 100-102).

⁹ Her acting and singing skills were praised, so she achieved her best roles in semi-operas. Married in 1864, she withdrew from acting (Tomandl 1953: 137-138).

¹⁰ Adeline Irby was born in England, where she received education. After completing her studies, she traveled to Germany, Belgium and France, Hungary, Romania and European Turkey (1859-1861) with her friend Georgina Muir Mackenzie. In 1862, they decided to visit parts of Turkey inhabited by the Southern Slavs. They also stayed in Belgrade and later moved to Bosnia and Herzegovina. On her return to London, she published a travelogue *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey-in-Europe* in 1867 (Momčilović 2009: 183-185).

played piano in four hands, while her guests danced waltzes and csárdáses with him and taught him Serbian folk dances – kolos (Dimitrijević-Stošić 1965: 77-76; Kokanović Marković 2014: 159) (Ex. 1 and Ex. 2).



Ex. 1. Kornelije Stanković, Bratimstvo polka, mm. 1-10.

Andante grazioso

Più vivo

f sempre staccato

Ex. 2. Kornelije Stanković, Smederevka.

CONCLUSION

Social life in the salons of Anka Obrenović is a true barometer of the needs and aspirations of the emerging citizens of the time. Princess Anka Obrenović was the first woman in the Principality of Serbia to publish translations from a foreign language and keep a diary, and she actively played piano. By organising

the so-called women's art salons, she made it possible, first and foremost, to socialise with her close friend, Paşa's wife Meira, as well as to connect the most respected women of the 1860s Belgrade. Since Anka Obrenović (Fig. 2) at that time was a woman with a clear political ambition and a significant influence on Prince Mihailo Obrenović, it is assumed that by bonding with Meira and Ali Rizâ Paşa, as well as with wives of foreign diplomats and with prominent scientists and artists, she strengthened her political power. On the other hand, by organising women's salons, intended for women who came from clerical and merchant classes, she also showed a willingness to bring together not only the capital's elite, but also women of the middle class, and educate them.



Fig. 2. *Princess Anka Obrenović* (retrieved from Nikolina Radovanović).

Since in public life there were not many opportunities to listen to music, music in the salons was a supplement, and often a substitute for public concerts. In their various appearances, the salons replaced the lack of public associations and professional institutions, which were only just beginning to develop at that time. The fact is that salon music was predominantly performed and listened to in the salons. However, it is important to emphasize that, unlike places with a rich musical tradition, the appearance of salon music in Serbia did not signify a single "orientation" in popular music of that time, which

existed in parallel with art music, but it coincided in time with the appearance of the first composers and music releases, which mostly belonged to salon music. Therefore, in contrast to the developed musical environments, classical music was “born” through salon music.

The education of young people at European conservatories, who then returned home with new knowledge and experiences, was of particular importance for the further development of Serbian music and for its incorporation into the contemporary currents of European musical achievements. Composers, beginning in the 1850s, received their music education mainly in Prague, Vienna, Leipzig and Munich, and after World War I in France and England. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the process of discarding a salon form was evident, both in terms of concert repertoires and in the compositions of young artists, graduates of European conservatories. This transformation was heralded and encouraged by the writings on music in the press, in which, since the 1880s, critical reviews of salon music could be encountered. However, in the first half of the 19th century, the foundations for the development of musical institutions, education and concert life were laid precisely within the framework of home and salon music-making, thanks to the activities of numerous foreign and national musicians and amateurs.

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