

Reclaiming Bukovina's Musical Folklore Heritage Collected by Alexandru Voevidca at the Beginning of the 20th Century for the Contemporary
Review

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Alexandru Voevidca, *Folclor muzical din Bucovina – vol. I – Repertoriul ritual-ceremonial vocal* [Musical Folklore from Bukovina – vol. 1 – Vocal repertoire for Rituals and Ceremonials], Constanța Cristescu (ediție critică și catalog tipologic muzical), Suceava: Lidana, 2015.

The general issue of reclaiming and preserving the musical folklore heritage is crucial within the framework of our postmodern world; at present, due to the major changes in society following technological advances and globalization, folklore has undergone important mutations. It therefore requires a considerable effort to research and document national or local archives; the results of this efforts are usually remarkable. Is is the case of the latest achievement by Constanța Cristescu, PhD, from the Bukovina Culture Centre of Suceava, a distinguished musicologist and an impassionate, tireless and prolific researcher; in the past years, she has been active in supporting, investigating and promoting genuine folklore from Bukovina.

The volume with the title *Musical Folklore from Bukovina – vol. I – Ritual vocal repertoire for rituals and ceremonies* is the first one in a larger project aimed at introducing to the public the volumes of folklore collected by Alexandru Voevidca at the beginning of the 20th century in Austro-Hungarian Bukovina, a project the researcher intends to complete in the coming years.

From the start we must emphasise the importance and value of such a research and publishing enterprise for the national musical folklore heritage, since the melodies collected by Voevidca are little known as few of them have been published. As the author mentions in the Introduction, only 384 of the total 3700 gathered have appeared in print in the selection *Rumänische Volksliederaus der Bukowina* published in Würzburg by the Austrian researcher Mathias Friedwagner in 1940. Later, 275 more lyrical melodies (*songs* and *doinas*) were published in the volume *Cântece populare din Bucovina* [Folk songs from Bukovina] (București, Editura Muzicală, 1990), in

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revised notation by folklorists Vasile D. Nicolescu și Cristina Rădulescu Pașcu. Alexandru Voevidca's activity as a folklorist is presented in great detail by the author, starting from the bibliography presented earlier and bringing in new information which was uncovered during her research¹.

The new title on folklore from Bukovina consists of two sections, one dedicated to the ethno-musical study, and the other one, to the actual collection. The study is divided into two chapters. The first one, entitled *Conținutul genuistic al fondului mss. Al. Voevidca. Considerații asupra notației muzicale* [The genre content of the mss. fund Al. Voevidca. Considerations on musical notation], gives a thorough description of the stock of Voevidca manuscripts at the National Library of Romania in Bucharest. The content of each file is presented, with information on the genre and pertinent data on the musical notation used by the collector. The collection includes most major musical folklore genres, from those specific of a particular ceremony (vocal ritual for specific ceremonies, instrumental – pieces for funerals, weddings, Christmas and other religious celebrations, songs of youths joining the army) as well as pieces with no specific aim (*doinas, ballads, songs proper*, pieces for dancing) and a repertoire of urban inspiration (drawing room *ballads*, scholarly influence songs, satirical songs). The author emphasizes that the collector had a very sharp ear for music and extensive musical knowledge, which allowed him to make accurate notations of the melodies without using any recording technique. In the second subchapter the author discusses *The musical tipology of the repertoire of the ritual voice music for various ceremonies in the historic province of Bukovina*. It is the central section of the ethno-musicological study, where the Romanian researcher gives a thorough and accurate systematic classification of the melody profiles of the ritual genres for voice presented in the anthology. The methodology and classification by types that she uses is that generally established in the Romanian ethno-musicological literature and belongs to researchers of the Cluj school (as presented in studies by Iona Szenik and her collaborators). Constanța Cristescu's main reason for this choice is "its high degree of generality and applicableness for the entire stock of Romanian Christmas carols (and other genres, n.n.); it is useful for further comparison in the area of style and for further tracing the circulation of musical genres in all the style areas of Romania within a historic period of clearly established boundaries" (Cristescu, 2015, p. 39). This classification method is applied consistently, but not mechanically, and is intelligently adapted depending on the musical content

¹ It should be said that, unfortunately, one of the important studies about Voevidca, written by Florin Bucescu, entitled *Alexandru Voevidca* and published in Ion Popescu-Sireteanu's volume *Siretul – vatră de istorie și cultură românească* [The river Siret – a centre and source of Romanian history and culture], Iași: Omnia, 1994, pp. 303-312, has not been cited, probably because its limited circulation.

to which it is applied and the four musical categories included in this volume: the Christmas carol, the ritual-ceremonial song of the youth joining the army, the repertoire for the funerals – the dirge (with stanza form and free form), and the ritual repertoire for the wedding ceremony. The author, therefore, assigns each song to a particular melody type, depending on the melody contour and the cadence system; the resulting classification is: a) for the Christmas carol, there are 7 supragroups classified into groups and types; b) in the case of the song of the youth joining the army there are 4 supragroups divided into supraclasses, classes and types; c1) in the case of the dirge in stanza form within the repertoire for the funeral ceremony, there are 6 macrogroups, each with their respective melody type; c2) in the case of the dirge in free form within the repertoire for the funeral ceremony, there is a single macrogroup with just one melody type; d) in the case of the ritual repertoire for the wedding ceremony, there are three macrogroups, each with their supraclasses, classes and types. Constanța Cristescu's classification scientifically and objectively points out at the remarkable variety and richness of the musical content collected by Alexandru Voevidca, school master from Bukovina.

The second section of the volume, with the title *A musical catalogue of types. Anthology*, is the actual corpus of ritualic voice melodies for various ceremonies, classified according to the system previously presented. It is the most valuable part of the volume, as it brings to the fore valuable ancient melody types, accompanied by the integral literary texts, which makes it an all-time first in the Romanian literature. The author provides the digital transcriptions of the holographic manuscripts in the Alexandru Voevidca stock of manuscripts; the melodies recorded in written format preserve the original notation of the folklorist from Bukovina; in some cases this notation foreshadows the modern method of ethno-musicological rendition. The musical content included in this collection is relevant in its thematic and melodic richness and illustrative of the four main genres included. For instance, special melodic types of the Christmas carol are present, some of them entirely novel, of peasant influence, as well as of scholarly influence (the latter is mostly manifested in the “star songs” performed in anticipation of the Christmas celebration). The corpus of Christmas carols can undoubtedly contribute to freshen up the specific repertoire as it is performed today in Northern Moldavia; it can be promoted among children and youths, in schools, and in the performance of vocal groups, which are numerous in this part of the country. A special mention must be made of the youth's song on joining the army, a genre and practice which is entirely obsolete today (as youths are no longer subject to conscription); this type is impressive for the value of the melodies, as well as for the richness and dramatic expressiveness of the lyrics (the young men's forced removal and separation from their families to join the

Austro-Hungarian army was felt as a trauma, especially since many did not return and died in conflicts away from home, on foreign territories).

The volume ends with a very useful index of the localities where the melodies were collected; this is preceded by an index of Chapters 1 and 3 of the Catalogue of types. The annexes also include the instrumental ritual repertoire for the New Year's Eve and the passage into the new year (Malanca and new year's bidding on St Basil's Day) and the repertoire for the funeral ceremony (the alphorn dirge and the Firtree hora/round dance). As these melodies are singular, they were assessed in terms of structure but were not made part of any classification.

We acclaim this volume of remarkable scientific and artistic value and we are sure it will contribute to a better understanding and wider spread of genuine folklore from Bukovina. We wish the author strength, patience and, above all, institutional support in her attempt to complete this generous project which proves great courage and scientific honesty.