The Hrvatski glazbeni zavod (Croatian Music Institute) in the 1920s: Jutarnji koncerti (Morning Concerts) and Intimne muzičke večeri (Intimate Musical Evenings)

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Abstract

Jutarnji koncerti (Morning Concerts) and Intimne muzičke večeri (Intimate Musical Evenings) were concert series of the Hrvatski glazbeni zavod (Croatian Music Institute) in Zagreb, organized by the institute's secretary, art historian, and music amateur Artur Schneider in the 1920s. From 1921 to 1928 there were 148 concerts, with works by 143 contemporary composers, from the most famous ones, like Béla Bartók and Arnold Schoenberg, to the youngest generation of Croatian composers, like Boris Papandopulo. The most common performers were Croatian soprano Maja Strozzi-Pečić and pianist Bela Pečić, who especially promoted music through their friend Igor Stravinsky. These concert series were outstanding also with regard to the high quality of performers and programs as well as the carefully prepared program booklets.

The Croatian Music Institute Until 1918

[1] The Hrvatski glazbeni zavod (Croatian Music Institute), a society of music (*Musikverein*) with a 190-year-long tradition, has a special place in the musical life of Croatia. It is the oldest continuously active Croatian cultural institution and has managed to maintain its independence in different political administrations. The Croatian Music Institute had a historical path similar to other *Musikvereine* in the monarchy, such as the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna. The key points in this development were its founding in 1827 (when the first concert of its amateur orchestra was performed), the establishment of a music school in 1829 (which proved to be a far-reaching goal in its own right), the dissemination of Croatian music through the publication of sheet music, and the erection of a building with a concert hall in 1876. There were some constants through all periods, like the organization of concerts.

The Croatian Music Institute's music school grew both in the number of pupils and teachers and in its importance in the 1890s, but the administration of the music institute appealed in vain to the Croatian government to have the school elevated to the rank of a school of advanced music education (*konzervatorij*). Instead of waiting for an authorization, the music institute declared its school to be a conservatory in 1916. In the middle of World War I, and only one month before the death of the elderly emperor Franz Joseph I. (1830–1916), the government had so many other important things to solve that it simply confirmed the school's status as a conservatory without asking any questions.

Arthur Schneider and his Series of Concerts

What did the political changes of 1918 bring to the Croatian Music Institute? The end of World War I resulted in financial crisis in Croatia, and of course the situation was also difficult at the music institute. As in Vienna, funding a conservatory was a burden for the music society, and after long negotiations the conservatory became a state institution in 1920, soon to be renamed Muzička akademija (Academy of Music). Changes also brought positive results: some new important personalities became members of the music institute's board, among them the composer Božidar Širola (1889–1956), who introduced a new spirit to the institute and brought it forward in comparison to prewar times. The new president was Robert Siebenschein (1864–1938, president 1919–29), a distinguished lawyer and politician.

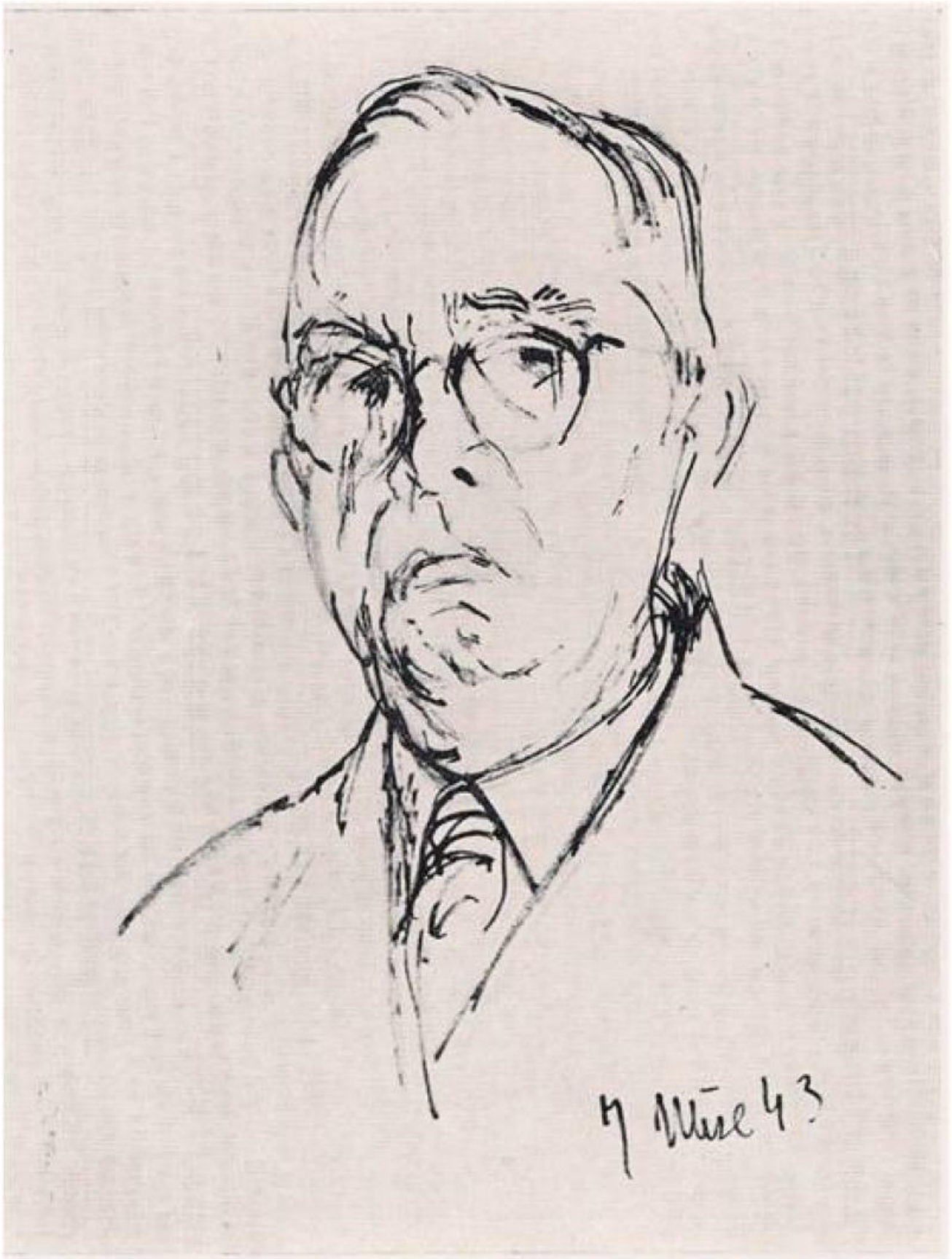

Figure 1: Artur Schneider, 1943 (portrait by Jerolim Miše); by courtesy of the Croatian Music Institute Archive

One needs to have exceptional people for such groundbreaking times, and in this case it was Artur Schneider (1879–1946), a Croat from Zagreb with a German name.[1] Although he was an art historian by occupation, he was also an amateur musician and an important writer on music. In his youth (1897) he had led a school string orchestra and sometimes performed as a conductor.

Later he wrote music criticism (some 150 articles, published in 1904–1906 and 1914–25), including a few very important articles, like the first study in Croatia on the composer and violinist Ivan Mane Jarnović (Giovanni Mane Giornovichi, 1747–1804).[2] Schneider was an individual who succeeded through dedicated and versatile work in making his mark on the period in several institutions. He was a professor of art history at the Filozofski fakultet in Zagreb (Faculty of Philosophy; 1913–43) and the head of the print collection of the Nacionalna i sveučilišna knjižnica (National and University Library; 1919–46). Schneider became secretary of the Croatian Music Institute in 1919 and remained in that position until his death in 1946. Besides his work in the office, he led a concert office at the institute and was active in the institute's library.

One of his first initiatives as the music institute's secretary was the organization of a concert series named *Jutarnji koncerti* (Morning Concerts) and later *Intimne muzičke večeri* (Intimate Musical Evenings). It marked the musical life of Zagreb in the period between the two world wars, featuring an unsurpassed combination of quality performers and programs, contemporary musical trends, and carefully prepared program booklets.[3] Schneider found the model for these concerts in the series organized by the society named Odbor za unapređenje komorne muzike u Zagrebu (Committee for the Advancement of Chamber Music in Zagreb) between 1897 and 1918. These concerts had carefully selected programs performed mostly by foreign ensembles. One of the founders of the committee was Antun Goglia (1867–1958), Schneider's predecessor as the music institute's secretary.

Schneider's series of concerts at the Croatian Music Institute ran for seven and a half seasons, from January 1921 to the end of the 1927/28 season, with a total of 148 concerts.[4] With regard to the concept and the participants, this was a single series with two names (the word "Intimate" was later left out, reducing the name to "Musical Evenings"), the only difference being the time of the concerts: at first they were held as Sunday matinee concerts at 11 a.m., and later on they were performed on Friday evenings at 8 p.m. However, the Intimate Musical Evenings are the most famous. They were held from 1923 to 1926 and included more than half of all concerts. They became important to such an extent that we can read about them not only in lexicographical articles on the music institute but also in the biographies of some of the performers (e.g. "performed on the Intimate Musical Evenings").[5]

With thirty-two concerts held, the 1923/24 season was the most prolific and, in many ways, the most important one. This would be an amazing number even today, to say nothing of the fact that the city of Zagreb was then more than four times smaller, with 170,000 inhabitants. For comparison, here are statistics from recent times: in the two years of 2015 and 2016, the Croatian Music Institute organized only twenty-five concerts, and their organization was far less demanding, because they were all smoothly running concerts of the music institute's ensembles.

Repertoire of the Concerts

The repertoire of this series was divided into standard, domestic, and contemporary. The standard concert repertoire, consisting of songs by Franz Schubert (1797–1828), piano miniatures by Robert Schumann (1810–56), or chamber music by Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904), made up the smallest part of the repertoire. One could even say that this music was probably included with the intention of offering the audience something familiar as a contrast to the concerts with

contemporary music.

Figure 2: title page of the booklet containing the program of the series of concerts 1924/25; by courtesy of the Croatian Music Institute Archive. In the middle features the monogram HGZ (Hrvatski glazbeni zavod)

[2] In his book *Music in the Balkans*, Jim Samson writes that the music institute survived after 1918, and its Intimate Musical Evenings were "designed to promote Yugoslav music."[6] The term "Yugoslav" stands here for the repertoire written by composers from the territory of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and the term "domestic music"(*domaća glazba*) was also often used for compositions by Croatian, Serbian, and Slovenian authors. Of the total of 148 concerts, twenty-seven had a completely domestic repertoire, which makes 18 percent. In addition, seventeen concerts combined native music with other European music. According to the program notes, eleven compositions were premiered in the series.

Nothing from the history of musical life in Zagreb could be compared to the Musical Evenings in the way they followed contemporary tendencies. The Croatian Music Institute was the first to present works by Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951) or Béla Bartók (1881–1945) to a Zagreb audience (only to mention the most important ones). Schneider was a prolific organizer, giving a chance to works by young composers like Jenő Takács (1902–2005), who was only twenty-four years old when he played his compositions in Zagreb in 1926. One of the reasons for Schneider's decisions was that he was the secretary of the Yugoslav section of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) from 1925 to 1932. When Schneider reported about these concerts at the annual assembly of the ISCM in Zurich, the society concluded that the "music institute is perhaps the only European music institution promoting contemporary music to such an extent in spite of all financial sacrifices."[7]

There were 143 living composers performed in Zagreb (see lists in appendix) at the Musical Evenings. The oldest one was Friedrich Hegar (1841–1927), a Swiss composer who was eighty at the time of the concerts in Zagreb, and the youngest was the Croatian composer Boris Papandopulo (1906–91). These contemporary composers make up 70 percent of all composers whose works were performed. With regard to geographical origin, all of the most important European nations were represented in the concert programs, even those not so common in Croatia, like Dutch. It is a peculiar fact that ninety years ago there was an evening of contemporary Dutch music in Zagreb—something which would be possible again only many decades later, at the festival of contemporary music Muzički biennale Zagreb (Music Biennale Zagreb). The majority of foreign composers were Czech, primarily Vítězslav Novák (1870–1949), whose students were also some of the most prominent Croatian composers of the time, like Antun Dobronić (1878–1955) or Josip Štolcer Slavenski (1896–1955).

Besides the already mentioned Bartók and Schoenberg, the composers whose works were performed included the following:

- the English composer Arthur Bliss (1891–1975), in his early phase, when he followed Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971) and Schoenberg;
- a larger group of Italian composers: Gian Francesco Malipiero (1882–1973), Alfredo Casella (1883–1947), and Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1895–1968);
- the young Paul Hindemith (1895–1963), who performed in Zagreb in the 1920s with his Amar-Hindemith Quartet;
- Erik Satie (1866–1925), Jacques Ibert (1890–1962), and two from the group Les Six: Darius Milhaud (1892–1974) and Francis Poulenc (1899–1963).

The composer Eugène Goossens (1893–1962) is important, because after 1921 he performed (as

conductor) compositions by Milhaud, Poulenc, and Schoenberg in London. Wilhelm Grosz (1894–1939), an Austrian composer and pianist, performed in Zagreb in 1926, and ten years later, as a Jewish emigrant to the UK, he composed the famous song *Harbour Lights*. It is particularly interesting that the composition *Jazz about Daniel* by the American composer Louis Gruenberg (1884–1964)—written in his so-called "American style," inspired by jazz)—could be heard in Zagreb only one year after it was written.

When we combine the criteria for a "domestic" or Yugoslav and a "contemporary" composer, the results are also interesting: from the biggest three nations of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, the first Yugoslav state of that time, twenty-six composers were from Croatia, seven from Serbia, and eight from Slovenia. All of them were at that time—between 1921 and 1928—younger than fifty, and the youngest was the already mentioned Papandopulo. The majority of their compositions were rather new at the time they were performed at the Musical Evenings. Regarding Croatian composers, the list shows that Schneider followed the trend of the so-called national style in Croatian music, since there are many compositions by Dobronić. Certainly not all Croatian music was written in the national style. The best examples are several compositions by the young Slavenski, who received the first prize at the Donaueschinger Musiktage in 1924 for his string quartet. The youngest composers introduced to the Zagreb audience were in their twenties: Zlatko Grgošević (1900–78), Rudolf Matz (1901–88), Papandopulo, Mladen Pozajić (1905–79), and Marko Tajčević (1900–84). Blagoje Bersa (1873–1934), their professor of composition at the Academy of Music and the most important composer of the *fin de siècle* in Croatia, was represented with only one composition in the whole period of the Musical Evenings. He was regarded as an outsider and eclectic, far from the most popular national style. History proved the opposite: today Bersa is celebrated and his compositions performed, while the music of Dobronić is rarely heard publicly and his role in the history of Croatian music is considered in a more negative light than before.

The Famous Soprano Maja Strozzi-Pečić

The list of musicians who performed at the Musical Evenings series shows variety, but mainly they were from Zagreb. New ensembles, like the Zagrebačka filharmonija (Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra) or the Zagrebački kvartet (Zagreb Quartet) and the amateur orchestra of the music institute (Društveni orkestar Hrvatskoga glazbenog zavoda), proved that musical life gained fresh energy after 1918. It is hard to believe that the organizer Schneider, in a series of concerts planned as thoroughly as this, did not give the audience basic information about the performers. For example, the biography of the pianist Takacs was published only because he also worked in Zagreb as a composer.

[3] It may be said that the stars of the Musical Evenings were the Croatian soprano Maja Strozzi-Pečić (1862–1962) and her husband, the pianist Bela Pečić (1878–1938).[8] They performed in twelve concerts, which amounts to almost 10 percent of all concerts, always with a carefully designed program. Not one but two concerts were devoted to their friend Stravinsky, who dedicated his *Quatre chants russes* to Maja Strozzi.[9] At the Stravinsky concert in the music institute, the Strozzi-Pečić couple also played *Trois pièces faciles* for four hands, composed in 1914–15. This is interesting information since Maja Strozzi-Pečić was a famous primadonna, especially in the role of Violetta in Verdi's *La Traviata* (even Thomas Mann admired her),[10] and it was not known that she performed as a pianist. Even better, Bela Pečić played these pieces

together with Stravinsky at a concert in Lausanne, Switzerland, a few years earlier. The Strozzi-Pečić Collection at the music institute archives holds the edition from which they played, with Stravinsky's dedication to Bela Pečić.

Figure 3: Igor Stravinsky with his friends Maja Strozzi-Pečić and Bela Pečić in Zagreb, 1926; by courtesy of the Croatian Music Institute Archive

Publications for the Concerts: Sheet Music and Programs

Today, the library of the Croatian Music Institute keeps interesting editions which Schneider obtained for this concert series cycle. Natal'ya Gončarova (1881–1962), a Russian avant-garde painter and graphic artist, designed the edition of a piece for piano by English composer Lord Berners (1883–1950), *Le poisson d'or* (*Golden Fish*), published in 1919 (London: Chester), and performed at a concert in Zagreb in 1923. On the title page, the name of Gončarova is written in a font almost as big as the name of the composer. It is interesting that even the article on Lord Berners in *Grove's Dictionary* mentions that this edition was designed by Gončarova.[11]

Figure 4: cover of *Le poisson d'or* by Lord Berners, illustrated by Natal'ya Gončarova, 1919; by courtesy of the Croatian Music Institute Archive

Schneider had to find funding for the concerts quickly—one concert each week. Luckily, he received help from the Institute française in Zagreb, founded in 1922. Already in January 1923, the concert program noted that the Institute française had helped in obtaining music scores of the works by Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924), an elderly master still alive at that time. Another source was the publishing house J. & W. Chester from London, which was at that time involved in

publishing works by Manuel de Falla (1876–1946), Lord Berners, Poulenc, and Stravinsky. *The Chesterian*, the renowned magazine of that publishing house, and booklets about composers from the series *Miniature Essays* were used for many texts in the programs. In turn, Schneider published an advertisement for *The Chesterian* in the programs. Exactly at the same time, advertising in Croatia began to flourish, and advertisements were constant in three concert seasons of the Musical Evenings. The ads were for various everyday items, such as chocolate, underwear, gloves and socks, silk, hats, wool and cotton, and disinfectant but also for businesses such as banks. When the British-Austrian piano couple Louis (1861–1939) and Suzanne Ree performed in the series, the Zagreb subsidiary of the Wiener Bank-Verein (Vienna bank club) bought an ad.

Portraits of musicians—photographs and pictures—published in the programs are of great importance. According to the report Schneider wrote at the end of the 1923/24 season, there were 144 pages of text published in the programs.[12] Schneider never signed those program notes, but certainly he was the author. As Šaban wrote regarding those program notes, "we have to admire how well he [Schneider] was informed and his highly professional work."[13] Schneider gave the concert audience bio-bibliographical data about the composers and sometimes analyses of the compositions. For this he used the basic lexicographical literature of the time but also obtained information from the musicians. The lyrics of songs were always given in the original language, sometimes in the original alphabet, such as the Russian Cyrillic alphabet for *Golosptic /La voix des oiseaux* by Sergey Prokofiev (1891–1953), composed in 1921, only four years before the concert in Zagreb. Interestingly enough, German lyrics were never translated—due to the old tradition of German language in Zagreb.

Schneider's Heritage

In considering the Intimate Musical Evenings to be one of the highlights in the history of the Croatian Music Institute, a final question pertains to the awareness of this situation on the part of Schneider and his contemporaries, and whether he was treated with proper respect. One example will show that this could be true, at least for the institute's management. Some newspaper reviews were so brutal in criticizing Schneider that at the end of 1923 he offered his resignation as artistic director of the concerts and as a member of the institute's board.[14] But the music institute's board gave him full support, and the concert series could continue.

After the end of the Musical Evenings series, at the end of the 1927/28 season, Schneider was still very busy at the music institute, leading the institute's concert agency, organizing a project involving the publication of music scores, and reorganizing the library. He also held the two already mentioned leading positions as art historian and in 1928 became the head of the Strossmayer Gallery of the Yugoslav (today Croatian) Academy of Science and Arts (*Strossmayerova galerija starih majstora HAZU*). Schneider died in 1946, at the beginning of a completely different political and cultural period, which of course had its own preferred music. Contemporary foreign music penetrated significantly into Zagreb's musical life again in 1961, with the first season of the Music Biennale Zagreb festival. At the Biennale in 1963, Stravinsky was a special guest. This time he didn't come to Zagreb as a friend of the Strozzi-Pečić couple but as a living legend.[15]

Appendix

The lists provide works by composers who were alive at the time their works were performed in Zagreb. The exception is Claude Debussy (1862–1918), who died a few years before the Intimate Musical Evenings began. Data on years of birth and composition are taken from relevant lexicographical publications;[16] only in a few cases was it necessary to search for them in other sources (see footnotes). Any asterisk in table 1 indicates that this piece was performed for the very first time at the respective concert. Abbreviations are given according to *The New Grove Dictionary to Music and Musicians*.

1. Repertoire of contemporary music at the concerts—Croatian, Slovenian, and Serbian composers

Composer	Birth	Composition	Year of the composition	Year of the concert
Adamič, Emil	1877	*V Indijo*, song; *Nočne pesmi*, song cycle		1922
Albini, Srećko (Felix)	1869	*Oproštaj*, song		1923
Baranović, Krešimir	1894	*Mrtvi lugar*, song		1922
Baranović, Krešimir		String quartet		1928*
Bersa, Blagoje	1873	*Seh duš dan*, song	1918	1921
Binički, Stanislav	1872	*Jorgovan-grana procvala*, song		1922
Dev, Oskar	1868	*Pastirica*, song		1922
Dev, Oskar		*Kranjčičev Jurij*, mixed chorus		1922
Dobronić, Antun	1878	*Sumorni akordi* (*U prozorju blijedom*, *Ponoć*), songs	1910	1922
Dobronić, Antun		*Divertissement* (*Jadovanka*, *U uzbuđenosti*), vn, pf	1914	1922
Dobronić, Antun		*Serenata moga života*, pf	1916	1927
Dobronić, Antun		*Pjesma srodnih duša*, op. 15, str qt	1917	1924
Dobronić, Antun		*Čobani, Sojčica*, mixed chorus	1922	1922
Dobronić, Antun		*Jugoslavenske pučke popijevke*, op. 28, small female chorus, pf	1923	1923

Table 1; to display the table, click the image above or follow this link

2. Contemporary music repertoire—foreign composers

All titles are in the original language; if they are in square brackets, it was not possible to identify with certainty which composition it was, so they are left in Croatian translation or translated from Croatian to English as basic information.

Composer	Birth	Composition	Year of the composition	Year of the concert
Axman, Emil	1887	*Sonata na pamět' velikěho člověka*, pf	1922[1]	1924
Bantock, Granville	1868	*Songs from Chinese poets*, song cycle	1918 (ed.)	1923
Bantock, Granville		[*Taj uzdah iz srca mog*], mixed chorus		1921
Bartók, Béla	1881	*Este a székelyeknél*, *Paraszti nóta*, *Medvetánc* [from *Tíz könnyű zongoradarab*], pf	1908	1926
Bartók, Béla		First string quartet, op. 7	1908–09	1924
Bartók, Béla		*Két elégia*, op. 8b, pf	1910	1926
Bartók, Béla		*Allegro barbaro*, BB 63, pf	1911	1926
Bax, Arnold	1883	*Elegiac trio*, fl, va, hp	1916	1923, 1926
Berners, Lord	1883	*Lieder Album: Three Songs in the German Manner*	1913–18	1923
Berners, Lord		*Le poisson d'or*, pf	1915	1923
Berners, Lord		*Fragments Psychologiques*, cycle, pf	1916	1923
Berners, Lord		*Trois petits marches funébres*, pf	1916	1923
Berners, Lord		*Fantasie espagnole*, pf 4 hands	1919	1923

Table 2; to display the table, click the image above or follow this link

References

1. See more on Schneider in Ljerka Dulibić, ed., *Artur Schneider 1879.–1946: Zbornik radova znanstveno-stručnog skupa Hrvatski povjesničari umjetnosti* (Zagreb: Društvo povjesničara umjetnosti Hrvatske, 2016), especially Nada Bezić, "Artur Schneider i glazba – tragom Ladislava Šabana," 81–96. See also Ladislav Šaban, "Artur Schneider i glazba," *Peristil* 23 (1980): 63–66. ↑
2. Artur Schneider, "Mozartiana u Zagrebu," *Sv. Cecilija* 35, no. 5–6 (1941): 83–93; "Neostvaren boravak Beethovena u Hrvatskoj," *Sv. Cecilija* 36, no. 3–4 (1942): 81–90; no. 5–6: 131–43; "Ivan Mane Jarnović, hrvatski guslač-virtuoz i skladatelj XVIII. stoljeća," *Sv. Cecilija* 37, no. 1 (1943): 14–20; no. 2: 53–59; no. 3: 76–81; no. 4–5: 120–29; no. 6: 166–75. ↑
3. In his book on the first 150 years of the Croatian Music Institute, Ladislav Šaban wrote about these two concert cycles: *150 godina Hrvatskog glazbenog zavoda* (Zagreb: Hrvatski glazbeni zavod, 1982), 120–22. ↑
4. Archives of the Croatian Music Institute, Concert program collection. ↑
5. Krešimir Kovačević, ed., *Leksikon jugoslavenske muzike* (Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod, 1984), s.v. "Mihalović, Hugo, pijanist." ↑
6. Jim Samson, *Music in the Balkans*, Balkan Studies Library 8 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 339. ↑
7. "[D]a je HGZ zacijelo jedina evropska muzička ustanova koja bez obzira na materijalne žrtva propagira u tolikoj obilnoj mjeri savremenu muzičku tvorbu," quoted in Šaban, *Hrvatskog glazbenog zavoda*, 120–21. Unfortunately, Šaban did not give an archival number of this report but only noted that it refers to the 1925/26 season. Today it is not to be found in the records for 1925/26. ↑
8. Maja Strozzi-Pečić studied music in Zagreb and Vienna. She made her debut in Wiesbaden in 1901 and was a member of the operas in Graz (1903–1905, 1908–10) and Zagreb (1910–37). She was also an

outstanding lieder singer. Her husband Bela Pečić was a pharmacy graduate but devoted himself to music—he performed only as piano accompanist of his wife. ↑

9. See more about their cooperation in Nada Bezić, "Artefakti art décoa: Primjeri iz Hrvatskoga glazbenog zavoda u Zagrebu," in *Music Cultures in Sounds, Words and Images: Essays in Honor of Zdravko Blažeković*, ed. Antonio Baldassarre and Tatjana Marković (Vienna: Hollitzer Verlag, 2018), 585–89. ↑
10. In his novel *Doktor Faustus*, Mann wrote that Strozzi-Pečić was "perhaps the most beautiful voice of both hemispheres," cf. Verica Grmuša, "Star Persona and National Identity in the Age of the Empire: The Role of Maja Strozzi-Pečić in Petar Konjović's Opus," *Muzikologija* 20, no. 1 (2016): 72–73. ↑
11. "Berners's earliest mature works were for the piano—*Le poisson d'or*, dedicated to Stravinsky and published with designs by Natal'ya Gončarova of the Ballets Russes." Peter Dickinson, "Berners, Lord [Tyrwhitt-Wilson, Sir Gerald Hugh, Baronet]," in *Grove Music Online*. ↑
12. Archives of the Croatian Music Institute, Archive records, 1923/24, No. 64. ↑
13. Šaban, *Hrvatskog glazbenog zavoda*, 118. ↑
14. Archives of the Croatian Music Institute, Archive records, 1923/24, No. 32. ↑
15. Cover picture: postcard of the Croatian Music Institute; by courtesy of the Croatian Music Institute Archive. ↑
16. Krešimir Kovačević, ed., *Muzička enciklopedija*, 3 vols. (Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod, 1971–77); Kovačević, ed., *Leksikon jugoslavenske muzike*, 2 vols. (Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 1984); *Grove Music Online*; *MGG Online*. ↑