

An online Collection of Authentic Folk Music

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The *physical* Collection of Authentic Bulgarian Folk Music is presently kept at the Institute for Art Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (IAS-BAS). This collection comprises 250 000 items of various types: manuscript descriptions, notes, audio records, photographs, video records and films.

The oldest item here is a handwritten notation of a song, dated July 1892. The most recent items are from the 1980s and came as a result of the numerous field trips taken by the Institute's staff and collaborators.

The kernel of the collection - the earliest handwritten notations on paper from the late 19th century - was first kept in the National Ethnographic museum; then in 1948 it went into the possession of the Institute for Music

with a Museum at BAS, incorporated into the Institute for Art Studies in 1988.

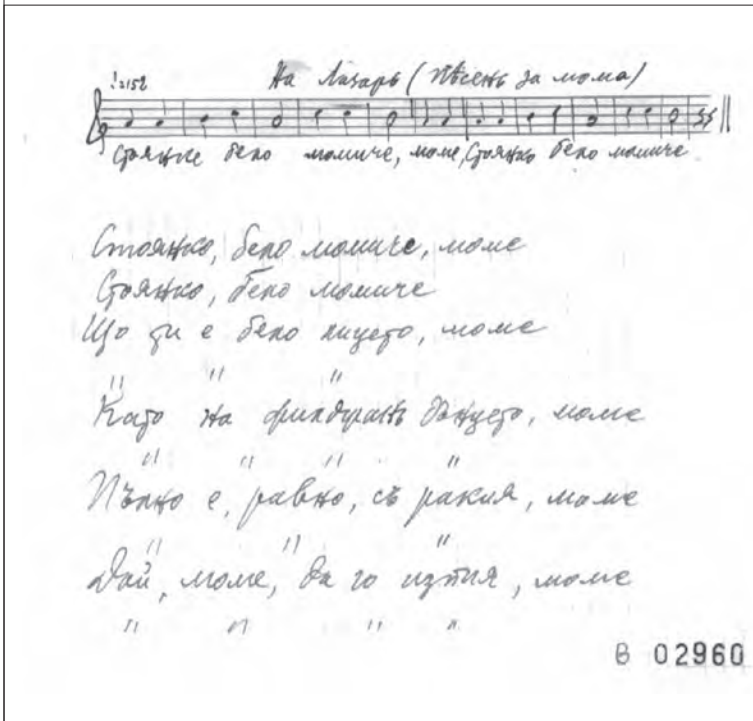
Even in its early stages the collection was enriched thanks to some political efforts: in 1926 Nikola Naydenov, then the Minister of National Enlightenment, appointed two collectors - Pavel Stefanov and Ivan Kamburov; later Vasil Stoin, a prominent Bulgarian expert in folk music, was chosen by the ministry to lead the activity in the newly established Department of Folk Music at the Ethnographic Museum; in 1935 another Minister of Enlightenment - namely Alexander Tsankov - ordered that part of his ministry's budget was to be employed for the collection of folk songs.

Notations such as the following one were the only way of recording music until 1939, when

Some samples of recording media as part of the collection



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One of the earliest items in the collection is a Lazarus song notated by V. Stoin in 1927

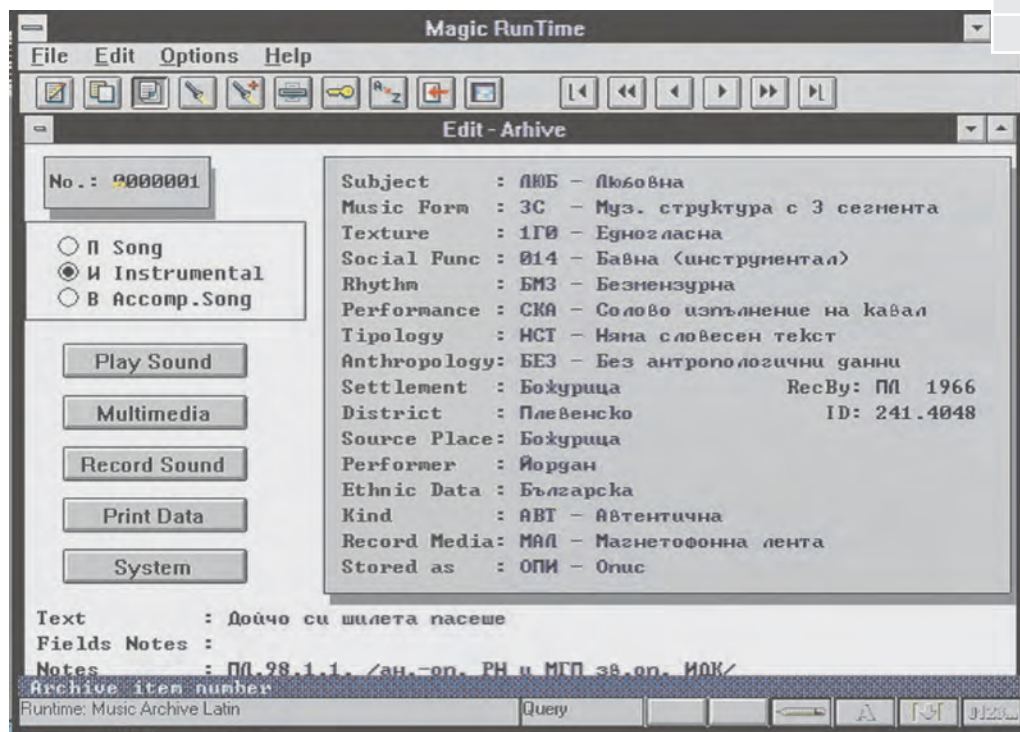
a Presto phonograph was imported and used for recording folk music first of all in the Rhodope Mountains. Later, until 1953, gramophone records were made, and after this date tape recording became common.

At present the Collection of Authentic Bulgarian Folk Music¹ is in five sections. The largest one is **On Paper** - mainly notated music, descriptions, copies and phonogram decoding of songs, instrumental music or dances. Another part is the **Phono Archive** itself. It includes 5 000 recording tapes, 800 records on wax, glass or metal platters, some audiocassettes and CDs. The most precious items provide evidence for unique events documented during the field trips of our best specialists in folk music. There are also some samples of foreign folk music there. **The**

Photo Archive consists of about 100 000 pictures, part of which depict folk festivals, dances, singers, musicians and ritual customs from the late 19th century to the present. The **Video Archive** contains video cassettes of all the folk festivals in Koprivshtitsa as well as of traditional dances and customs. The **Film Library** includes over 800 black-and-white or colour 16 mm films. Digitisation of this rich material began in 1994 under my leadership². Some of the staff of the Institute for Art Studies - mainly specialists working in the Department of Information Systems in Musical Culture - got involved in the creation of both digital copies of text, photograph, audio and video items and of the related multimedia database. 1 000 digital objects were created in the following year and were then published as static web pages on the Internet. On the next page you can see a sample window of application used at the Institute of Art Studies to digitise and input metadata in the multimedia database.

By 1995 we had a fixed idea of the number and the names of the fields used for identification and for analytical data, and by 1997 our team had managed to digitise and electronically catalogue thousands of objects. Then we received international recognition for our unique and modern database, namely the First Award for Regional Bulgarian Projects under the initiative of Global Inventory Project at the European Commission, G7 and Japan (April 1997). Digitisation continued quite intensively and by 2000 we had already more than 10 000 objects of various types. In 2003 the number was over 13 000. In 2004 the collection was uploaded to the Bulgarian Music Portal but digitisation continued. Now we have 16 000 objects, all of which are searchable on the net.

The application
has been
developed by
Milko Daskalov



A peculiarity of the collection is that every item is supplied with a compulsory handwritten note from the folklorist who collected it, a handwritten decoding often supplied with a note score and/or audio record; a few of the digitised objects are supplied also with photographs of the performers and video recordings. Every object of this kind is linked to its respective identification (player/singer, collector, place, manner and time of recording etc) and analytical data (theoretical, sociological and aesthetic data related to rhythm, form, subject, function, etc).

There are three search options one may chose from a drop-down menu at

<http://musicart.imbm.bas.bg/en/Default.htm>:

a) complex, b) by clicking on a map and c) by

choosing from a list. The last two are quite similar, as the list enumerates the same zones indicated on the map, yet in the list there is an additional option for search among *not indicated* items. The picture below shows the clickable map of Bulgaria divided into folk music areas. The 12th zone is for Bulgarian folk music recorded beyond the present boundaries of the country. Clicking on any of the zones directs the search to the main settlements in the respective region.

The complex search is intended for professionals. It is organised in 14 drop-down fields by means of which data is filtered. The window gives an option to restrict the search also by type of item audio, video, etc. (See <http://musicart.imbm.bas.bg/en/izbor.asp>). No matter which option you prefer, you



The clickable map of Bulgaria as a search option in the online collection



eventually get to a list of clickable titles of items and by clicking on them you receive a full description in either Bulgarian or English – an example can be viewed at

<http://musicart.imbm.bas.bg/en/karton.asp?zapisID=1318>

Then you can hear the audio record or see it as notated music.

The present composition of the WebFolk Bulgaria database is: 13 744 objects to which are attached 8 000 audio records, 5 000 scanned pages of handwritten note scores, 3 video records and some photographs. The majority of these were integrated with text descriptions. The digital collection WebFolk Bulgaria, its organisation, the search options and representation online are a unique combination not only in Bulgaria, but – at least to my knowledge – also within the European Union.

¹ A number of prominent Bulgarian musicologists devoted great effort to the gathering and enrichment of this collection. It is worth mentioning here at least a few: Rayna Katsarova, Academician Nikolay Kaufman, Senior Research Fellow Elena Stoin, Senior Research Fellow Dr Todor Todorov, Senior Research Fellow Dr Todor Djidjev, Research Fellow Petar Ljondjev. Work was located at and organised by the Folk Music Section at the Institute of Music at BAS (1948-1988), later at the Section for Music (the Division for Scholarly Documentation) at the Institute for Art Studies.

² The main specialists in our team were: Lubomir Kavaldjiev, Ph.D., S.R.F (Chair person), Margarita Popova (Musicologist), Radka Nikolova (Musicologist) and Ivan Kumitchin (Musicologist). Of course there were many others who helped in the scanning activity and the maintenance of the system.