

Ščepán, Michal

The contribution of Slovak radio to the development of musical culture in the years of World War II

Musicologica Brunensia. 2025, vol. 60, iss. 2, pp. 111-124

ISSN 2336-436X (online)

Stable URL (DOI): <https://doi.org/10.5817/MB2025-2-7>

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/digilib.83042>

License: [CC BY-SA 4.0 International](#)

Access Date: 14. 12. 2025

Version: 20251210

Terms of use: Digital Library of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University provides access to digitized documents strictly for personal use, unless otherwise specified.

The Contribution of Slovak Radio to the Development of Musical Culture in the Years of World War II

Michal Ščepán / michal.scepan@savba.sk

Institute of Musicology, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava, Slovakia

Abstract

During the Czechoslovak Republic, Slovak Radio (SRo) served mainly as a regional branch of Radiojournal, with limited input in national broadcasting and content decisions made in Prague. A decisive shift came on 14 March 1939, when SRo became independent following the creation of the Slovak state. The government, holding a substantial share in the new joint-stock company, recognised its potential to shape public opinion and placed it under the Propaganda Office, including its music programming. Previously marginal, the music department, headed by composer Alexander Moyzes, achieved notable results during this period. However, Slovakia's position as a client state of Nazi Germany brought ideological pressures, which also extended to its main broadcasting institution.

This article examines how SRo's music department maintained its independence from political interference and evaluates its role in shaping Slovak musical culture during the war years, with Moyzes's personal recollections serving as a supplementary perspective.

Key words

Slovak Radio, music department, Alexander Moyzes, Radio Symphony Orchestra, propaganda, censorship, public concerts

This article is the outcome of the Identity and Memory in Twentieth-Century Music: Metamorphoses and Interactions (No. 2/0127/24) project, supported by the Scientific Grant Agency of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic and the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava, Institute of Musicology of the SAS, 2024–2027.

Origins and Centralization of Programming Strategy

The origins of radio broadcasting in Slovakia can be traced back to 1926. Following a series of preliminary attempts, the Bratislava branch of the company Radiojournal commenced official transmissions on August 3 of that year. Beginning in October 1926, the Bratislava station launched daily broadcasts, which were incorporated into the national broadcasting schedule in February of the following year. In addition to developments in Bratislava, April 1927 marked the gradual involvement of a studio in the eastern part of the republic, in Košice, in the domain of radio broadcasting.

Until the late 1920s, the existing branches across the country enjoyed relatively broad autonomy. Gradually, however, as their importance to the overall functioning of radio broadcasting increased, a more centralized approach began to take shape. This transition is corroborated by the statement made by the company's director, Ladislav Šourek, at the 1935 Program Conference: *"Prague is a kind of astronomical centre, surrounded by two large orbits – Brno and Bratislava. These are accompanied by satellites, which represent the Moravian-Ostrava and Košice stations. This indicates that the latter-mentioned stations are meant to serve as a kind of programmatic supplement to Brno and Bratislava. The role of all stations will be twofold: to contribute to the overall programming and, at the same time, to fulfil certain regional functions."*¹

The Prague headquarters of Radiojournal managed the branches in both economic and personnel matters and determined the fundamental direction of their programming. What applied generally also applied to music broadcasting. Within the established functional framework, Bratislava, and Košice were assigned primarily the domain of popular (dance) music and operetta.² As contemporary records show, representatives of the Prague headquarters, particularly Karel Boleslav Jiráček, head of the music department, also raised the question of whether the individual branches were straying too far from the established programming framework in their activities.³ In this context, a significant attempt to alter the musical profile of the Bratislava station was made by Alexander Moyzes. A graduate of Vítězslav Novák's Master School at the Pražská konzervatoř [Prague Conservatory], Moyzes introduced new perspectives into the conception of the music program after assuming his position in Bratislava on May 1, 1937, striving to establish a representative Slovak musical broadcast. However, these efforts met with little understanding, not only in Prague but also locally. Although management in Bratislava admired his artistic ambitions, they also criticized Moyzes's programming for placing excessive emphasis on more serious classical music genres, which, in some months, accounted for a higher percentage than at the central Prague station.⁴

1 VAJDIČKA, Ludovít M. K organizačným a personálnym otázkam rozhlasového hudobného vysielania na Slovensku v rokoch 1926–1952. In *Príspevky k dejinám rozhlasu IV*. Bratislava: Metodicko-výskumný kabinet Čs. rozhlasu, 1989, pp. 10–11.

2 MARŠÍK, Josef. Stabilizace vysílání 1926–1929. In *Od mikrofonu k posluchačům. Z osmi desetiletí českého rozhlasu*. Eva Ješutová (ed.). Praha: Český rozhlas, 2003, p. 79.

3 VAJDIČKA, op. cit., p. 12.

4 Ibid., p. 15.

Effects of Political Upheaval

The rise of fascism, accompanied by political events in the late 1930s, had a significant impact on the functioning of radio, including its musical programming. The Munich Agreement and the establishment of the first Slovak autonomous government on October 6, 1938, were directly reflected in the organizational structure of the radio. In that same year, the original Radiojournal was transformed into a limited liability company named Česko-slovenský rozhlas [Czecho-Slovak Radio]. As a result of the First Vienna Award in November 1938, Czechoslovakia was forced to cede parts of southern and eastern Slovakia, as well as the territory of Carpathian Ruthenia, to Hungary. Among the affected areas was the city of Košice, resulting in the closure of its radio station, as the city was no longer part of the country. The impact of these political developments was also reflected in the structure of radio programming, especially toward the end of 1938. This period was marked by programming instability, which radio staff explained in the Czech broadcasting magazine *Vestník Radiojournalu* [Bulletin of Radiojournal] as a consequence of conceptual changes responding to the shifts in political and social circumstances. A clear indication of the ongoing changes appeared in the Czech periodical *Týden rozhlasu* [Radio Week], which discontinued its coverage of Slovak radio stations as of March 26, 1939.

Wartime Structure and Operations

Czecho-Slovak Radio de facto ceased to exist on March 4, 1939. On March 15, just one day after the dissolution of Czecho-Slovakia and the establishment of the independent Slovak State,⁵ Slovenská rozhlasová spoločnosť [Slovak Broadcasting Company] was founded. The state held a majority stake through Ministerstvo dopravy pôšt a telegrafov [Ministry of Transport, Posts, and Telegraphs]. Alongside the state, several prominent Slovak cultural and civic organizations became shareholders, including Matica slovenská [Slovak Matica], Slovenská muzeálna spoločnosť [Slovak Museum Society], Spolok sv. Vojtecha, [St. Adalbert Society], Vydavateľský a kníhkupecký spolok Tranoscus [Tranoscus Publishing and Bookselling Cooperative], Spolok slovenských výtvarných umelcov [Association of Slovak Visual Artists], Slovenská liga [Slovak League], Toldyho krúžok/Toldy Kör [Toldy Association], and the Zväz rádioobchodníkov Krajiny slovenskej [Union of Radio Merchants of the Slovak Land]. The executive authority of the company was a three-member board of directors. Until 1942, the chair of the radio council was Ministerial Counsellor Ján Novák, who was succeeded on February 3, 1942, by Tido Jozef Gašpar, a journalist, writer, cultural worker, and dramaturge. The company's director until 1939 was composer, conductor, music educator, and cultural organiser Miloš Rupeldt, followed by radio reporter, folklorist, and playwright Emil Rusko, who led the

5 LIPTÁK, Eubomír. *Slovensko v 20. storočí*. Bratislava: Kalligram, 2011, pp. 160–174.

organization until 1945.⁶ Under its official name, Slovenský rozhlas [Slovak Radio] operated from Bratislava through four departments: administrative, literary, technical, and musical. The music department, headed by Alexander Moyzes, was further divided into sections for classical music (solo and chamber), popular music, pre-recorded music, the radio symphony orchestra, and the archive.

There was another radio studio, which was relocated to nearby Prešov from Košice after broadcasting ceased there. Due to its limited personnel and technical resources, it served only local functions, including small-scale music programming.⁷ This contrast was natural, given that Bratislava, the capital, held a prominent position in the ongoing formation of the Slovak state. In his reflections, Tido J. Gašpar emphasized the aspiration of elevating Bratislava to the status of the centre of cultural life in Slovakia, into which all creative forces would converge and which would subsequently provide all regions with both the spiritual and material foundation for building a new and better Slovakia.⁸

Role of the Propaganda Office

The functioning of radio broadcasting was significantly influenced by the newly established Úrad propagandy [Propaganda Office], which was tasked with addressing nearly all matters concerning the internal administration of the state. As the Slovak State functioned as a satellite of Nazi Germany, the activities of the Propaganda Office were directed by a Berater (advisor), a German envoy in Bratislava, who issued daily directives for the propaganda apparatus.⁹ Initially administered by Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Mach, control of the Propaganda Office was later assumed by Tido J. Gašpar, chair of the radio council.

Nationalism and Personal Purges

The prevailing political circumstances inevitably affected the personnel composition of all domestic institutions. Since the signing of the Munich Agreement, the most dominant political force in Slovakia had been Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana [Hlinka Slovak People's Party]. Shortly after the declaration of autonomy, attacks against citizens of non-Slovak nationality began to intensify under the slogan "*One Nation, One Party, One*

6 JENČA, Imrich. *Zásadné zmeny spoločensko-politického vývoja v Československu po roku 1918 a ich vplyv na organizáciu rozhlasového vysielania na Slovensku*. [Doctoral dissertation]. Bratislava: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Komenského, 1999, p. 48

7 DRAXLER, Vladimír. Prešovský rozhlas 1938 – 1944. In *Príspevky k dejinám rozhlasu V*. Bratislava: Slovenský rozhlas, 2000, pp. 5–72.

8 GAŠPAR, Tido J. *Pamäti II*. Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo Spolku slovenských spisovateľov, 2004, p. 7.

9 ŠEFČÁK, Luboš – DUBAJOVÁ, Zuzana. *Dejiny slovenského novinarstva 1918–1968*. Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo Univerzity Komenského, 1999, p. 283.

*Leader.*¹⁰ As part of the nationalist agitation, Czechs in particular became the primary targets. According to the original agreement from December 13, 1938, nine thousand Czech public employees were to be transferred to the Czech lands, while the remainder were to be allowed to continue in state service in Slovakia. However, the Slovak government failed to honour this agreement. Shortly after the establishment of the Slovak State, it declared the agreement void, dismissed all Czechs, and expelled most of them to the recently established Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Even many of those not employed in state service reconsidered their decision to remain, choosing instead to leave the country due to the deteriorating conditions caused by aggressive attacks from supporters of the ruling party. This development had a significant impact on various sectors and institutions, naturally including radio and the music department, especially its symphonic orchestra.

Crisis and Renewal of Slovak Radio Orchestra

During the period of the Czechoslovak Republic, the first music broadcasts by the Bratislava branch featured performances by the Bratislavský symfonický orchester [Bratislava Symphony Orchestra], which was, in fact, the orchestra of the Slovak National Theatre, conducted first by Oskar Nedbal and later by Karel Nedbal. Other performers included the Kubátovo kvarteto [Kubát Quartet], the only resident ensemble of Radiojournal in Bratislava, as well as soloists drawn from among the teaching staff of the Hudobná a dramatická akadémia [Music and Drama Academy]. In addition, various café and military ensembles contributed to the programming. It was not until 1929 that the Radiojournal Orchestra in Bratislava began its activities. Initially modest, with just 18 musicians, the ensemble gradually developed over the course of the years into an ensemble of nearly 40 permanent members. Since there was still a lack of professionally trained musicians in Slovakia at the time, the core of the orchestra, including its conductors, consisted primarily of Czech musicians. Although an agreement was reached between the Prague and Bratislava radio officials after March 14, 1939, allowing all orchestra members of Czech nationality to remain in Bratislava, the majority of them terminated their engagement under the pressure of growing anti-Czech sentiment. As a result, only eight members remained in the orchestra. A partial solution was sought through an agreement on broadcasts with the Slovak National Theatre and by enlisting members of its orchestra to assist. However, due to financial constraints, this arrangement was not sustainable in the long term. Since it was unthinkable for the music department to function without an orchestra, the attempt to resolve this issue led to a paradoxical situation. In his memoirs, Moyzes recalls the situation as follows: *"We put our heads together; one of us knew somebody, the other knew somebody else, and before long we had an orchestra. Within fourteen days or three weeks, we were already performing with our own orchestra. Most of the musicians were again recruited from Czech lands. I discussed it with Alexander Mach. 'What am I supposed to play*

10 POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. *K základom Slovenského štátu*. Martin: Matica slovenská, 1998. p. 6.

with?’ I asked. ‘Then find someone,’ he replied. I said, ‘So I have to go to Czech lands again.’ He responded, ‘Then go to Czech lands!’ That is how Mach spoke to me. In this respect, I had his support, and as a result, together with my colleagues and the orchestral section, we succeeded in establishing a proper symphony orchestra, which grew week by week and eventually required very little external assistance.”¹¹

It was precisely Mach, in his role as Minister of the Interior and chief ideologue of the ruling party, under whose leadership Slovak authorities exerted pressure on Czech state employees to leave Slovakia. Even during the interwar period, he expressed strongly anti-Czech views, perceiving Czechs as enemies of the Slovaks and a threat to Slovak national identity.¹² Therefore, it is particularly surprising that Mach, along with other leading state representatives and the Propaganda Office, viewed the activities of the music department positively, especially in connection with the engagement of the Croatian conductor Krešimir Baranović. The long-standing conductor of the Opera of the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb faced significant difficulties in his homeland following the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia. As part of repressive measures, the Ustaše organization arrested Baranović because of his status as a Freemason, and he was subsequently interned in the Stara Gradiška concentration camp in November 1941.¹³ Upon his release in April 1942, he returned to Zagreb and reassumed the conducting post at the commencement of the forthcoming season. In April 1943, he visited Bratislava for the first time as a guest conductor, marking the beginning of his permanent tenure there, as the political situation in Croatia continued to be precarious. Moyzes recounts: *“Once, Krešimir Baranović came to guest conduct. Afterwards, we were sitting together in the Reduta building, above the entrance to what is now the residence of the Slovak Philharmonic. Mach and Tido Gašpar were also there, and I said to them, ‘Gentlemen, we need a conductor like him. Should I speak with him about possibly coming?’ ‘Of course,’ Mach replied. Subsequently, I spoke with Baranović and asked, ‘Krešo, could we talk about whether you might come to us for a longer period with the orchestra?’ ‘I don’t know,’ was his answer. He was a prisoner at the time. I do not know how Mach managed to convince the Croats to even allow him to come here for that guest conducting. Now, I wanted him for good, and Mach arranged it. Baranović was a partisan, and we brought him here. He came on Tito’s orders.”*¹⁴

Moyzes’s efforts in re-establishing the orchestra were clearly evident, as he consistently addressed the musicians while also making frequent appeals to radio management for the financial resources necessary for their engagement.¹⁵ Within a single month, from March 15 to April 15, 1939, the new ensemble comprised 34 members; by March

11 ZELJENKA, Ilja. *Rozhovory s Alexandrom Moyzesom (1984)*. Bratislava: Scriptorium Musicum, 2003, p. 39.

12 HRUBOŇ, Anton. *Alexander Mach. Radikál z povolania*. Bratislava: Premedia, 2018, p. 169.

13 KOVAČIČ, Davor. Načini izlaska zatočenika iz logora smrti Jasenovac i Stara Gradiška 1941–1945. In *Istorija 20. veka*, 2013, vol. XXXI, no. 2, pp. 101–102.

14 ZELJENKA, op. cit., p. 39.

15 Archív Slovenského rozhlasu v Bratislave [Archive of Slovak Radio in Bratislava] (hereafter SK-BRr), Archívny fond Slovenský rozhlas 1939–1948 [Archival Collection Slovak Radio 1939–1948], Box 2, Inv. No. Bb. 7-367. Zápisnica z 10. schôdzy správy Slovenského rozhlasu, 26. 12. 1939.

1942, this number had increased to 48 musicians.¹⁶ The principal conductor was Kornel Schimpl, who was succeeded in May 1941 by František Babušek. Regular guest conductors included Ladislav Holoubek, Tibor Frešo, Ludovít Rajter, and Alexander Albrecht. Notably, the most distinguished performances and contributions to the artistic development of the orchestra were attributed to Baranović following his engagement in 1943. As Moyzes noted: “*Under Baranović’s baton, our symphony orchestra achieved a success the likes of which we had never known before.*”¹⁷

Political Tensions and Incidents

Given the close ties between Slovakia and Germany, the Cultural Office of the German Party [Deutsche Partei] sought to exert its influence within the radio broadcasting sphere, a goal that was not always met with understanding on the domestic side. Due to the tense relations between the two communities, several negative incidents occurred within the radio. The most notable was the intervention of the radio council chair and simultaneously head of the Propaganda Office, Tido J. Gašpar, whose actions escalated to a state-political level. In this context, the most striking event was the police detention of all orchestra members in early 1943. The immediate cause, between February 3 and 5, 1943, was a strike declaration as a response to disciplinary fines of 50 Slovak crowns imposed on orchestra members following a conflict between the principal conductor František Babušek and the guest German conductor Kurt Karrasch, which had occurred on December 20, 1942.¹⁸ The affair attracted significant public attention primarily due to the police intervention and subsequent imprisonment. Although most orchestra members were released from detention after forty-eight hours, two were held by the State Security Authority in a detention camp for over a month. Each member was fined 300 crowns, and moreover, the time spent in detention was recorded as an unexcused absence.

Jewish and Romani Musicians Amid Official Persecution

The implementation of personnel policy was distinctive in that there was limited willingness to rigorously enforce anti-Jewish laws within the radio organization. Until April 1944, its management succeeded in maintaining a protective shield over Ján Kalina (born Ladislav Schwarz), who worked at the radio as a sound engineer from 1940 to 1943. The institution’s representatives even responded to a direct attack from the edito-

16 SK-BRr, Archival Collection Slovak Radio 1939–1948, Box 2, Inv. No. A-2. Výročná správa za rok 1942, Valné zhromaždenie Slovenského rozhlasu, 20. 4. 1943.

17 DRAXLER, Vladimír. Rozhovor s národným umelcom Alexandrom Moyzesom. In *Príspevky k dejinám rozhlasu IV*. Bratislava: Metodicko-výskumný kabinet Čs. rozhlasu, 1989, p. 83.

18 SK-BRr, Archival Collection Slovak Radio 1939–1948, Box 2, Inv. No. Bb. 7-367. Zápisnica z 58. schôdzky správy Slovenského rozhlasu, 21. 12. 1942.

rial office of the daily newspaper *Slovák* by adopting a confidential resolution: “*Kalina will change his pseudonym; no one except the director Rusko will be informed of the change.*”¹⁹ In this instance, the actions of the management constituted a deliberate and intentional breach of the law, undertaken with the aim of protecting their employee. Ján Kalina remained at Slovak Radio even after failing to obtain a presidential exemption from systematic persecution under the anti-Jewish legislation in 1942. He was eventually dismissed following direct intervention by Tido J. Gašpar, despite subsequently receiving the exemption.

Among the prominent members of the music department during the war years was Michal Knechtsberger, who became better known after the war under the name Michal Karin. In the book, *Alma Rosé: Vienna to Auschwitz*, authors Richard Newman and Karen Kirtley describe Michal Karin as a person who, during the period of Jewish persecution, helped and provided shelter to the Viennese Jewish violinist Anna Poláková (née Aranka Anna Kux).²⁰ Poláková was a close friend of Alma Rosé and served as concertmaster of Rosé’s popular women’s orchestra, Die Wiener Walzermädeln. As the book notes, violinist Alma Rosé, the niece of Gustav Mahler, collaborated closely with Michal Karin, who was actually the same person as Knechtsberger during the 1930s, arranging music for her orchestra. As it turned out, the origin of Michal Karin-Knechtsberger himself proved to be hazy. Born in Bratislava, Knechtsberger studied piano at the municipal music school in his hometown and later at the Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna. He subsequently held posts with the Radiojournal branches in Ostrava and Brno, before receiving an official appointment in Bratislava in 1939. His autobiography, written after 1945, reveals several complex circumstances in this regard: “*At first, I was suspected of being half-Jewish, later of being a Czechoslovak, and finally, of having married a woman of Jewish origin.*” He further noted: “*I did not submit either my own or my wife’s Aryan certificate. Nor is it necessary on our part to search for the ancestry of either myself or my wife.*”²¹ In accordance with government regulations established under the Jewish Code enacted by the Slovak State, the radio administration adhered to strict procedures in matters of employment policy. According to the racial definitions of the time, individuals who had no Jewish ancestors were classified as being of Aryan origin. This status was determined based on religious affiliation and the ancestry of one’s parents and grandparents. Persons who did not meet the criteria for being classified as Jewish under this definition were considered Aryans. Individuals not of Aryan descent were, as a rule, ineligible for employment or retention in their positions. Failure to submit the required documentation proving Aryan origin was excused only when it was objectively impossible to do so. Nevertheless, the absence of such documentation was regarded with deep suspicion and, in many cases, had fatal consequences.

19 SK-BRr, Archival Collection Slovak Radio 1939–1948, Box 2, Inv. No. Bb. 7-367. Zázpisnica z 18. schôdzky správy Slovenského rozhlasu, 7. 8. 1940.

20 NEWMAN, Richard – KIRTLEY Karen. *Alma Rosé: Vienna to Auschwitz*. Portland: Amadeus Press, 2000, p. 107.

21 SCHINDLER, Agata. Klavirista Vášu Příhodu. Michal Knechtsberger/Michal Karin. *Hudobný život*, 2016, vol. XLVIII, no. 7–8, p. 44.

Nevertheless, Michal Knechtsberger was a successful employee of Slovak Radio, holding various positions between 1939 and 1945. He led the popular music section, served as a conductor and solo pianist, and was also an active member of several chamber ensembles, especially in a piano duo with his wife, Elena Smidžárová.

In addition to the Jews, the Roma were also victims of the Holocaust; however, the persecution they initially faced was comparatively milder than that experienced by the Jewish population, as they were utilized as forced labourers in state-run industries. Within the context of radio broadcasting, the involvement of Roma was primarily associated with censorship. In 1941, the Propaganda Office issued an order to reduce the presence of “*Gypsy music*” in radio programming.²² This directive mainly targeted performances by Romani bands from Bratislava cafés, which until then had often served as substitutes for traditional folk music broadcasts. The campaign against the Roma thus possessed a dual character: beyond its ethnic dimension, it also targeted the performance practices characteristic of Romani musicians, distinguished by rich harmonization, melodic ornamentation, and a rhapsodic style. For these traits, Romani bands were frequently criticized for corrupting Slovak folk song and its unadulterated essence, which eventually prompted a curtailment of their radio appearances in favour of music originating from the rural environment. Although the café productions of Romani bandleaders such as Aladár Bittó, Jožko Pihík, Maťo Pihík, Belo Piťo, Štefan Lakatoš, Lajo Bittó, Vojtech Farkaš, Alojz Berky, and others did not disappear entirely from the airwaves, they were substantially relegated to a supplementary role alongside the broadcasting of authentic musical folklore, which began to be regularly recorded during this period. Its primary initiator, Emil Rusko, together with music director Janko Matuška and the technical team, travelled through various regions of Slovakia, recording numerous performances by folk artists and ensembles. During a 14-day trip, they managed to visit around 7 different places and record approximately 300 songs.²³ These were later used in individual programs. However, their selection was not based on systematic ethnomusicological field research but was rather adapted to thematic and content-related needs, as the broadcasting of folk music was a feature of the popular music section.

Such recording trips were also organized by the director of the Prešov radio station, Anton Prídavok, who, together with his staff, focused primarily on the region of eastern Slovakia.

Music Broadcast Against Official Policy

The primary focus of the music department was the promotion of Slovak compositions and the presentation of Slovak composers. Nevertheless, directives from the Propaganda Office significantly influenced programming decisions, reflecting the prevailing official policy and animosity: prioritizing the inclusion of works by German authors

22 SK-BRr, Archival Collection Slovak Radio 1939–1948, Box 2, Inv. No. Bb. 7-367. Zápisnica z 4. schôdzky správy Slovenského rozhlasu, 7. 1. 1941.

23 DEMO, Ondrej. *Folklórna hudba v rozhlase na Slovensku*. Martin: Matica slovenská, 1996, pp. 19–20.

while excluding compositions by Jewish and, predictably, Czech composers. Following the declaration of war against the Soviet Union in June 1941, a comparable ban was imposed on composers from that region. Throughout the period from 1939 to 1945, German music predominated among foreign works broadcast, consistently maintaining a leading share of 50%, 61%, 63%, 66%, 62%, and 61%, respectively. Despite these ideological constraints, representatives of the radio and music departments endeavoured to maintain a conscientious stance. Evidence of opposition to the intention to severely restrict the music of Czech composers is provided by an objection raised by the music department during a meeting of the radio council. The objection concerned the program of a symphonic concert that was to include works by Bedřich Smetana.²⁴ However, the department ultimately concluded that there was no reason to alter the concert program. In addition to Smetana, the programs featured other Czech composers such as Antonín Dvořák, Josef Suk, Vítězslav Novák, and Leoš Janáček. Importantly, the musical criticism published in the daily newspaper *Slovák* raised no objections; on the contrary, positive adjectives appeared, such as “*outstanding Czech romantic*”, used in reference to Zdeněk Fibich.²⁵

A similar approach was taken with Russian music, which was represented in the programs by works of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Modest Mussorgsky, and Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov. Analogously to the Slovak National Theatre, which undertook continual efforts to stage Russian operas and ballets, its representatives asserted that these works were not Soviet but rather Russian classics, thereby rendering them politically neutral.²⁶ Although the Propaganda Office emphatically recommended that performances of works by Russian authors should not take place during the state of war with the Soviet Union, Moyzes handled the inclusion of banned composers with composure, recalling: “*We performed everything that was forbidden to be played at the time. [...] Smetana, Dvořák, Tchaikovsky, Mussorgsky – all of these were prohibited. Naturally, we incorporated Mozart, Beethoven, and Wagner; it was necessary to wisely create the programming so that the restrictions would not be too conspicuous.*”²⁷

Reflecting this approach, throughout the broadcasts in the years 1939–1945, the share of Czech composers was 19%, 10%, 12%, 12%, 14%, and 13%, while the portion of Russian composers was 17%, 15%, 12%, 7%, 10%, and 13%.

Among 20th-century composers of other nationalities appeared those from allied countries such as Croatia (Jakov Gotovac), Bulgaria (Veselin Stojanov), Romania (George Enescu, Dinu Lipatti), Finland (Yrjö Kilpinen), and Italy (Ottorino Respighi). Alongside composers whose works were officially branded by the Nazi regime as “*degenerate art*”, such as Paul Hindemith and Arnold Schönberg, the music of Igor Stravinsky and Béla Bartók was also notably absent from broadcasts.

24 SK-BRr, Archival Collection Slovak Radio 1939–1948, Box 2, Inv. No. Bb. 7-367. Zápisnica z 22. schôdzky správy Slovenského rozhlasu, 13. 4. 1944.

25 [n.a.] Symfonický koncert Slovenského rozhlasu. *Slovák*, vol. XXIV, no. 28, 4. 2. 1942, p. 7.

26 LAJCHA, Ladislav. *Dokumenty SND 2 (1939–1945). Divadlo v rokoch vojny*. Bratislava: Divadelný ústav, 2000, p. 130.

27 ZELJENKA, op. cit., p. 40.

Symphonic Music in the Broadcasts of Slovak Radio

The dominant aspect of musical broadcasting, compared to the previous period, became symphonic music, with a significant share of live broadcasts of orchestral concerts. The radio symphony orchestra operated in the large studio of the radio building, dedicating four days of the workweek to symphonic music, two days to popular music, and the remaining days to other genres. This schedule stemmed primarily from the aforementioned consolidation of the radio orchestra, which was one of Moyzes's main intentions since his appointment: *"The position of the headquarters in Prague, that Bratislava radio should focus on entertainment programs was not very fortunate for me. I had different ideas about Bratislava's musical broadcasting, and it was along this line that I began to build a new type of musical program."*²⁸

On Moyzes's initiative, beginning in November 1942, symphonic concerts were regularly organized and opened to the public. This marked a departure from the previous period, during which the idea of season concerts had not been supported by the Prague headquarters, since it prioritized studio production over public performances.²⁹ Since the concert studio in the main radio building was inadequate due to capacity limitations, assistance once again came from state authorities, who provided the ceremonial hall in the Government Building. Radio staff subsequently expanded the stage to accommodate a large symphony orchestra of 60 to 70 members. The hall was also equipped with seating, allowing for up to 500 chairs, with an additional 60 standing places added.³⁰ Following the initial concert, attended by prominent political figures such as Alexander Mach and Tido J. Gašpar, subsequent public concerts were held every Friday evening and broadcast live. Some of the concerts were conducted in collaboration with the German Philharmonic Society and their conductors, who led the radio orchestra. Among them were devoted supporters of the regime, such as Wilhelm Jerger, who at the time held membership in the NSDAP and the SS and served as the executive director of the Vienna Philharmonic. On the other hand, there were also contrary cases, such as Fritz Weidlich, to whom one of Moyzes's recollections is linked regarding the performance of works by officially undesirable composers: *"There were no objections to the program, not even from some Germans. Even Weidlich said, 'Finally, I can conduct some Tchaikovsky.' And so he conducted Tchaikovsky's symphony himself."*³¹

From the beginning of November 1942 until the end of May 1943, 25 symphonic concerts were performed, followed by 26 concerts during the 1943/1944 season. In the subsequent season, concerts were discontinued due to increased security risks related to Allied air raids on Bratislava. Parallel to the symphonic concerts, public chamber music concerts were held monthly. Through the initiative and efforts of Dobroslav Chrobák, the then technical director of Slovak Radio, the concerts began to be systematically

28 VAJDIČKA, op. cit., p. 16.

29 MOYZES, Alexander. Koncerty Slovenského rozhlasu I. *Slovák*, vol. XXV, no. 47, 26. 2. 1943, p. 6.

30 MOYZES, Alexander. Koncerty Slovenského rozhlasu II. *Slovák*, vol. XXV, no. 48, 27. 2. 1943, p. 6.

31 ZELJENKA, op. cit., p. 40.

recorded, enabling several of them to be rebroadcast. Along with live performances, music was consistently recorded on the premises of the radio building. In 1940, ten modern studios were built and equipped with newly purchased recording sets. Six of these were for lacquer discs, and two each were for wax discs and magnetic tape.³² Recording activity was significantly enhanced from 1942 by the acquisition of the Philips-Miller mechanical-optical system, which facilitated an increase in the share of Slovak compositions in broadcasting. It began at 38% in 1939, declined to 34% in 1940, and dropped further to 26% in 1941. In 1942, it rose slightly to 28%, then increased notably to 40% in 1944. Following this peak, their share remained steady at approximately 36% in 1945. Throughout this period, Alexander Moyzes held a dominant position in programming works. In alternating second and third positions were his father, Mikuláš Moyzes, alongside composers such as Viliam Figuš-Bystrý, Mikuláš Schneider-Trnavský, František Babušek, Andrej Očenáš, and Eugen Suchoň.

Ernest Zavarský's Commentaries on Symphonic Concerts

An interesting complement to the concert broadcasts were the commentaries provided by radio employee Ernest Zavarský, a graduate of the Brno musicology department. At the time of preparing his contributions, Zavarský did not have access to any scholarly texts on the Slovak works presented and based his analyses solely on the musical scores and recordings. Naturally, Zavarský also addressed the works of foreign composers in his commentaries, without any exceptions related to the author's origin. The content of these commentaries not only attests to the author's enthusiasm and breadth of knowledge but also confirms that the political situation did not exert a limiting influence on the music department's production. Zavarský's commentaries were broadcast the day before the concerts and, in some cases, immediately prior to particular performances. In printed form, they appeared in the News section of the journal *Slovenský rozhlas* [Slovak Radio], which was published weekly from 1940 to 1945. It included a detailed broadcast schedule, announcements, and internal news from the radio station, covering both personnel matters and developments in technical infrastructure, as well as records from general assemblies.

Conclusion

In 1940, Alexander Moyzes expressed in an article published in the journal *Slovak Radio* that his primary objective was to establish Slovak Radio as a permanent and prominent centre of musical life in the capital city.³³ This goal was effectively realized in the following years, as the music department significantly expanded its cultural influence through

32 CHROBÁK, Dobroslav. Technická výstavba rozhlasu. *Slovenský rozhlas*, 1940, vol. I, no. 4, p. 9.

33 MOYZES, Alexander. Hudobný program 1940/41. *Slovenský rozhlas*, 1940, vol. I, no. 32, p. 1.

sustained musical programming and the organization of public concerts. The schedule, alongside a broad repertoire of foreign works sometimes extending beyond officially tolerated restrictions, placed particular emphasis on domestic composers, spanning from the earliest generations to Slovak musical modernism. Several members of this generation, including Dezider Kardoš, Andrej Očenáš, Šimon Jurovský (Weiss-Nägel), and Tibor Frešo, were given an exceptional opportunity to contribute significantly to the development of Slovak musical culture through their work in the music department. This was made possible by Alexander Moyzes, their former teacher at the Academy of Music, who brought them into radio service. In connection with the wartime events that affected broadcasting, particularly through frequent interruptions caused by air raid alarms, the radio administration decided in October 1944 to transfer two dozen gramophone records to the backup transmitter Bratislava I, so that in the event of a disruption, at least music could continue to be broadcast. The Bratislava station of Slovak Radio remained on the air until April 1, 1945. Following liberation, its broadcasting resumed only after more than two months. In closing, paraphrasing a thought from Moyzes's memoirs: "*Although the Slovak National Uprising against the fascist occupiers began in August 1944, a form of resistance had already emerged much earlier within Slovak Radio and its music department.*"³⁴

Bibliography

Literature

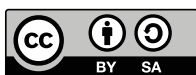
- [n.a.] Symfonický koncert Slovenského rozhlasu. *Slovák*, vol. XXIV, no. 28, 4. 2. 1942, p. 7.
- DEMO, Ondrej. *Folklorná hudba v rozhlase na Slovensku*. Martin: Matica slovenská, 1996.
- DRAXLER, Vladimír. Prešovský rozhlas 1938 – 1944. In *Príspevky k dejinám rozhlasu V*. Bratislava: Slovenský rozhlas, 2000, pp. 5–72.
- DRAXLER, Vladimír. Rozhovor s národným umelcom Alexandrom Moyzesom. In *Príspevky k dejinám rozhlasu IV*. Bratislava: Metodicko-výskumný kabinet Čs. rozhlasu, 1989, pp. 74–89.
- GAŠPAR, Tido J. *Pamäti II*. Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo Spolku slovenských spisovateľov, 2004.
- HRUBOŇ, Anton. *Alexander Mach. Radikál z povolania*. Bratislava: Premedia, 2018.
- CHROBÁK, Dobroslav. Technická výstavba rozhlasu. *Slovenský rozhlas*, 1940, vol. I, no. 4, p. 9.
- JENČA, Imrich. *Zásadné zmeny spoločensko-politického vývoja v Československu po roku 1918 a ich vplyv na organizáciu rozhlasového vysielania na Slovensku*. [Doctoral dissertation]. Bratislava: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Komenského, 1999.
- KOVAČIČ, Davor. Načini izlaska zatočenika iz logora smrti Jasenovac i Stara Gradiška 1941–1945. In *Istorija 20. veka*, 2013, vol. XXXI, no. 2, pp. 93–117.
- LAJCHA, Ladislav. *Dokumenty SND 2 (1939–1945)*. Divadlo v rokoch vojny. Bratislava: Divadelný ústav, 2000.
- LIPTÁK, Eubomír. *Slovensko v 20. storočí*. Bratislava: Kalligram, 2011.
- MARŠÍK, Josef. Stabilizace vysílání 1926–1929. In *Od mikrofonu k posluchačům. Z osmi desetiletí českého rozhlasu*. Eva Ješutová (ed.). Praha: Český rozhlas, 2003, pp. 55–92.

34 ZELJENKA, op. cit., p. 40.

- MOYZES, Alexander. Hudobný program 1940/41. *Slovenský rozhlas*, 1940, vol. I, no. 32, p. 1.
- MOYZES, Alexander. Koncerty Slovenského rozhlasu I. *Slovák*, vol. XXV, no. 47, 26. 2. 1943, p. 6.
- MOYZES, Alexander. Koncerty Slovenského rozhlasu II. *Slovák*, vol. XXV, no. 48, 27. 2. 1943, p. 6.
- NEWMAN, Richard – KIRTLEY Karen. *Alma Rosé: Vienna to Auschwitz*. Portland: Amadeus Press, 2000.
- POLAKOVIČ, Štefan. *K základom Slovenského štátu*. Martin: Matica slovenská, 1998.
- SCHINDLER, Agata. Klavirista Vášu Příhodu. Michal Knechtsberger/Michal Karin. *Hudobný život*, 2016, vol. XLVIII, no. 7–8, pp. 42–45.
- ŠEFČÁK, Luboš – DUBAJOVÁ, Zuzana. *Dejiny slovenského novinárstva 1918–1968*. Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo Univerzity Komenského, 1999.
- VAJDIČKA, Ľudovít M. K organizačným a personálnym otázkam rozhlasového hudobného vysielania na Slovensku v rokoch 1926–1952. In *Príspevky k dejinám rozhlasu IV*. Bratislava: Metodicko-výskumný kabinet Čs. rozhlasu, 1989, pp. 5–50.
- ZELJENKA, Ilja. *Rozhovory s Alexandrom Moyzesom (1984)*. Bratislava: Scriptorium Musicum, 2003.

Sources

- SK-BRr, Archival Collection Slovak Radio 1939–1948, Box 2, Inv. No. Bb. 7-367. Zápisnica z 10. schôdzky správy Slovenského rozhlasu, 26. 12. 1939.
- SK-BRr, Archival Collection Slovak Radio 1939–1948, Box 2, Inv. No. Bb. 7-367. Zápisnica z 58. schôdzky správy Slovenského rozhlasu, 21. 12. 1942.
- SK-BRr, Archival Collection Slovak Radio 1939–1948, Box 2, Inv. No. Bb. 7-367. Zápisnica z 18. schôdzky správy Slovenského rozhlasu, 7. 8. 1940.
- SK-BRr, Archival Collection Slovak Radio 1939–1948, Box 2, Inv. No. Bb. 7-367. Zápisnica z 4. schôdzky správy Slovenského rozhlasu, 7. 1. 1941.
- SK-BRr, Archival Collection Slovak Radio 1939–1948, Box 2, Inv. No. Bb. 7-367. Zápisnica z 22. schôdzky správy Slovenského rozhlasu, 13. 4. 1944.
- SK-BRr, Archival Collection Slovak Radio 1939–1948, Box 2, Inv. No. A-2. Výročná správa za rok 1942, Valné zhromaždenie Slovenského rozhlasu, 20. 4. 1943.



This work can be used in accordance with the Creative Commons BY-SA 4.0 International license terms and conditions (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/legalcode>). This does not apply to works or elements (such as image or photographs) that are used in the work under a contractual license or exception or limitation to relevant rights.