

“SHE WAS AFRAID THAT SOMEBODY WOULD SEE”: THE GENDER PERFORMATIVITY OF FEMALE YUGOSLAV SINGERS IN THE SIXTIES¹

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Abstract: *This paper focuses on female singers of so-called light music active during the 1960s in Yugoslavia, and on the status of what can be called Mediterranean music in their work. The goal is to explore how the concept of gender performativity, as defined by Judith Butler, can be applied to the performance of music, and to shed some light on the way Mediterranean music has affected gender performativity. Several important aspects of Yugoslav culture at that time will be examined, including the importance of Western influences and the ideological use of popular music, as well as the status of women in the former Yugoslavia and the question of gender (in)equality. The aim of the paper will also be to reveal the norms of femininity that were prevalent in the music industry at that time.*

One important characteristic of cultural life in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from the 1950s onward was its openness to the Western influences that strongly shaped the lives especially of those who lived in large cities.² Among the most important of these Western influences was the development of the rock music scene and that of the so-called light music that was very popular in Yugoslavia.

The assimilation of ‘artifacts’ from Western consumer cultures – from Western Europe as well as Britain and the United States – was used by the government to shape the idea of Yugoslavia’s ‘progressiveness’ and to distance the regime from the ideologies of the other communist countries that formed the Eastern Bloc.

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2 Cf. Alexei Monroe: *Interrogation Machine. Laibach and NSK*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003, pp. 80–121; Sabrina Petra Ramet: “Shake, Rattle and Self-Management. Rock Music in Socialist Yugoslavia, and After”, in: *Kazaaam! Splat! Ploof!: The American Impact on European Popular Culture Since 1945*, eds. Sabrina Ramet and Gordana Crnković. London: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, 2003, pp. 173–197; and Radina Vučetić: “Rokenrol na Zapadu Istoka – slučaj *Džuboks*”, in: *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju* 1–3 (2006), pp. 71–88.

In this context I propose to consider the ways in which music performance influenced female gender performativity, as understood by Judith Butler, and vice versa. My focus will be on three singers (Tereza Kesovija, Ljiljana Petrović, and Zorana Lola Novaković) who performed light music during the 1960s under the influence of the ‘Mediterranean’ music that came to be understood as a musical symbol of the ‘progressive’ West.³ I will also examine how the identity of female singers of light music was constructed within Yugoslav society and elaborate some of the ways in which music influenced their gender performativity.

THE CONCEPT OF GENDER PERFORMATIVITY AND ITS RELATION TO VOICE

Judith Butler writes that “If gender is a kind of a doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one’s knowing and without one’s willing, [...] it is a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint.”⁴ According to Butler, gender ‘appears’ due to practices of reiteration that happen within the framework of different norms; in acts of gender performativity, individuals repeat, change or ‘decline’ to accept those norms, and by doing so they become subjects. Gender norms are thus (re)produced in this process of reiteration, but they can, at the same time, be questioned. Butler writes that these norms are “[t]he terms by which we are recognized as human” and are located “from the start, outside oneself, beyond oneself in a sociality that has no single author”.⁵ Thus, she claims that society recognizes us as ‘men’ and ‘women’ only in relation to the degree to which we comply with the reiteration of prescribed gender norms. One’s self, thus, “emerges only within and as the matrix of gender relations themselves”.⁶ According to Butler, no one *is* a gender, but everyone’s gender is constantly being performed, in a process that happens in time and includes the reiteration of certain social norms.

3 In the pre-war period, jazz music and the so-called schlagers became popular among the urban bourgeois as examples of the latest musical fashion from the West. This popularity continued after the World War II despite the fact that a new, socialist state had been established, and these popular genres merged into what is often referred to as ‘easy’ or ‘light’ music. Along with jazz and schlager music, light music was influenced by Latino rhythms (cha-cha-cha, rumba, samba), as well as elements of rock, swing, twist, blues etc. In other words, it was a blend of various musical genres popular in the West. Cf. Vartkes Baronijan: “Pola veka beogradskog zabavno-muzičkog života”, *Zvuk* 102–103 (1970), pp. 104–106.

4 Judith Butler: *Undoing Gender*. London, New York: Routledge, 2004, p. 2.

5 Idem.

6 Judith Butler: *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”*. London, New York: Routledge, 2011, p. xvi.

In her theoretical work, Butler thus emphasizes the difference between the concepts of gender *performance* and gender *performativity*: “the former presumes a subject, but the latter contests the very notion of the subject”.⁷ Performativity is a concept that, in her opinion, invites us to think about language and voice, since it can be understood as “*that aspect of discourse that has the capacity to produce what it names*” (italics in the original), or as “the vehicle through which ontological effects are established [...] the discursive mode by which ontological effects are installed.”⁸ Yet, even though the concept of performativity announces the importance of language, questions of voice and sound remain outside Butler’s theoretical focus. As Annette Schlichter notes, Butler’s “theory of gender performativity and the consecutive deliberations about the matter of bodies do not account for voice as sound, nor do they acknowledge the mediation of vocal acts through sound technologies”.⁹ According to Schlichter, Butler “eventually presents us with voiceless bodies”.¹⁰ Although Butler’s concepts offer an important theoretical tool for understanding the way gender is performed through speaking or singing, the author herself seems to understand the voice as purely discursive. Schlichter’s article provides a valuable extension. As Schlichter claims, voice is a vitally important aspect of gender performativity and the materialization of the body, since it “marks a passage from the inside of bodies to the exterior, and its materiality is rather delicate, even paradoxical”.¹¹ Schlichter agrees with Jacques Lacan and Mladen Dolar that the voice is “an object that emerges from the body but is neither fully defined by matter nor completely beyond it”.¹² The question of gender performativity through singing is also an important field that shows how voices are trained to fit particular genre norms – like those of *bel canto*, jazz singing, or blues. As defined by Butler, gender performativity is based mainly on the visual, which can be understood as both a result and a critique of the predominance of this aspect in contemporary society.

Butler claims that gender performativity and compliance with the reiteration of gender norms are what make us ‘recognizable’ to the society in which we live, which is a thesis that can be applied to music (and to many other phenomena) as well. To put it simply, compliance with certain norms or rules – manifested in the form of genres, compositional techniques, performance characteristics, etc.

7 Judith Butler: “Gender as Performance”, in: *A Critical Sense: Interviews With Intellectuals*, ed. Peter Osborne. London: Routledge, 1996, p. 112.

8 Idem.

9 Annette Schlichter: “Do Voices Matter? Vocality, Materiality, Gender Performativity”, in: *Body & Society* 17/1 (2011), p. 32.

10 Idem.

11 Ibidem, p. 33.

12 Idem.

– ensures that a piece of music will be recognized by its audience as belonging to popular, classical, jazz, or any other kind of music. My intention here is to analyze how gender and musical performance are connected and influence each other, and to shed some light on the question of how the female gender has been constructed and performed within a world of music that *was* predominantly male – most composers, arrangers, and lyricists were men – but which ‘allowed’ a number of women to enter the sphere of performance. Special attention will be given to the female voice since, during the sixties in Yugoslavia, visual media culture was not as highly developed as in other Western countries, and singers were recognized by audiences chiefly through their singing voices.

YUGOSLAV WOMEN BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

As noted, “the process of westernization was encouraged in Yugoslavia as part of the Cold War and the Yugoslav policy of balancing between two superpowers.”¹³ Also, as Alexei Monroe (and others) have observed, the status of popular music in Yugoslavia was different from its status in the other communist countries of Eastern Europe, since in Yugoslavia it had the additional role of promoting a certain political and cultural ideology. As Monroe states, the “authorities were tolerant of popular music partly in order to differentiate the ‘progressive’ Yugoslav regime from the overt cultural Stalinism of its Eastern neighbors.”¹⁴ Monroe also points out that in this case, “not only was there no sustained *Kulturkampf* against rock as such (only its ‘unacceptable’ variants), it even came to be seen as a useful transmitter of Yugoslav ideology.”¹⁵ Thus, music that was created under the influence of (mostly Anglo-American) popular genres came to be associated with progressive, urban, and cultured members of Yugoslav society and was often used as a basis for their distinction from those living in rural areas of the country, whose’ music was understood as oriented towards the local context. In other words, popular music created under Western influences (not only rock and roll, but light and jazz music as well) played an important role in shaping the identities of the urban youth by supporting the idea that the country and its culture lay truly between East and West, never fully

13 R Vučetić: “Rokenrol na Zapadu Istoka”, p. 77. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by the author.

14 Alexei Monroe: *Interrogation Machine: Laibach and NSK*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003, p. 204.

15 Idem. It should be noted here that Monroe seems to understand the situation in eastern Europe at the time through the stereotypes present in the western countries; for example, he seems to generalize the entire Eastern bloc, understanding the cultural politics of these countries simply as “overt cultural Stalinism”, uncritically assuming that Western popular music is ‘free’ of ideology while Eastern (Yugoslav) music is (only) a “useful transmitter of ideology”.

accepting either of their ideologies as Yugoslavia chose ‘its own path into socialism’ in 1948, after the break between Tito and Stalin. In this context, the music of the Mediterranean, and especially the light music of Italy, served as a link with the popular music of Western Europe.

Another area that offers a way to understand how tensions and differences between East and West were negotiated within the context of Yugoslavia is that of female emancipation. The emancipation of women was among the goals to be achieved by the new socialist society that emerged after the end of World War II. The official position of the communist party was in accordance with the ideas of Marx and Engels concerning this issue: gender inequality would be eradicated together with class inequality and all forms of exploitation resulting from the existence of private property.¹⁶ As Neda Božinović points out, while the Communist Party of Yugoslavia was in power there existed a permanent discussion about whether society required women’s organizations whose work would be directed especially towards achieving the equality of women. In other words, two discourses were constantly present: one that stood by the ideas of Marx and Engels, and another arguing that the ‘female question’ and the problem of gender inequality must be addressed as issues separate from the fight for social and class equality. According to Božinović, “the status of women [...] improved constantly, but was coupled with a constant struggle by women’s organizations against the general economic and cultural backwardness and the conservative patriarchal consciousness manifested in the everyday life by men and women alike”.¹⁷ The end of World War II and the victory of the Communist Party brought many improvements for the women of Yugoslavia – such as the right to vote, to choose a profession, the right to equal education, etc. – yet these changes often remained only on paper, and patriarchal ideas still remained strong. Even though women were given the same rights as men, they were never encouraged to denounce the traditional gender roles that kept them at the home as wives and mothers. In other words, legal mechanisms were constantly clashing with ideological principles. Feminist ideas took root in Yugoslav society partly due to Western influences, and despite the fact that this movement was often frowned upon by the authorities. One event that is often considered “the first event of the second wave of feminism in Eastern Europe”¹⁸ was organized by women in 1978 under the title “Comrade Woman. Female Question. New Approach?” It can be

16 Bojana Pejić: “Proleterians of All Countries, Who Washes Your Socks? Equality, Dominance and Difference in Eastern European Art”, in: *Gender Check. Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe*, ed. Bojana Pejić. Vienna: Museum Moderner Kunst, 2009, pp. 19–29.

17 Neda Božinović: *Žensko pitanje u Srbiji u XIX i XX veku*. Beograd: devedesetčetvrti, žene u crnom, 1996, p. 251.

18 Marijana Stojčić: “Proleter i svih zemalja – ko vam pere čarape? Feministički pokret u Jugoslaviji 1978–1989”, in: *Društvo u pokretu*, eds. Đorđe Tomić and Petar Atanacković. Novi Sad: Cenzura, 2009, p. 108.

taken as evidence that actual gender equality did not exist in Yugoslavia, but that the question was considered very important.

Many women managed to use the opportunities offered them by a socialist society that espoused gender equality. Women were active in the political life of the country (like Mitra Mirović and Spasenija Babović, to name only two), and Yugoslav women were also active as sports journalists and commentators, rock journalists, scientists, engineers, etc. The growing number of female singers in Yugoslavia was not only a result of the demands made by the market and the music industry – as was the case in the capitalist West – but was also influenced by the proclaimed gender equality that existed in the official political discourse. Thus, the careers, music, and gender performativity of female singers must be considered in the contexts of a number of opposing influences: of East (or local) and West, of traditional versus progressive, and of emancipation versus gender inequality.

UNDERSTANDING THE MEDITERRANEAN IN A YUGOSLAV CONTEXT

When discussing Mediterranean music, or the Mediterranean *in* music, a clear definition of this term is lacking, as the term ‘Mediterranean’ can be applied to the music of all the countries that have access to the Mediterranean Sea whether they are in Europe, the near East, or North Africa.¹⁹ The cultures in this region are many and diverse, and the ‘Mediterranean’ seems to be defined and redefined with each new attempt to understand the music – mostly traditional and popular – of different countries in the region. For present purposes ‘Mediterranean’ will be understood here in the context of the light music of former Yugoslavia, which differs from the definition formed through analysis of, for instance, folk and traditional music.²⁰ In the specific context of light music in Yugoslavia, the Mediterranean was associated mostly with the Adriatic Sea and was usually represented by Italian music, and to a lesser extent also with the music of France, Spain, and Greece.²¹

19 Cf. David Cooper and Kevin Dawe (eds.): *The Mediterranean in Music: Critical Perspectives, Common Concerns, Cultural Differences*. Lanham, MD.: The Scarecrow Press, 2005.

20 In this case, ‘traditional music’ refers to folklore – to music performed by people living mostly in rural areas, whose music is considered the primary subject of ethnomusicological research – while ‘folk music’ points to musical practices that produce popular music supposedly inspired by traditional music. In other words, this formulation implies the difference between the ‘authentic’ folklore and music that uses some of its typical elements (such as scales, ornamentation, or rhythms) but is in fact a product of the music industry.

21 Other non-European countries bordering the Mediterranean, such as Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, Libya, and others, seem to have been excluded from what was recognized as ‘Mediterranean’ music in Yugoslavia.

Italy is one of the two ‘Western’ neighbors of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (the other being Austria), and the country itself had access to the Mediterranean via the Adriatic Sea and the coasts and seaports of Croatia, Montenegro, Slovenia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Italian music strongly influenced the Yugoslav light music of the sixties, and many Italian hits were covered by popular singers from Yugoslavia.²² After the end of the so-called Trieste crisis – when Yugoslavia and Italy fought over the territory of Trieste, Gorizia, and Istria – many felt that Trieste should have been merged with Yugoslavia and ‘embraced’; as the famous slogan proclaimed: “Trieste is ours!” One of the most important festivals revealing Yugoslavia’s closeness to Italy and to Mediterranean music is the one held since 1958 in Opatija, on the Croatian coast. This festival was envisioned as a Yugoslav variant of the Sanremo Music Festival, and helped to define what is meant by Mediterranean music in Yugoslavia and to popularize Italian music. Covering popular songs was a common practice in Western Europe at the time, so the presence of a large number of foreign hits in the repertoire of Yugoslav singers is not surprising. But Mediterranean music was only one aspect of the light music scene in Yugoslavia, and only one of the representatives of the West European tradition of popular music. The Mediterranean also had strong local connotations, as Yugoslavia had access to the sea, especially via Croatia, where Mediterranean music became an important symbol of Croatian culture. In other words, Mediterranean music could be recognized as both international and local – that is, both Croatian and, in a broader sense, Yugoslav – which reveals once again the position of the non-aligned country *between* influences constructed in mutual opposition – not only ‘East’ and ‘West’, whether understood as the USSR and the U.S. or as Eastern Europe and Western Europe. Yugoslavia was close to *both* but accepted *neither* completely.

Within this framework, I will analyse a few examples of songs performed by Tereza Kesovija, Ljiljana Petrović, and Zorana Lola Novaković, whose music offers important insights into the performativity of female gender in the Yugoslav light music scene in the 1960s.

22 For instance, Dragan Toković sang Domenico Modugno’s hit *Si, si, si*; Dušan Jakšić covered Carlo Buti’s *Per un Bacio D’amor* with a song called *Za jedan poljubac*; and Dorđe Marjanović performed a number of Italian songs including *Renato* (sung by Mina), *Domani prendo il primo treno* (renamed *Prvi voz*), and *Bella pupa* (translated as *Lutkica*). Also, a magazine called *Metronome for You* published the scores of songs that were popular in the West, among them many Italian songs that were performed at the Sanremo Music Festival.

GENDER PERFORMATIVITY AND LIGHT MUSIC

TEREZA KESOVİJA

Kesovija (b. 1938) was born near Dubrovnik in Croatia. Her career developed rapidly in the early sixties following a performance at the festival *Beogradsko proleće* (Belgrade Spring Festival), and especially after she won second prize at the Opatija Festival in 1962 with a song entitled *Plavi nokturno* ('Blue Nocturne'). As her official biography states, she was known both within Yugoslavia and internationally, and toured the countries of Western Europe as well as the USSR, South America, and Asia.²³ In 1965 Kesovija moved to France, where she released two albums, *La Chanson de Lara* and *C'est ma chanson*; her international career flourished especially after she was chosen to represent Monaco at the Eurovision Song Contest in 1966. Her albums published in France achieved great success, with the first one selling over 50,000 copies. She also recorded a number of songs and albums dedicated to her home town of Dubrovnik, the region of Dalmatia, or the city of Split, which reveal her understanding of Mediterranean music as a symbol of local and specifically Dalmatian identity.

One such song is *Nima Splita do Splita* ('There's No Place Like Split'), composed by Nikica Kalogjera and Ivica Krajač, which Kesovija performed at the Split Festival in 1963. The song leans heavily on the characteristic local dialect, with lyrics that describe the beauties of Split and express love for its uniqueness, while the music reveals ties to Dalmatian folk music and the characteristic shaping of the vocal line. Similar characteristics can be found in the song *Sunčane fontane* ('Sunny Fountains', later known as 'Dalmatian Evergreen'), composed by Zdenko Runjić and first performed at the same festival in 1974.²⁴ This ballad again shows the strong influence of Dalmatian music, in a major key, with a prominent role given to the mandolin as one of the symbols of this area. The melody is wide-ranging, filled with jumps in thirds and ending in a characteristic manner, moving from the seventh to the third tone of the scale. Another interesting example of the Mediterranean music in Kesovija's discography is *Larina pjesma* ('Lara's Theme', 1967), one of the many covers of the famous tune from *Doctor Zhivago* (1965) composed by Maurice Jarre.²⁵ In Kesovija's performance, the music reveals strong ties to the region of Dalmatia; thanks to the prominence of the mandolin and the slightly slower tempo, the Russian atmosphere of the original tune was given a more local sound. From the rich discography of Tereza Kesovija, it is important to

23 <http://tereza-kesovija.com/>, biografija, 60e (accessed on September 29, 2015).

24 <http://tereza-kesovija.com/> (accessed on September 29, 2015).

25 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=weRqVURKrWI> (accessed on September 29, 2015).

mention the album *Nježne strune mandoline* ('Tender Strings of Mandolin') which contains songs inspired precisely by the 'Dalmatian sound' – with the use of the mandolin, major keys, the large vocal range of the melody, and frequent use of the major third – such as *Sunčane fontane*.

The performativity of Tereza Kesovija's gender during this time suggests that her identity was formed within a complex web of social norms that established the role of women, governed their conduct in public, and dictated how female vocalists should look, intersected by the possibilities (and limitations) offered by technology and the media. Her appearance on stage as a passionate, sensitive, and beautiful young woman was modeled on that of singers of classical music: she was elegant and feminine, wearing long dresses or skirts, and dressed and acting according to the norms of traditional femininity, yet never over-emphasizing any of her female attributes. Her visual appearance thus defined her clearly as a woman, but – paradoxically – also implied a certain 'neutrality', since her looks were never supposed to distract attention away from her singing. This neutrality of Kesovija's look can also be attributed to the fact that in Yugoslavia in the sixties, popular music was still heard mostly on the radio, so the physical appearance of the singer – male or female – was less important than in later decades. More emphasis was put on her singing abilities and her voice, trained according to the norms of light music, which was at times tender, soft, clear, or powerful, and always technically perfect. Her singing reflected the tradition of Italian *canzone* or French *chanson*, while her use of vibrato recalled the tradition of classical music. In any case, her voice clearly defined her gender as unquestionably female. Finally, due to her vocal abilities and the rapid development of her career, she appeared to the audience as a music professional, a woman who was *just as important* for the ideology promoting a 'progressive' Yugoslavia as were her male colleagues. In this sense, it could be said that Kesovija's body revealed a type of materiality that was typical for singers of popular music in Yugoslavia during the 1960s: to most members of the audience, it was materialized – to a certain extent – 'outside' her body, at the same time both connected with it and detached from it, due to the technologies of reproduction and radio.²⁶ Although there was nothing typically Mediterranean in her physical appearance but this trait could be found, whenever she sang 'Dalmatian music', both in her voice and her way of singing.

26 Certain forms of the subversion of gender norms – possible, according to Butler, precisely due to their reiteration in different ways – were present in the visual appearances of popular West European singers who had access to entertainment TV programs, like Mina (Anna Maria Quaini), who was famous for her open questioning of the traditional bourgeois role of women, or Rita Pavone, whose image was that of an androgynous teenaged girl with short hair and 'boyish' looks.

LJILJANA PETROVIĆ AND ZORANA LOLA NOVAKOVIĆ

Petrović (Bosanski Brod, Serbia, 1939) and Novaković (Belgrade, Serbia, 1935) were among the most popular singers of light music, mostly singing covers of famous hits from the sixties, though they also performed some original songs by Yugoslav composers. Both are famous as Yugoslavia's representatives at the Eurovision Song Contest: in 1961, Petrović sang *Neke davne zvezde* ('Some Ancient Stars') and finished in eighth place, while Novaković finished in fourth place a year later with a song entitled *Ne pali svetla u sumrak* ('Don't Turn the Lights On at Dusk').

The Mediterranean sound of their music came mostly from Italian, Spanish (or more broadly 'Latino'), and Greek songs that they sang in various arrangements. For example, the hit song *Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Yellow Polka Dot Bikini*,²⁷ sung by Brian Hyland and covered numerous times, became very popular in Yugoslavia as well and was performed by numerous artists, most famously by Ljiljana Petrović and Đorđe Marjanović (who also translated the lyrics and the title as *Bikini sa žutim tačkama*). The original track, composed for male voice and orchestra, introduces the 'seaside atmosphere', with some elements of Caribbean music (mostly in the rhythm) and a prominent role given to the brass section, also making possible associations with Latino or Mexican music. In the version sang by Ljiljana Petrović, the Latino element was enhanced by singing the song as a cha-cha-cha with brass instruments and extensive use of percussion, which also made it sound more Mediterranean. The lyrics were also changed to the first person, as if Petrović were singing about something that had happened to her on the beach. However funny and light it might seem, this track actually touches on an important issue concerning the female body. Namely, the lyrics tell a story – from a man's point of view – about a young girl (who seems to be mocked by the storyteller) wearing a bikini – an itsy bitsy one with yellow polka dots – to the beach for the first time and who feels uncomfortable, "afraid that somebody would see" her exposed body. In other words, the theme of the song is quite contemporary, touching on what Lora Malvi later called the 'male gaze' and the shift that began to occur in the way society looked upon (semi-)nudity, or women showing off their bodies, from a presumption of immorality to a situation where girls who refused to free themselves from old-fashioned views were considered 'shy'. As for Petrović's interpretation, it can be described as sweet, clear, tender and 'girly', allowing the listener to believe that the song was sung by a sweet and shy young girl, which Petrović was around the time the song became a hit. Like Kesovija, Ljiljana Petrović's vocal range was

27 Music and lyrics written by Paul J. Vance and Lee Pockriss. The song reached #1 on the Billboard Hot 100 on August 8, 1960.

very wide, her technique excellent, and the song also reveals her ability to act out the story with her voice. Thanks to the changed lyrics, the perspective of the song was changed and its mocking tone was effectively removed. Her visual appearance mostly followed the same norms of required neutrality and elegance as in the case of Tereza Kesovija.

The Greek song composed by Manos Hatzidakis, *Deca Pireja* ('Children of Piraeus'), was also very popular in Italy. It was covered by both Ljiljana Petrović and Lola Novaković in different characters: Petrović's version was closer to Latino, with extensive use of brass instruments and percussion to emphasize the characteristic rhythm, while the version sung by Novaković kept the original Greek features of slow tempo and the extensive use of string instruments (imitating the sound of the Greek bouzouki, the chief symbol of this music). Novaković's gender performativity was in the same mode as that of Petrović: excellent technique and a wide vocal range, a sweet lyrical timbre, and lyrics dedicated mostly to love and other subjects usually considered light, like summertime on a Mediterranean beach.²⁸ She also presented herself as a sensitive, tender, and sophisticated young woman. The audible aspect of her identity was coupled with an elegant and simple appearance, short hair (in blond curls during the seventies), and a rather humble attitude. In other words, the focus was on her vocal abilities and not her looks, her voice being something of a 'transmitter' of her body and 'responsible' for the performativity of gender. Both Petrović and Novaković had large vocal ranges, with techniques revealing closeness to the norms of Italian *canzone*, as well as some jazz. At the time, the gender of singers was not crucial for the development of their career or the choice of their songs. Popular Italian, Spanish, or Greek songs were sung by men and women alike, and songs originally sung by men were often covered by women and vice versa. Hits from other Mediterranean countries were also sung by Radmila Karaklajić, Nada Knežević, Beti Jurković, Gabi Novak, Elvira Voća, Nena Ivočević, Đorđe Marjanović, Vice Vukov, Dušan Jakšić, Dragan Toković, Marko Novosel, Ivo Robić, and many others. In every case, the emphasis was on the music and the quality of the performers' voices; their looks were much less important. It can therefore be said that when light music was performed for the public, a high level of gender equality was achieved.

As visual media culture developed and influences of the Western music industry became stronger from the late sixties onward, singers began to receive more attention from magazines and television producers, which resulted in their visual images

28 As against more 'serious' issues like politics and social criticism.

becoming ever more important. This change was also supported by the increasing popularity of rock 'n' roll, which was heavily dependent on the appearance of the performers; the idea that popular music is made to be seen as well as heard has by now become a rule in the music industry. At the end of the seventies, and especially during the eighties, as light music lost its popularity to rock and roll, singers like Ljiljana Petrović, Tereza Kesovija, and Lola Novaković slowly began to change their public images. Petrović and Novaković gradually left the scene as the 1970s passed and new singers became increasingly popular, but Kesovija continued with her work and is active to this day as a singer of light Mediterranean music. She also kept refining her image of a classy, elegant, evergreen singer, emphasizing more and more her femininity and stylishness. Thus the gender performativity that was mainly achieved via sound in the sixties became outdated.²⁹ Women who played or sang rock music seemed to pay more attention to their looks. One good example is the group Sanjalice ('The Dreamers'), who released their first album in 1964, and whose gender performativity was strongly influenced by British beat groups, some of which were comprised exclusively of women, like The Liverbirds or The Debutants.

In other words, the female gender performativity of singers of light music in Yugoslavia in the 1960s is an example of female emancipation which lacked the element of sexual revolution that came to define both rock music and popular music in recent decades in the struggle for women's rights.

CONCLUSION

Given this brief look at songs performed by singers of 'light' music in Yugoslavia in the sixties, it appears that the most important aspect of the performativity of female gender was the singer's voice and the music she performed. Gender performativity was strongly dependent on the music, and the visual aspects of popular music were less important than they are today. The gender performativity of female singers at the time was split between the visual and the vocal sphere. In this sense, Mediterranean music played an important role in the formation of the female gender of Yugoslav singers. It was used by some, like Tereza Kesovija, to represent the local, in her case the region of Dalmatia, while at the same time it pointed to Yugoslavia's connection with the West and the 'progressiveness' of the regime that allowed and sponsored the development of popular music. The field of light music can also provide insight

29 The next generation preferred rock music to light music, and most of those who achieved great popularity were male rockers who emphasized their masculinity, like the members of Bijelo Dugme, Kornj Group, Vatrene poljubac, or Riblja čorba.

into the position of women in Yugoslav society, revealing that the performativity of the female gender kept happening in between the idea of the singers as emancipated women with successful careers and the traditional gender roles that presented them as sensitive, elegant and 'feminine'. In the final analysis, the performativity of gender being enacted through the light music scene in the 1960s offered an image of women who were not concerned with subverting the norms established by the popular music of other Western cultures. In other words, the (Western) norms concerning both gender performativity and the performance of music were reiterated by these singers and transferred to the context of Yugoslavia to be once again established as norms.³⁰ Thus, it can be said that both the musical and gender performativity were conventional when viewed from an international perspective; yet – to make matters somewhat more complex – when understood in the local Yugoslav context, this development can also be interpreted as a sign of progress.

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30 I do not wish to imply that Western influences were simply pasted into a new context. What is important is to consider the complex processes that defined this transfer from one culture to another.

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