

“Wien – die Stadt der Lieder” (1930). *Rigasche Rundschau*, 19. Mai, S. 4

“Wintertraining” (1932). *Rigasche Rundschau*, 12. November, S. 2

“Wirtschaftliche Rundschau. Die Aussichten der Leipziger Herbstmesse” (1930). *Rigasche Rundschau*, 1. September, S. 6

““Zapfenstreich am Rhein” im “A. T.”” (1930). *Rigasche Rundschau*, 9. September, S. 4

“Zur Grammophonplage am Rigaschen Strande” (1930). *Rigasche Rundschau*, 27. Mai, S. 7

““Zu Tee und Tanz”” (1923). *Rigasche Rundschau*, 18. Oktober, S. 2

“Zwei Herzen im 3/4 Takt” (1930). *Rigasche Rundschau*, 20. September, S. 13

## THE TERM *SCHLAGER* IN THE *RIGASCHE RUNDSCHAU* NEWSPAPER, 1919–1939

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### Summary

The terms *šlāgeris* and *šlāgermūzika* in Latvian are derived from the German *Schlager* and *Schlagermusik*, meaning “hit” and “hit music”. Nowadays, they apply to compositions produced by the music industry with certain stylistic qualities. The main focus of this paper lies in the semantic properties of the term *Schlager* as it appeared in advertisements in the *Rigasche Rundschau*, the most important German newspaper in Latvia of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This German term originating in the Austrian dialect and the German merchant vocabulary of the 19<sup>th</sup> century entered the German press in Riga in various publications related to culture several decades before the proclamation of Latvian independence in 1918. It remained widespread in press vocabulary in the interwar era and during the German occupation in the Second World War.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *Schlager* as a term was attributed mostly to operetta music. The practice of using the term for popular and financially successful operetta excerpts in the German language and in German-related regions of Europe continued in the interwar period.

The field of popular music in the 1920s was characterised by new media – improved sound-recording technologies and radio – but printed music also continued to play an important role in the distribution of music. A common feature of all these music distribution media was their compact format. Composers adapted to the new

situation by creating entertaining vocal miniatures in the previously popular operetta styles and adding the latest dance rhythms to boost the popularity of their music. In the press, this music was also referred to as Schlagermusik.

In the 1930s, when sound film was introduced to the public, musicals rose in popularity, and many operettas were also adapted for the screen. Consequently, a new type of Schlager – namely, sound films – appeared in the vocabulary of the press. However, the first years of the decade already highlighted the involvement of the music industry in filmmaking. Companies produced phonograph records and editions of printed music featuring title songs and lyrical duets from movies. Essential features of these film-Schlagers included popular dance rhythms, various waltzes, tangos and foxtrots. By the second half of the 1930s, *Schlager* became established as a description for film music distributed on records, printed music or the radio.

This paper concludes, first of all, that the term *Schlager* was a popular label used in the press vocabulary and in publications about cultural news in general. Second, the meaning of this word was quite broad and changed several times. The analysis of the *Rigasche Rundschau* newspaper reveals that the term reflected not only the trends mentioned above but also other semantic properties. In view of the increasing popularity of cinema after the First World War, already in 1919 advertisements began calling new silent movies *Schlagers*, and this practice continued into the early 1920s, with *Schlager* used to refer to new films. In contrast, cultural reviews used the term for popular operettas or popular songs set to new dance rhythms. In the mid-1920s, when radio stations began operating all across Europe, Schlagers were introduced to *Rigasche Rundschau* readers through foreign radio programmes. The term was used most broadly in musical and cinema contexts in the newspaper in the late 1920s and the turn of the 1930s. This can be explained by the technological developments of the day and the appearance of sound films, with *Schlager* being used in *Rigasche Rundschau* advertisements to denote silent and sound films as well as operettas, dance songs, phonograph records and printed music.

The situation changed over the course of the 1930s. By the second half of that decade, the term *Film-Schlager* was increasingly used in press communication to indicate popular film melodies. Advertisements announced that these were available on phonograph records and as printed sheet music, thus establishing a certain change in the term's meaning towards "a musical piece from a sound movie" distributed on shellac phonograph records or as printed sheet music. Many of the previous semantic properties were discarded, while the role of the Schlager as an entertainment product created by the music industry became clearly defined.