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CONCERT MANAGEMENT IN CROATIA: OBSTACLES AND CHALLENGES

ABSTRACT

The concept of *concert management* in the Republic of Croatia encounters numerous obstacles in any attempt to institutionalize it. Unlike other countries in the European Union, there is no register of the concert stages, venues as well as facilities for the provision of hearing / consumption of music in the form of performances. Process management organization is incomplete, and institutions that are closely associated with such events do not carry out the classification, categorization and analysis of events that are within the concerts' domain. Commercial music, economically far most cost-effective, is completely ignored and within the framework of cultural events not even the slightest attention is given to it. On the contrary, it is considered the music of poor quality and completely irrelevant.

This paper tries to frame the mentioned genre, which includes various musical directions that economically bring significant benefits and help the survival of these related activities indirectly, and ultimately have a positive impact on the economy. Comparing global trends it speaks about the position of the Croatian music industry and lists the main obstacles for setting up a solid foundation for the construction of an adequate system of indexation of concert businesses that, as part of the creative industries records a meteoric economic growth.

Keywords: Concert management, commercial music, music and economy

1. Introductory consideration

From the cultural standpoint, commercial music has no artistic value and is meaningless as such. In the professional literature you can find articles about *the questionable quality of popular music* (Pavičić et al., 2007: 331), and all the space is given to other genres whose financial value is significantly lower. The economy, however, has quite a different perspective on it. Capitalism and global consumerism turned the commercial music industry into one of the most lucrative business fields in recent decades.

Concert management in Croatia as opposed to global trends is still undergoing a turbulent pe-

riod of transition. The role of managers, whether retained by the performer or by the company, is questionable. The tasks and responsibilities are not specified and precisely defined as the knowledge and skills are based on practice without any significant theoretical framework. *The vicious triangle* (a limited market, a limited number of performers and a limited budget) does not allow expansion as institutions at the state level do not support these kinds of events while institutions at the local level are often inert.

This paper will discuss the value of commercial music and trends on the global and Croatian music

scene. As concerts are classified among the group of high-risk events, there will be mention of the organization and the necessary knowledge and skills to organize such events. The paper will also present final basic obstacles and challenges of this industry in Croatia that impede its path to global popularization and stabilization in the global market.

1.1 Design and methodology

Previous research includes a case study of the concert stage - the club in which more than eighty concerts of different genres have been organized (from small concerts up to those with two hundred visitors or larger ones with two to three thousand sold tickets). By observing, analysing, interviewing and comparing the results, some deficiencies have been found which served as the basis for the development of this work.

In order to substantiate the claims, extensive research was carried out. Data from the primary and secondary sources were analysed, and the publications from domestic and foreign government offices, associations, agencies, scientific institutions, the media and the results of previous researches were included in the research. The survey and interviews were used in compiling the required information by the regulatory authorities and relevant institutions.

1.2 The aim

The aim of this paper is to show that concert management in Croatia is an activity that is not regulated. The institutions (contrary to other European countries) do not have and do not carry out data gathering for any kind of database. It is not known how many concert stages there are in the country and there is no categorization. No records are kept on the number of concerts, their size, type, genre, mode of implementation, the contractors nor the number of visitors.

The profession of concert managers, which cannot be fully identified with the concepts of project and event manager, does not have an adequate definition, education and job description.

Commercial music is not valorised because artistically it is considered unsuitable, and economically without any value because of the lack of all these indicators, which do not exist because there are no data on which they can rely.

2. Music in the framework of the European and world economy

In 1996, *EMO – the European Music Office*, established in the EU, published a report *Music in Europe*, describing the economic importance of music for the European Union¹. Author Dave Liang² stated the number of public places for performing live music, discos, clubs and similar facilities in the European Union member states. Ireland, which could be compared to Croatia by the number of inhabitants, had 650 places for live music and 1360 discotheques and other similar facilities.

Furthermore, the importance of various musical genres as well as employment in the music sector is also mentioned, whether is it the musicians - performers or organizers, promoters, producers, etc. Although the report and the overall activity of the office should have contributed to the evaluation and systematization of production and performance of music, due to the economic conditions and structural difficulties after the extraordinary general meeting of 2013 it has been shut down³. Similar data for the Republic of Croatia have not been found.

The same author presented the results of the research of the International Federation of the Phonographic industry (*IFPI*) in the article *World music and global music industry - flows, corporations and network*, which published in its report for 2006 that the world of marketing ticket sales reached up to 12.5 billion US dollars (Liang, 2009: 19). World gross spending on music in three main sub-sectors including the music industry, publishing and live performance is 1.4 billion US dollars which is 1.8% of the global industry (Liang, 2009: 27), while the average ticket price for 2014 is 82.07 US dollars⁴.

3. Perception of music in Croatia

About 70% of Croatian citizens are satisfied with their lives⁵, but two-thirds out of 400 respondents rarely or never go to the movies, theatres, concerts or exhibitions (Kaliterna Givers, 2008).

The Market Research Centre and portal Muzika.hr conducted a study in 2011 of listening to music in Croatia on a sample of one thousand respondents over the age of fifteen. More than half of the respondents (55%) listen to music almost every day or several times a day⁶. Among the most listened genres is turbo-folk in the third place (21% of respondents), rock / metal / punk in the second place (more

than 23% of respondents) and in the first place is pop music (68% of the respondents⁷). Although the trends have been changing in the past four years and some other genres have become more popular, pop music firmly holds the leading position.

Looking at the world scene, we must mention Taylor Swift, a famous singer. Originally playing country music, she turned to pop expression that has made her a global star. She was named the best global performer in 2014⁸ by IFPI and declared Woman of the Year by Billboard⁹.

3.1 Undemocratic: Cultural vs. Commercial music

It is very difficult, almost impossible to find information or announcements for commercial shows and performances of pop performers like Severina, Tony Cetinski or Željko Joksimović¹⁰ on the sites that promote culture and art. The three names stated above (randomly chosen) belong to the first category of the regional music scene. Their fees can reach up to several hundred thousand kunas per appearance and their concerts are regularly sold out.

And although they deal with music and musical - stage art which belongs within the scope of the Ministry of culture¹¹, information on their activities is often lacking.

Furthermore, the above mentioned research centre for studying the market and portal Muzika.hr shows that the first five places among the *favourite* performers belong to Oliver Dragojević, Tony Cetinski, Mate Mišo Kovač, Dražen Zečić and Severina¹².

The bright example is definitely the Vatroslav Lisinski Concert Hall, whose management in recent years has been introducing novelties into business and started with the organization of commercial concerts. According to its statute, *the Concert Hall carries out the activity of concert and theatre halls and other arts facilities such as: holding of concert, musical and theatrical, entertainment, cultural, artistic and other events*¹³. The explanation can be found in the fact that Zagreb is co-financing the Hall with approx. 40% while the remaining amount the Hall must obtain on its own. If we randomly choose ticket prices for two concerts, the ticket price for the Master Cycle - Cycle of the Symphony Orchestra of HRT held on 10 December 2015 was 40.00 and 60.00 kunas. The day before, Jasmin Stavros, Dražen Zečić and Mladen Grdović performed in the same

hall and the price of the ticket was 220.00 kunas per person¹⁴. The financial report for the hall for 2014 shows that budgetary funds account for 49% of the revenue and the profit at the end of the year was slightly less than eight hundred thousand kunas¹⁵. Due to the changes in the business policy the Hall has suffered much criticism¹⁶, but on the other hand it has shown *an example of market adjustment* (Pavičić et al., 2007: 209), and accepted the financial importance of organising commercial concerts.

3.2 Economic aspects of commercial music

The music industry together with the film, fashion, culture, design, publishing and partly media and advertising industry is one of the creative industries¹⁷, which contains aspects of the new and unknown in terms of social and cultural innovation¹⁸.

Economic aspects of commercial music can be viewed dually: the first is the music industry itself that strives to achieve the highest possible profit, and the other is jump-starting the economy through activities that are not included in the creative industry but are closely related as such.

According to the annual report of HDS ZAMP for 2014, *the top 10 authors with the highest earnings* in that period among others include Miro Buljan, Boris Đurđević, Tonči Huljić and Vjekoslava Huljić¹⁹, respective authors who cooperate with singers from Croatia and the region like Tony Cetinski, Jelena Rozga, Colonia band and many others who deal with commercial music. In comparison to foreign performers, the top ten are Pharrell Williams, Shakira, Rihanna, Avicii and Justin Timberlake²⁰. Although the genres of listed artists rank from pop and rock through entertainment, dance and R&B and electro music, all of them belong to the group of commercial performers and commercial music, which is, as the word itself says cost-effective and profitable.

It favours and adapts to the laws of supply and demand, it is very flexible, it employs more and more people and encourages consumption, or fluctuation of resources on both the national and global level.

The organization of a concert which will feature a *commercial* performer carries the assumption that it will be profitable in advance. However, in order to maximize profit and provide access to additional services for every visitor, the hospitality industry, whose role can decisively influence the outcome of

success, is often approached as the safest path for achieving additional income.

Catering and related agencies do not contribute only to the satisfaction of performers, organizers and visitors, but they also allow the flow of funds and moving of the whole industry through various fees, taxes and other obligations towards regulatory and similar institutions.

4. Concert Management in Croatia

The organization of commercial concerts is very expensive, with high costs in a short period of time, and revenues and profits are linked to a much higher risk than it is the case in other activities (Van der Wagen, Carlos, 2008: 2). The concert manager is the person who is responsible for organizing the event, and can be hired by the performer or by a company²¹ that organizes the concert.

4.1 Management of concerts as a high-risk event

Risk management is one of the most important tasks of the organizers (Van der Wagen, Carlos, 2008: 38). The event includes a wide range of events, from smaller ones, such as birthday parties, anniversaries and weddings to major ones which include conferences, symposiums, sports competitions, various types of events etc. Any public event that takes place before the (un)expected audience is regarded as an event (Pavičić et al., 2007: 268).

Crisis can be caused externally and internally (Osmanagic Bedenik, 2003: 17). Although many authors advise the preparation of a systematic program to avoid the crisis (Luecke, 2005: 53), there are situations that are impossible to predict and avoid and in most cases often occur due to: technical difficulties, natural events, economic conditions, illness and deaths.

Practice shows that postponing a concert is more demanding than arranging it, while the outcome is always the same - a loss, because it cannot be influenced by any of these unpredictable situations. For example, no insurance company in the Republic of Croatia insures concerts against inclement weather conditions because the risk is too great. In such situations the decision-making ability of managers is the key of success. Concerts are considered as group events, but because of their uniqueness they require a specific, prepared and trained approach that ensures the elimination of uncertainties and reduce

the risk to the minimum through all phases of the organization of the concert, from preparation to its implementation and final evaluation.

4.2 Organizational process from the planning to evaluation

Depending on the size of the concert, the organizational process can last from a few weeks to a year or more. The average time required for organizing a commercial concert in Croatia, (for approximately three thousand visitors) lasts from six months to a year.

The basis of each project's budget is always limited, pre-defined and approved in advance by the investor / performer, depending on who is the main organizer.

The concert manager has full responsibility. He is at the top of the hierarchical pyramid and builds the team according to these units which make the organizational process.

The entire process can be divided into six closely related entities that intertwine, complement and go from one to another. The main components and the most important actions within each are:

1. Logistics involves processes of negotiations and contract conclusions with performers, taking care of the additions to the contract (*technical and hospitality riders*), obtaining work permits (if performers are foreign citizens) and all other matters that are related to the performer and his escort team (transport, accommodation, food, drinks) before, during and after the show, during the entire stay.
2. Technical issues include the purchase / lease of the necessary sound and light equipment as a whole, the preparation and management of the stage (*staging*) during the duration of the concert.
3. Marketing is an area which requires knowledge of all the available tools, channels (Pavičić et al., 2007: 181) and the communication mode of the market. Analysis of the targeted public (Tomić, 2008: 83) is crucial and one must not forget that, when it comes to institutions in the field of culture and art, the external public also includes celebrities, artists and related institutions (Pavičić et al., 2007: 231). In case of the concerts the product

is the music while the promotion strategy is of unquestionable importance because of all the activities and resources that are directed to all current and future target groups through effective communication, information and persuasive action (Pavičić et al., 2007: 191).

4. Security and insurance include hiring a security service that takes care of peace and order in the venue, and the conclusion of the insurance liability in the case of breakdowns, fires, floods, etc.
5. Managing the finances implies tracking funds in the budget, the timely fulfilment of obligations towards suppliers, paying taxes, local taxes and similar charges related to the general business of the company.
6. Meeting the legal, legislative and other provisions – knowing and respecting the law²², submitting the application for a public gathering permit to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, signing contracts and paying the compensation to ZAMP (Protection of music copyright), obtaining necessary permits from the competent institutions.

These actions take place simultaneously. Most of the time they are synchronized and require trained personnel. Another peculiarity is the employment according to the principle of *the pulsating organizations* (Van der Wagen, Carlos, 2008: 17). The process begins with planning a smaller team of people, and as the concert approaches a growing number of people is engaged that will reach its maximum on the day of the concert.

Concerts can be extremely cost effective but can also lead to significant financial losses (more in: Van der Wagen, Carlos, 2008: 13) if a sufficient number of tickets are not sold. For this reason, forming the appropriate price is extremely important for success.

Ticket price is formed by calculating the base points of coverage that is equal to the total fixed cost divided by the difference of selling price and variable cost per unit (Pavičić et al., 2007: 171).

Modern trends require constant research and processes of reducing uncertainties. In the case of concerts uncertainty is partially reduced by launching an early ticket (*early bird*) that indicates the pre-production price. With the announcement a small number of tickets are released on the market and

the time in which tickets will be sold out is measured for organisational reasons. Although economically they are the most unprofitable for the organizers at the same time they are a very reliable indicator of the success of the upcoming event.

Also, they may be let on sale in the case of a crisis - knowing the negative factors that could significantly reduce sales in the future. Then the number of tickets that marks *a critical mass* - enough people so that the venue would not look empty and the event would not be declared as unsuccessful before it begins - are released on the market.

The presale price represents a middle ground between early entrance fees and basis points of coverage while the price per day can be increased up to 50% from those presales and allows reaching the base points of coverage and / or making a profit.

5. Obstacles and Challenges

There are many obstacles before the concert management in Croatia that prevent professional treatment and adequate access to the process of the organization that requires knowledge, skills and abilities.

One of the main obstacles is the fact that on the territory of Croatia there is no institution that conducts systematic sampling of concert statistics.

The information system of the Croatian Composers Society (HDS ZAMP) does not support the data processing in a structured way when it comes to the number of concerts held live by genre, size (number of visitors) and the type of location in which it was held. The only information available to the public is the billing fee that can be found in the annual reports²³ and is not sufficient for analysis and other processing. Organizers of concerts pay a fee in the amount of 10% of the total gross income of the concert²⁴. These payments are made to the authors of the reported musical works. How frequently and efficiently the reported information is verified remains questionable.

The Croatian Association for Protection of Performers' Rights (HUZIP), however, pays the funds to the performer. At the same time there is not any database of the events that were held. And finally, not even the Croatian Musicians Union (HGU) keeps records of previous concerts and similar events, because they are not competent, they do not ask for any reporting of future concerts that will

take place, nor do they issue any permits and similar documents for holding the events.

The only institution that has a database is the Ministry of Interior Affairs (MUP)²⁵ to whom it is obligatory to report any public gatherings where more than twenty people are expected, otherwise sanctions will follow. It is a very extensive database that includes peaceful gatherings, public protests and public events²⁶ which implies *gatherings organized for the purpose of making a profit from business activities*²⁷.

The Ministry of Culture issued a strategic plan in May 2013 for the period from 2014 to 2016²⁸. The two main objectives are related to the development of cultural and artistic creativity together with production and public communication and protected and preserved cultural heritage. The concept of a concert does not appear on any occasion in the strategic plan.

In a report on culture and art in 2013²⁹ the Central Bureau of Statistics defines a concert as *a public performance that is a constituent part of the whole programme of an event, while performing during formal events and festivities includes participation only in a part of the whole programme*³⁰. It brings the processed data from annual reports that are filled by theatres, orchestras, ensembles, choirs, radio stations, television centres³¹ etc., while commercial concerts are not mentioned at all.

One of the challenges that are mostly associated with the financing are relations with sponsors / partners. The basic problem in the case of commercial shows and concerts is the development of *perceptions on how to connect the brand with a particular type of event* (Pavičić et al., 2007: 60). In certain cases the brand does not want to be related to the individual performer due to the unfavourable impact of the image, business policy (...), while on the other hand performers, especially those in the first category often sign exclusive contracts with brands. In this case, if the sponsors and venues of concert performances do not match, there is no real way to solve the situation because one of the sides must break the agreement. In that case the simplest solution is absence of promotional messages of sponsors entirely (of which the sponsor is notified in advance).

The importance of this item shows the fact that any serious agreement that organizers make with the performer contains separate articles about the ban

and / or conditions of highlighting brands³² during the performance. Violation of rules related to the sponsorship invariably leads to the termination of the contract and paying the penalty³³.

6. Conclusion

Concert management requires quick and effective adaptation measures in order to be positioned in the global market. Market research can greatly contribute to setting guidelines of vision and mission of this industry which thanks to technology and the media is one of the fastest growing in the world. Commercial music needs to be accepted as such, and used to popularize other, lesser-known genres that are classified in the category of *cultural* music.

Self-proclaimed managers should be trained in efficient ways of doing business. It is very important to eradicate the grey economy with greater involvement of regulatory institutions. It is necessary to start with the introduction of systematic data monitoring of concerts held (their size, the number of visitors, production costs, etc.) and credibility control in order to start following trends and do benchmarking.

It was found that some crisis situations cannot be avoided, and it is therefore necessary to adopt specific precautions and suggestions for the most effective and fast ways of finding solutions. There is no adequate protection against some forms of crisis. Adverse future events can be partially controlled by signing contracts, annexes and similar documents. The most important measures of precaution regarding the possible cancelling the show or changing the date on which it is held (in the case of death, natural disasters, acts of God e.g. sudden failure and power outage in the wider area, etc.) are the following:

1. The pre-agreed backup date of performance that suits both the organizer and the artist;
2. Pre-prepared material and flow crisis communication channel with the media in order to pass the information to as many people as possible in the shortest period of time. Insurance companies do not offer protection from these occurrences in their packages and measures of precaution are rarely enforced.

By joining the European Union Croatia has greatly facilitated business with other countries. This advantage should be exploited in order for Croatian

music to become an integral part of the European scene. But to be appreciated by others, we should learn to evaluate it and make it profitable where it was made.

Continued research should be redirected towards the MUP (Ministry of Internal Affairs) as the only institution that has a database on public gatherings. It is possible to find out the exact number of concerts, the venue and the approximate number of visitors by analysing, classifying and selecting information, which can then serve as the foundation

for creating a national database. If we want continuous data collection and in order to make these data relevant, the next step is cooperation with ZAMP, HUZIP, HGU and the performers themselves.

Once the entire system is set up, it will be possible to evaluate each event economically. Depending on the value which remains questionable even after this paper, it is necessary to create a synergy between research and music profession in order to include commercial music into the category which will have an artistic value.

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KONCERTNI MENADŽMENT U HRVATSKOJ: ZAPREKE I IZAZOVI

SAŽETAK

Pojam *koncertni menadžment* u Republici Hrvatskoj pri svakom pokušaju institucionalizacije nailazi na mnogobrojne zapreke. Za razliku od drugih zemalja unutar Europske unije, ne postoji registar koncertnih pozornica kao ni objekata za pružanje usluga slušanja/konzumiranja glazbe u vidu nastupa. Upravljanje procesom organizacije je nedorečeno, a institucije blisko povezane s tom vrstom kulturnih događanja nisu klasificirale kategorizaciju ili analizu događanja koja ulaze u područje koncerata. Komercijalna glazba, kao ekonomski daleko najisplativija, potpuno je zanemarena te joj se u okvirima kulturnih događanja ne pridaje ni najmanja pozornost, već se, naprotiv, smatra nekvalitetnom i nevažnom.

Rad pokušava uobličiti spomenuti žanr, unutar kojega se ubrajaju razni glazbeni pravci koji ekonomski donose značajnu korist i pomažu opstanku neizravno povezanih djelatnosti, te u konačnici pozitivno utječu na gospodarstvo. Uspoređujući svjetske trendove govori se o položaju hrvatske glazbene industrije te se navode osnovne zapreke postavljanju čvrstih temelja za izgradnju primjerenoga sustava valorizacije koncertnoga poslovanja koji, kao dio kreativne industrije, bilježi strelovit ekonomski rast.

Ključne riječi: koncertni menadžment, komercijalna glazba, glazba i gospodarstvo