

Musical associations and their place in the musical life of Bratislava in the 19th century¹

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By the decision of the emperor Joseph II, Bratislava (then Pressburg/Pozsony/Prešpork) ceased to be the capital of the Kingdom of Hungary in 1783. After the crown jewels were taken to Vienna and almost all central offices moved to Buda, followed by a large segment of the aristocracy, the city started to lose its importance. These significant changes also affected the local musical life. After disbanding the number of aristocratic music bands, its character changed, when dominant role had continuously been taken over by bourgeois/townpeople. This fact was also reflected in the institutional basis the pillar of which became music associations. As a qualitatively new institutional form, they were associating music lovers and were adapted to social and cultural interests of the newly established middle class, i.e., townpeople. However, the aristocracy did not disappear from the music life completely, when participated on music activities, in addition to organizing, mainly through the function of patron of individual associations. The basic function of the associations was cultivating artistic singing and art music as such but, at the same time, the associations worked as a medium of spending one's spare time in a cultivated and meaningful manner with the unwritten requirement of developing creativity of their

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townspeople members. Cultivation of common interests also contributed to the enhancement of collective identity of this social class. In the 19th century, Bratislava had the character of a German-Slovak-Hungarian town.² The dominant German burghers got integrated both economically and socially in Hungarian society and took over the task of the Hungarian middle class. On the other side, only a small number of the local intelligentsia adhered to Slovak nationality. This was also reflected in the national composition of associations, which were primarily German and German-Hungarian. Their establishment began in 1810s and reached its peak in the last third of the century.

The Society of Bratislava Free Artists and Language Teachers (Verein der Preßburger freien Künstler und Sprachlehrer) association the statutes of which were officially approved in 1817 had a primary position in the process of constituting modern music associations. His archetype can be seen in the Viennese Society of Musicians (Tonkünstler-Societät) and the association of the same name from Prague. Its purpose was to support retired artist and their families and for this aim, organizing concerts to gain financial funds was one of his activities. Joseph Schodl, a long-time music teacher, stood behind the foundation and the entire concept of this institution, whose patron became Count Stephan Illésházy. Among all artists, music teachers formed a substantial part of the Society's membership base.³ The basic repertoire consisted of opera overtures, symphonies and oratorios by composers such as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven and Luigi Cherubini.⁴ The performance of Haydn's oratorios *Die Jahreszeiten* and *Die Schöpfung* belonged to the most important documented music activities of the association. In 1828, the musical section led by Ludwig van Beethoven's friend the composer and teacher Heinrich Klein (1756–1832) separated and founded a completely new association focused on the performance of church music. However, activities of the Church Music Association (Kirchen Musik-Verein) were continuously reduced to zero, and the association was dissolved in the year 1832. In addition to Klein's death, one of the main reasons for its end was a lack of funds, but a more capable succes-

2 Zuzana Francová, "Obyvatelia – etnická, sociálna a konfesijná skladba," *Bratislava: (Ročenka Mestského múzea)*, no. 10 (1998): 20–1.

3 Eva Szórádová, "Z histórie bratislavského Spolku umelcov a učiteľov jazyka," *Slovenská hudba* 29, no. 3–4 (2003): 434.

4 Luba Ballová, "Spolok slobodných umelcov a profesorov rečí v Bratislave," in *Hudobné tradície Bratislavy a ich tvorcovia I.*, ed. Zdenko Nováček (Bratislava: Obzor, 1974), 76.

sor appeared soon. The score archive and the overall aim of enhancing of the musical performance in the church was taken over by the newly formed Church Music Association at the Saint Martin's Cathedral (Preßburger Kirchenmusikverein zu Sankt Martin/Szent Mártonról címzett Pozsonyi Egyházi Zeneegyesület) founded in 1833. This association with 290 founding members played central role in the Bratislava music-cultural life both in the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries.⁵ A key factor for its existence was that the aristocracy, clergy, and townspeople were joined in the association. This symbiosis is proven by the personalities who were involved in its founding: the main initiator, a local priest Joseph Prybila as chairman, the municipal councillor Anton Namer as cashier, and Count Casimir Esterhazy as patron. A specific feature of the association was cultivation both of sacred and secular music. Sacred music productions of the association had liturgical character and the requirements of the church year and religious holidays were naturally reflected in the sacred music repertoire. Thanks to the successful first concerts, the number of secular music concert performances had increased shortly afterwards. The decisive art and professional guarantor of the level both of the sacred and secular music productions of the association was the Kapellmeister. In the 19th century, three important persons were holding this function: Josef Kumlik (1801–1869), Karl Mayrberger (1828–1881), and Josef Thiard-Laforest (1841–1897).⁶

Josef Kumlik, a former student of Heinrich Klein, served as the Kapellmeister for more than 30 years (1833–1837; 1843–1869). He mostly tended to the sacred music with the broad repertoire: masses, offers, graduals, and other liturgical genres. He is considered the founder of performing this type of music in the city and his successors made some additions to the repertoire only. Masses written by the composers such as Joseph Haydn, Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Ludwig van Beethoven were frequently performed. A unique Kumlik's contribution is relating to the cultivation of Beethoven's secular as well as sacred music. The *Mass in C major* was a permanent part of his repertoire, *Missa solennis* in D major was reserved for the St. Cecilia's holiday and was performed

5 Jana Lengová, "Cirkevný hudobný spolok," in *Hudobné dejiny Bratislavy: od stredoveku po rok 1918*, ed. Jana Kalinayová-Bartová (Bratislava: Ars Musica, 2020): 262–74.

6 Jana Lengová and Eva Szórádová, "Kapelníci Josef Kumlik, Karl Mayrberger, Josef Thiard-Laforest," in *Hudobné dejiny Bratislavy: od stredoveku po rok 1918*, ed. Jana Kalinayová-Bartová (Bratislava: Ars Musica, 2020): 274–82.

by Kumlik seven times in total.⁷ The Schubert's *Mass No. 6*, Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, and Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy's *Psalm No. 42* were performed by Kumlik too. The most important artistic events included performances of the Beethoven's *Symphonies No. 3, No. 5, and No. 7*. Kumlik had also premiered several Slovak pieces including Ján Levoslav Bella's compositions.⁸

For unknown reasons, in the years 1837–1843, Karl Frajman von Kochlow (1800–1885) replaced Kumlik in the function of the Kapellmeister. Unlike his predecessor, Kochlow preferred secular music, especially operas and their instrumental arrangements. This can also be seen in the repertoire, which consisted of works by well-known opera composers such as Vincenzo Bellini, Gaetano Donizetti, Gioacchino Rossini, etc. At that time, his own compositions *Der Liebe Sehnsucht* and *Der Liebe Klag* for voice and orchestra were performed too. After almost six years, Kumlik returned and was awarded the Medal of Honor for Arts and Sciences for his meritorious activities.

Karl Mayrberger and Josef Thiard-Laforest, the other two Kapellmeisters of the association, tended toward neo-Romanticism and this style orientation of theirs was also expressed in their association repertoire. With regard to the concert repertoire, Karl Mayrberger (1869–1881) followed the Kumlik's heritage by performing compositions of Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, and Mendelssohn-Bartholdy in particular. However, Mayrberger also enriched the concert programme of new works of Franz Schubert, Max Bruch, Robert Volkmann, Richard Wagner, as well as works of the old masters such as Orlando de Lassus, Johann Sebastian Bach or Michael Praetorius. Thanks to Mayrberger, Franz Schubert's masses found their place in the liturgical repertoire of the association. Undoubtedly, integration of the Franz Liszt's masses in the repertoire of the Cathedral belongs to the Karl Mayrberger's greatest artistic contributions. The Liszt's *Missa solemnis* was played by Mayrberger five times in total, out of which two times with Liszt personally present. The Liszt's *Missa coronationalis* was performed more frequently since its duration was more suitable for liturgical purposes.

Another Kapellmeister Josef Thiard-Laforest (1881–1897) preferred three music style areas: Viennese classicism, neo-Romanticism, and ancient music. The important music events performed by him became the Ludwig van Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* and the *Legend of St. Elizabeth* oratory

7 Sylvia Urdová, "Hudba počas slávností sv. Cecílie Cirkevného hudobného spolku v Bratislave a Ján Batka," *Bratislava: (Ročenka Mestského múzea)*, no. 29 (2017): 66.

8 Vladimír Godár, "Cirkevno-hudobný spolk," *Slovo* 36, no. 24 (2004): 20.

and *Missa coronationalis* written by Franz Liszt; in 1844, the latest was conducted by Franz Liszt himself there. One of the unique features of Bratislava's musical life at that time was that, unlike in Vienna, there was no rivalry between adherents of program and absolute music. Within this context, compositions such as *The Prelude* and *Isolde's death scene* from the Richard Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde* and overtures by Hector Berlioz's *Benvenuto Cellini*, *Roman Carnival*, *The Flight into Egypt*, and *Harold in Italy* were played on the one hand. At the same time, there were performed *Serenade in A major* and choral work *The Schicksalslied* composed by Johannes Brahms, Robert Schumann's *Symphonies No. 3 and No. 4*, Anton Bruckner's *Symphony No. 7* with the author present. As for ancient music, overtures from the Georg Friedrich Handel's oratory *Esther* and Johann Sebastian Bach's *Concerto for Two Violins in D minor* were given place. During Thiard-Laforest's term in office, his *Mass in D major* was in the repertoire too.

In the last years of the 19th century (1897–1901), the association was led by Ludwig Burger (1850–1936) who was also including in the concert programmes new pieces of a high artistic value such as the extract from *Die Walküre*, an opera written by Richard Wagner, or Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 6*. After the Burger's resignation, Anton Strehlen (1840–1922) became his successor (1901–1905); however, the activities of the latter are associated with the first years of the 20th century.

From the very beginning, the association was cooperating with the Ödenburger Musikverein/Soproni Zeneegyesület. It is important to note that its founder and leader was Eugen Kossow (1860–1921), who after spending 25 years in Sopron moved in Bratislava where in 1906 became a new Kapellmeister of the Church Music Association. At the turn of the century, the association was also in contact with Wiener Männergesang-Verein managed by Viktor Keldorf, with the Udel-Quartett association, Philharmonischen Konzert-Unternehmung as well as Sängerbund Dreizehnlingen, and Wiener Akademischer Wagner-Verein. However, the association had the most extensive contacts with Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, especially through Eduard Kremser, a conductor of Wiener Mannergesangverein being in contact with Karl Mayrberger.⁹ A mutual feature of both associations is their attention given to the work of Johann Nepomuk Hummel who was born in Bratislava as well as to the personality of Franz Liszt having

9 Alexandra Tauberová, "Kontakty bratislavských hudobných spolkov a hudobných spolkov a inštitúcií viedenského okruhu," in *Úloha spolkov, spoločností a združení v hudobných dejinách Európy*, ed. Edita Bugalová (Trnava: Západoslovenské múzeum v Trnave, 2001), 160–1.

been an honorary member of both associations. Ludwig Bösendorfer and Johann Nepomuk Batka, as representatives of these associations were preparing Liszt's concerts both in Bratislava and Vienna even after the Liszt's death. Between 1880 and 1890, when Hans Richter worked as a concert conductor of Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, he was also in contact with Batka.¹⁰ In their correspondence, one can find information that Richter was personally interested in the successor of Thiard-Laforest in the function of the Kapellmeister after the latter's death in 1897.¹¹

At the turn of the 19th century, a temporary crisis occurred in the activities of the association. A close cooperation between professional musicians and music lovers started to cause problems resulting from the education and performance disproportion between professional and amateur orchestral players. The further orientation of the association was also put in question in relation to the reform of church music and *motu proprio* issued by Pope Pius X accenting vocal music and the Gregorian chant as genuine church music and the tradition of vocal/orchestral masses of the association was thus eclipsed.

Vocal associations of townspeople were developing intensively in the last third of the 19th century. Along with the cultivation of artistic singing and music, they were also working as concert institutions and as a medium of spending one's spare time in a cultivated and meaningful manner. They had thus several functions: social, representation, educational, and artistic. Members of such associations were lovers of choral singing and music, and the choirmaster function was held by an educated musician. The official approval of statutes as a decisive moment for the official activity of an association was usually preceded by informal singing meetings or public performances. The events like consecrations of a flag of the association or singing festivals had a representative character. Other invited singing associations were also participating on both types of events. Annual concert (Stiftungskonzert) with the appropriate representative programme contents was considered the most important artistic event in the year structure of the associations. The social function of the associations was associated with the formats of entertainment events and parties where rather less

10 Jana Lengová, "Hans Richter v listoch Jánovi Batkovi," *Hudobný život* 36, no. 1 (2004): 35–7.

11 Alexandra Taubnerová and Jarmila B. Martinková, *Johann Nepomuk Batka. Auswahl aus der Korrespondenz* (Bratislava: Slovenské národné múzeum – Hudobné múzeum, 1999), 38.

complicated compositions, humoristic duets and quartets, arrangements of folk songs, etc. were played.

The Pressburger Liedertafel/Pozsonyi dalárda, the oldest men's choral association, was officially formed in 1857 on the initiative of vocal coach Ludwig Stoffregen.¹² Its activities culminated when managed by skilled choirmasters Karl Mayrberger and Ferdinand Kitzinger.¹³ During their terms in office, the difficult pieces of the choral literature such as Richard Wagner's *Das Liebesmahl der Apostel*, Ferdinand David's *Die Wüste*, and the chorus of Capulets from *Roméo et Juliette*, a symphony dramatique written by Hector Berlioz, were locally premiered. Johannes Brahms who visited the premiere of his cantata *Rinaldo* in Bratislava received great ovations. Choir pieces written by the local composers Karl Mayrberger and Josef Thiard-Laforest were sung too. The association was also performing at the funeral of their former choirmaster Josef Kumlik. Except for the choral genre, the then form of vocal quartets was cultivated too. The choral group rehearsed and locally premiered almost all-important men's choruses of Franz Liszt and was mainly striving for performing Liszt's music together with the Church Music Association and another institution called the Pressburger Singverein/Pozsonyi dalegylet.¹⁴ It was founded in 1879 upon the initiative of Anton Strehlen and Julius von Simonyi and was focused on the cultivation of combined choral, women's, and men's singing.¹⁵ Activities of the association included singing exercises, individual public performances (concerts, music and music-entertainment evenings), participation on public events as the choral singing component, and organization of concerts (including guest artists and instrumental music). Both the domestic and guest soloists were performing in the concerts including Ernst von Dohnányi, Johann Kopetzky, Raoul (Rudolf) Mader, Maria Stegerová, Franz Tranta or Géza Zichy. Both smaller and larger choral pieces as well

12 Jana Lengová, "Das deutsche Chorgesangwesen in Pressburg am Beispiel der Pressburger Liedertafel – Nationale und regionale Identität," in *Chorgesang als Medium von Interkulturalität: Formen, Kanäle, Diskurse (Berichte des interkulturellen Forschungsprojekts "Deutsche Musikkultur im östlichen Europa" 3)*, ed. Erik Fisher (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2007), 31.

13 Viera Žitná, "Bratislavské spevácke zbory v druhej polovici 19. storočia," in *Franz Liszt a jeho bratislavskí priatelia (Hudobné tradície Bratislavy a ich tvorcovia, vol. 2)*, ed. Alexandra Tauberová (Bratislava: Obzor, 1975), 224.

14 Jana Lengová, "Nové poznatky k činnosti Bratislavského speváckeho spolku," in *Hudobnohistorický výskum na Slovensku začiatkom 21. storočia II.*, ed. Marta Hulková (Bratislava: Stimul, 2010), 376.

15 Jana Lengová, "Bratislavský spevácky spolok a jeho prvý zbormajster Anton Strehlen," *Musicologica Slovaca* 11, no. 1 (2020): 35.

as pieces for various voices and instruments composed by Franz Schubert (*Litanei auf das Fest Allerseelen*), Robert Schumann (*Der Rose Pilgerfahrt*), Franz Liszt (*Seligpreisungen* from the *Christus* oratory), Ferenc Erkel (*Isten, áldd meg a magyart*), Johannes Brahms (*Wiegenlied*), Max Bruch (*Frithjof*, op. 23), Niels Wilhelm Gade (*Psyche*) were played in the concerts of the association. Within the Silvester celebrations, one-act operettas written by, for example, Jacques Offenbach and Franz von Suppé were performed too. In 1888, the association and Schubert-Bund from Vienna organized a concert consisting of Schubert's works; the income from the concert was used for supporting activities of the Red Cross. As in the case of the Pressburger Liedertafel, from the beginning of the 20th this association was also led by Eugen Kossow.

The raise of the labour movement brought another type of multi-purpose associations of an international character, not excluding music practice. Upon the example of Vienna and Budapest, there was Vorwärts, a worker's education association associating workers from Germany, Hungary, and Slovakia including a choral section, founded in Bratislava in 1869. In 1893, members of the choral section founded the choral association Liedesfreiheit. The original men's choir grew to a combined one; a children's choir existed there for a longer time too.

The Pressburger Gesangvereines Typographenbund/Pozsonyi dalkör as a separate choral association of the eponymous educational institution, consisting only of male singers, which was relatively active from 1872.¹⁶ Its first choirmaster became the Realschule professor Johann Wawra and the repertoire consist of wide range of choral works (acapella, with piano accompaniment, duos to quintets) by the German (Carl Attenhofer, Carl Beines, Joseph Scheu) and Hungarian composers (Franz Doppler, Pál Gaál, Ernő Lányi). There were also instrumental arrangements of the well-known operas, (e.g. Potpourri based on motifs from *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* by Vincenzo Bellini, for pianoforte 4) hands as well as virtuosic pieces (*Symphonie concertante No. 1* by Jean Delphin Alard), not to mention various traditional folk songs. At the tenth anniversary of founding the association, they organized a grandiose consecration of the flag of the association with the nine invited associations participating thereon including the local ones as well as the associations from Brno, Budapest, Vienna, and Hainburg.

16 Emanuel Muntág, "Bratislavský robotnícky spevácky spolok Typografia," in *Robotnícke spevokoly a robotnícka kultúra na Slovensku (Hudobné tradície Bratislavy a ich tvorcovia, vol. 10)*, ed. Katarína Horváthová (Bratislava: Mestský dom kultúry a osvetu, 1983), 57.

The present text is only a brief outline of the activities and performances of musical associations, which undeniably had an important place in the musical life of Bratislava in the 19th century. All the said associations stayed active also at the beginning of the 20th century. The decisive moment was after the dissolution of Austria-Hungary in 1918 when the First Czechoslovak Republic was established. Since most of the associations consisted of German and Hungarian members, their activities were adjusted according to new cultural needs. However, they continued continuously even in this period with unchanged significance for the city's musical life.

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