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PROBLEMS OF THE DOCUMENTATION AND NOTATION OF FOLK MUSIC TODAY

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The paper points to the need of a complex documentation of the folklore objects. The notation of folk songs and instrumental melodies serves as a basis for ethnomusicologist's research work and analyses. It is a precondition for the development of a theory of the folk music of an ethnic community. The search for most suitable graphic realization in deciphering a folk song and the lack of methods for effectuating it create prerequisites for differences in the notation of the folk songs, which, with no reason, we sometimes term as individual idioms in the musicographic practice.

A basic precondition for carrying out the diverse activities of preserving folk songs, tunes, dances, customs, etc. is the historically natural process of the falling apart of the traditional customary system, which in the past had ensured the creation, the spreading, the socialization, and reproduction of the works and phenomena of folklore. The recognition of the tremendous importance of folk art for the building and development of contemporary culture and arts gave full range to an unfolding and affirmation in life of a great number of initiatives, the purpose of which was precisely the preservation of the ages-old folklore values, both as a national cultural heritage and as a living artistic practice.

Independent of the efforts being made for preserving folklore as a system, and the works of the folklore in their living form which also have their place in today's routine and festive life of the Bulgarians, a number of folklore forms (oral, musical, dance, plastic etc.) are subject to gradual extinction. The activities of documenting them on various carrier materials, such as paper, recording tape, roll-film, or as museum exhibits, is increasing in scope with every coming day. This is

the sphere which ensures the preservation of folklore as an artistic heritage, as folklore material in a museum form. It is in this field that Bulgarian folkloristics and, musical folkloristics in particular, have had a considerable experience covering long years. It is hardly necessary to mention the remarkable work of Vassil Stoin and his co-workers, and the colossal recording activities of the Institute for Musicology, and of the Institute for Folklore, attached to the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. It is necessary, however, to accentuate, from scientific positions, the problems of documentation and notation of musical folklore, proceeding from its state today.

If we were to define in a few words, the character of documentation in recording folk songs and instrumental melodies, we would have to point out that in Bulgaria, not only at the time of Vassil Stoin when the notation was done by ear, but later on as well, when mechanical phono-recording was introduced, requirements concerning the contents and quality of the recording had to do mainly with the decipherer's possibility of extracting from it, to a sufficiently reliable degree, the verbal and music text of the folklore work. For this purpose (and also with a view to economizing recording tape) it was considered sufficient to record, on the average, three verses (musical stanzas respectively) from a folk song. Even today, in spite of the "more lavish" use of tape material, we only rarely record the songs in full. Of course, there are also certain objective reasons for that: our informers are usually elderly men and women singers, who could not endure prolonged vocal (but also psycho-physical) strain, when they carry in their memory several dozens, and sometimes even hundreds of folk songs. Obviously there will be compromises in this respect in the future as well, but, in this case, it is more important to point out that as a result of this way of recording, documentation will lack a series of elements of the living folklore sample. Thus, for example, we are quite often compelled to give up the recording of the antiphonal singing, which used to be the general practice for the prevailing part of the Bulgarian songs, owing to the absence of proper performers. In other cases, we have been recording songs from one single woman-singer, which had typically been performed by a group. (For example, song melodies which are linked to horo dancing, working bees, or rituals). For phonographing some typical men's songs (such as Christmas carols) we sometimes use women-informers, and so on. These are some of the compromises made only with respect to the musical indices, but if we proceed from the classic in folkloristics formulation concerning the complexity of the folklore phenomenon (work), where speech, music, dance, costume, and the ritual act, and the objects of the nation's material culture, all have an equally important role, we will see that a considerable part of our recordings so far would not be able to give us an idea about the overall character and content of the original folklore works. In the future, again, we will often set ourselves limited tasks in documentation (to record, for example, only the speech and the melody), due to inability to secure suitable performers for the complete (complex) reflecting of the original folklore work. However, we must point out that we have still not adopted such a method of registration work which would make us deliberately and purposefully seek cases in which we would be able to grasp the complete sonic, visual, full-color and varied picture of the folklore object. Such possibilities are offered most often at festivals of

folklore, and during the period of their preparation. In this connection, it is also necessary to create the proper organizational, material, and technical conditions, and the respective personnel to fulfil that task. I would say that we are falling behind alarmingly in its realization. Under the present state of the folklore tradition, in which the young generation are ever more rarely able to meet with original and particularly vestigial works of the national artistic genius in live performance, how can we familiarize them with such works unless we have preserved them as archival-museum exhibits in their factual, stylistic and artistic fullness? What would be a young man's notion, for example, of the fascinating Christmas carols, their place in the Christmas festivities, and their social and artistic function, if we enable him to hear only a tape recording of a number of Christmas songs, recorded from an elderly woman, songs she has kept in her memory from the years of her girlhood, when her sweetheart was a member of a carol-singers group?

But regardless of the need for complex documentation of folklore objects, notation of folk songs and instrumental tunes is of a singular importance to the ethnomusicologist, because that documentation serves as a basis for his specific research and analysis of musical folklore.

The need for graphic recording of folk songs, dances, and instrumental tunes, had arisen along with the first steps of musical folkloristics, as a prerequisite for it becoming a science. It was unthinkable, without their being durably fixed on paper, to start the description and investigation of the facts underlying the musical folklore of a given national culture, or to draw profound conclusions about the natural laws of their existence and development. Thus, the notation of Bulgarian folk songs is a precondition for developing the theory of the Bulgarian folk music, on the basis of the achievements of world musical thought. "By means of note-recording we not only record a composition, but at the same time... we also interpret it, by bringing it under musical categories and schemata: tonality, pitch, rhythm, measure, form etc., established beforehand!¹ We most often use musical categories and schemata from musical theory already familiar to us, this being largely the theory of the West European music. Those are the cases in which the borrowed concepts, models, symbols etc. had proved applicable to Bulgarian folk music. But when a number of definitions and schemata of West European musical theory have proved unsuitable for many of our folk songs, Bulgarian musicologists-folklorists (musicographers) have searched for alternative ones, or have created new varieties of the fundamental categories of musical theory, reflecting most faithfully the specificity of Bulgarian folk songs and tunes. This was done after they had gained a sound knowledge of the song music of our people, and subjected it to a profound scientific analysis. *This process has been an essential part in creating the theory of Bulgarian folk music.* It has not been completed, but is rather being extended and deepened in parallel with the development of our science of musical folklore. The notation (deciphering²) of folk songs from phonograms is the most important stage of that process. In this work, musicographers are confronted by phono-documentation of

¹ S. Dzhoudzhev. *Theory of the Bulgarian Folk Music*. Vol. IV, S., 1961, p. 151.

² The verb "decipher" is here used in the sense of "notate from phonogram": "deciphering" = "notation from phonogram"; "deciphering" 0 "notated recording", "notogram".

authentic materials of musical folklore, and are obliged to subject them to a most thorough analysis in order to determine their objective melorhythmic structure and form, and hence to find or create the most suitable graphic image for expressing them, this being the result of their theoretical generalizations and conclusions.

Notation is one of the most important links in the theoretical investigation of Bulgarian, or any other folk music. It does not submit to a mechanical and superficial attitude. Each notogram ought to be made with a sense of deep responsibility, so as to leave no doubt as to the true expression of the sound recording, from the positions of modern achievements in the theory of the respective folk music. In addition, the notogram of a folk song should also be in conformity also with its function. In this sense, Prof. Dr. Stoyan Djoudjev makes the following interesting remark: "Once recorded by mechanical means (by phonograph or taperecorder), the song should be notated with musical symbols and presented in a form which is *convenient for both performance and analysis*."³ (the italics are mine - T. D.) The notated recording should not only reflect the possible most exact objective sounding of a given folk melody, but should also find such graphic expression for its written image, which will contribute to its most precise and convenient reproduction, and its best possible use in various studies of folk music.

Proceeding from what I have said above is the first problem of the musicographers in deciphering folk songs: the need for an excellent knowledge of the general theory of music, and in particular the theory of the folk music at issue. This is, above all, a problem of personnel, and is settled with the selection of the persons who will notate folk songs, according to the quality and extent of their training for such type of musicographic work. Musicographic practice shows that other problems exist as well, on which the quality and the character of the notation depends: the manner of applying the musical-theoretical categories and schemata (pitch, tonic, tonality, rhythm, metrem, beat, tempo, metronomic measure, ornamental forms, etc.) and their varieties in the notation of given folk songs. As it turns out, there are differences in the approach of musicographers in setting certain folk songs under these or other musical-and-theoretical principles or models. This frequently leads to considerable differences in the notograms, which matters both for freedom and ease in reproducing the melodies, and for their theoretical investigation (the latter in particular). In other words, the varying approach of the decipherers in expressing the melodies, rhythm, metrem, time, ornamentation, tempo, etc. creates conditions for finding a different graphic expression (to one or another extent) for the same folk songs or kinds of songs.

What is the reason for the different applications of general theoretical formulations and schemata, the final results of which are different notograms? A number of musicologists have pointed out that departures from the mathematically exact intonation of the tones of a melody, and the absolute measurement of their duration, is a normal phenomenon, even for professional singers and instrumentalists of the highest degree. This is true even more of the performers of folk songs and tunes, in whose case this phenomenon is combined with varying

³ S. Džoudžev. Op. cit., p. 154.

and even improvising in each subsequent singing of the melody which repeats itself. The fact that these departures are usually within definite limits and that they are typical also of musicians with a very subtle ear and sense of rhythm, has stimulated the Soviet musicologist N. A. Garbuzov to elaborate these questions in his works: "Zonnaya priroda zvukovysotnogo sluha" (Moscow 1948) and "Zonnaya priroda tempa i ritma" (Moscow 1950). Yet there is an essential difference in the relation between the composer's own notation of a composition and its relatively free realization by a given performer; and between the existing different singing of a folk song by a singer (in the case of one or several reproductions of the song) and the finding of its optimal notogram. It expresses that sonic image of the melody, which has served as a basis for the realization of different singing, has, in fact, combined their most typical and essential features. The difference is clear. In the first case, the melorhythmic structure of the work with all its components, is sonically and graphically realized by the composer; the notation is given and it is upon it that the "free" interpretations of one or another performer have appeared. I have put the word "free" in quotation marks, because, in the professional (composer's) music, the freedom of the interpreters in reproducing a composition is quite a limited one. As regards intonation and rhythm, it varies almost exclusively within the narrow "zonal" framework, about which Garbuzov speaks. A greater freedom is shown by the singers and instrumentalists in the tempo and dynamics, and, to a certain extent, in the ornamentation. (For certain types of composition it is even regulated, as for example, the cadenzas in the instrumental concerto.) In the second case, however, we have at hand various singing of the song, while the "original" is, so to say, lacking⁴. It is left to the musicographer to create the picture of notes of that "original", by finding the most faithful intonational and rhythmic schema of the song, metre, measure, ornamentation, etc. He disposes of very little freedom, because the purpose is to notate a work of the folk musician and not to redact it according to the taste of one or another musicologist. For this reason, he may eliminate or correct only those tones (sounds), which are obvious mistakes of the folk singer in the intonational, rhythmical or any other respect (an omitted tone, a "sliding" of the voice, a casual rest because of lack of air, etc.). He is obliged to mark all departures from a generalized melorhythmic schema of the song in all of its phonographed renditions, by using not only the symbols of traditional notation, but the additional so-called "diacritical signs" as well. It is *due to the frequent subjective individual interpretations of a song that the musicographer has often to grasp and judge about the objective trends of a collective musical consciousness.*⁵

It is out of that made-in-the-laboratory deciphering of a given song that the musicographer should extract the generalized "original", possessing the most faithful and characteristic features of the notated song. The generalization is done with respect to insignificant rhythmic (durational) and intonational departures. The significant differences between the various renditions, including new tones (with or

⁴ As a matter of fact, in the folk-music practice the same song may have many "originals", i.e. variants. In this case we are speaking about one of them.

⁵ Sometimes a departure, seeming insignificant at first sight, can guide us and help us in clarifying one or another natural law in the evolution of the folk song.

without syllables), various ornaments, et al., are marked as varied passages on individual staves. The fragments of the melody, to which they belong, are marked with indices. The printing of the notograms thus generalized could be done with or without the varied passages - for popular and scientific publications respectively. It is precisely *the search for the most suitable graphic realization in deciphering a given folk song and the lack of a method for realizing it, which is the reason for the creation of prerequisites for differences in the notation of folk songs which, for no good reason, are sometimes termed as individual idioms in musicographic practice.*

With increase in the number of musicologists engaged in the notation and study of folk songs, there emerges also the need for a standardization of the individual differences in the theoretical approach to deciphering, and in the most felicitous use of the graphic of notation. This breeds the need for creating methods of notation of folk songs which, in my opinion, does not concern only Bulgarian songs, but also the songs of other ethnic communities. These methods should describe, in detail, the principles of the notographic expression of the fundamental elements of a folk song's structure: rhythm, intonation, ornamentation, etc. and of the specificity of its concrete forms, which we find expressed in various types and groups of folk songs.

PROBLEMI DOKUMENTIRANJA I NOTIRANJA NARODNE GLAZBE DANAS

SAŽETAK

Ovaj rad ukazuje na potrebu kompleksnog dokumentiranja predmeta folklor. Bez obzira na to, za etnomuzikologa notacija narodnih pjesama ima jedinstvenu važnost, jer ta dokumentacija njemu služi kao osnova za njegov specifični istraživački rad i analize muzičkog folklor. Notacija narodnih pjesama i instrumentalnih melodija preduvjet je za razvitak teorije o narodnoj glazbi neke etničke zajednice. Za muzikografe je neophodno da primjere narodnih pjesama i instrumentaalne glazbe podvrgnu najdetaljnijoj analizi da bi otkrili njihovu stvarnu meloritmicku strukturu i formu, i tako pronašli odnosno stvorili najprikladniju grafičku sliku koja to izražava, s tim da je ta slika rezultat teoretskih uopćavanja i zaključaka. Upravo je *traganje za najprikladnijom grafičkom realizacijom u dešifriranju narodne pjesme i nedostatak metoda za njenu provedbu to što stvara preduvjet za razlike u notaciji narodnih pjesama, koje bez ikakvih razloga, mi ponekad nazivamo individualnim idiomima u muzikografskoj praksi.*