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THE IMPORTANCE AND USE OF BULGARIAN FOLK MUSIC AND ITS AUTHENTICITY

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Abstract:

The understanding of *Bulgarian folk music* depends on a variety of definitions. It begins during the period of national rebirth and proceeds with the extensive work of musicologists during the socialist period until today. The definitions can be summarised chronologically in the history of Ethnomusicology in Bulgaria. Selected examples help to explain the use of the term *authentic folk music*. It has changed over the centuries while the scientific definition remains constant. Currently, the accessibility to musical material is particularly important (through databases, archives, instruments, notes, audio, etc.).

The question "Which kind of scholarly intervention in the process of making music is useful, wise and reasonable?" will be answered by the current observations concerning the present experience with the use and the reception of Bulgarian folk music in Bulgaria and in other countries, especially in Germany.

The focus is on the changing perception and the knowledge of traditional music. It relates to different periods and places compared to the present concept of "authentic Bulgarian folk music."

Keywords: Authenticity, Bulgarian Folk Music, History of Ethnomusicology, Databases, Archives

"The Authentic"

When we talk about "authentic Bulgarian folk music," everyone seems to know what it means. I personally wanted to achieve a deeper understanding, which is why I've been studying it for ten years and in the process I have found many kinds of "The Authentic":

- in everyday language,

- within Bulgarian ethnomusicology,
- as a legal and political term,
- in psychology and pedagogy,
- in philosophy and
- in the WORK of art and in the historical performance practice.¹

In everyday speech, the institutions that influence mass culture determine the way "authenticity" is used.

"The Authentic" within Bulgarian ethnomusicology

In opposition to everyday usage stands a small group of scientific "experts." They introduced this term into the Bulgarian language and used it to define traditional music, which was closely connected to older ways of living. Synonyms include "Izvoren folklor" (from the wellspring) or village music, sometimes even "Selski folklor" (rural music). I have written about the history of ethnomusicology in Bulgaria, paying attention to technological developments, especially the media for preservation and transmission of the "authentic music".²

"The Authentic" as a legal and political term

There is a legal and political understanding which underpin the usage of the term "authenticity". "Authenticity" serves as a mark of power, a stamp of truth and a label of legitimacy (according to Max Weber). "The authentic" does not necessarily have a positive connotation (as the Better), rather it means what is authorized and valid.³

"The Authentic" in psychology and pedagogy

In the 20th century, the concept was used in psychology and was applied to people and their actions. "Authentic behaviour" was synonymous to positive behaviour. The "authentic person" does not give in to external pressure, social conventions or even traditionalism

¹ About "The Authentic" in the different discourses see: T. Noetzel, *Authentizität als politisches Problem. Ein Beitrag zur Theoriegeschichte der Legitimation politischer Ordnung*, Akademie Verlag Berlin, 1999.

² D. Popova, *Authentizität, Medialität und Identität. Wege der Definition und Transformation „authentischer bulgarischer Musiken“* (Dissertation). *Bulgarische Bibliothek*, Bd. 18, München / Berlin / Washington D.C., Verlag Otto Sagner, 2013.

³ M. Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundriß der Verstehenden Soziologie* (1922), Tübingen 1980, Mohr, p. 122–124.

without reflection. Developing into a self-reflexive and honest "authentic individual" also became a goal in pedagogy.⁴

"The Authentic" in philosophy

In philosophy, we find "authenticity" according to Heidegger as "Eigentlichkeit" (the essence) and its opposite is "Uneigentlichkeit" (the inauthentic). By this Heidegger means the process of human being (das Dasein) in which the person attains authenticity only when he accepts the system of society (as stigma) and finds his place within it.⁵

"The Authentic" in the WORK of art and in the historical performance practice

Also, Theodor W. Adorno says – and in this he is close to ethnomusicological thinking – that "the work of art" is objective and hence authentic since it is recognized by society, while the subjective act of creating the work is inauthentic.⁶

In the context of historical musicology, we also find the term used in "the authentic sounding work" – as the "original sound movement" or authenticity in the practice of performing.⁷

"The Authentic" in Ethnology

Levi-Strauss introduced the term "authenticity" in Ethnology in order to describe experiences and ways of direct face-to-face communication.⁸

Various concepts as an opportunity

On the basis of these divergent concepts, I find it meaningful to work on the orientational potential of the term authenticity, for the simple reason that it is used in these various ways. I argue that only in this connotative multiplicity can it explain culture and music in a useful way.

⁴ Noetzel, Authentizität als politisches Problem, p. 20-23.

⁵ M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (1927), Tübingen, Niemeyer, 1986, p. 41-45.

⁶ T. Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik* (1949), Frankfurt a.M., Suhrkamp 1991, p. 373f.

⁷ P. Kivy, *Authenticities. Philosophical Reflections on Musical Performance*, Ithaca, London, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1995. J. Levison, *Authentic Performance and Performance Means*, In: J. Levison (ed.), *Music, Art and Meaphysics. Essays in Philosophical Aesthetics*, Ithaca & London N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1990, p. 394-408.

⁸ C. Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale*, Paris, Plon, 1958, p. 400ff.

I follow the process of defining "authentic Bulgarian music", because that prepares the ways for its transformation. These culturally and politically, institutionally and financially motivated efforts make it clear how important these processes are for the cultural self-identity of the Bulgarian people, for the nation-state and its representation abroad.

My analysis of what "authentic music" could be began in Dobraläk, a small village in the Rhodope Mountains. This borrowed term itself is not used in the village; instead they use personalized and localized descriptions: "our song," "from here," "I learned this song from my father," etc.⁹

Processes of Transformation (Medialities)

What consequences do the various concepts of authenticity have on our thinking and practice when we deal with music?

Since the 19th century to the present, abundant material concerning ideas of authenticity can be found. A transformation process has been going on in the world of ethnomusicology. Here the term was introduced and became a genre-marker. This process can be broken into three historical time periods:

1. Phase: The Idealizing of Folk Culture (1815-1944)

Private initiatives and the institutionalization of ethnomusicology in Bulgaria – 1924 (Vasil Stoin, Rajna Kazarova ...)

The first phase began with the "idealizing of folk culture" and above all the folk song during the time of the Bulgarian Revival. This led to the institutionalization of ethnomusicology in Bulgaria. The archive was also introduced at the same time.

2. Phase: Socialist Restructuring, Division of Labour, Interference in and Control over musical practice (1944-1989)

⁹ Popova, Authentizität, Medialität und Identität, p. 44-104.

Quantity-wise, the largest body of authentic music was collected and processed during the socialist period. Therefore, we also have a large number of people hired to this aim within that timeframe.

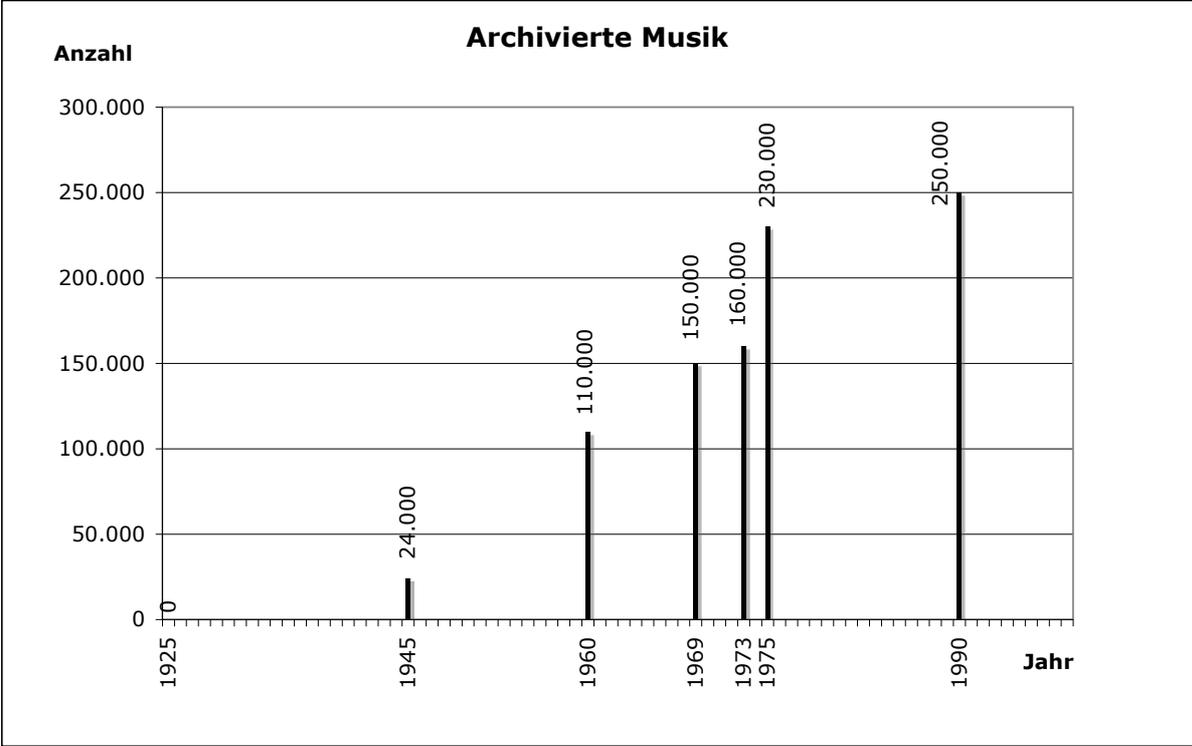


Figure 1: Numbers of archive units (1925-1990)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Staff members</u>
1948	2
1969	31
1974	51
2012	22

Figure 2: Staff members (1948-2012)

Interference in and Control over musical practice

In the second, the socialist period, the goal was to mould the production of music, as well as traditional and religious customs, in such a way that they conformed with the system.

Here a significant role was played by the support and promotion for showcasing art through amateur folklore collectives and also through the professionalization of the folk music sector. At this stage the ethnomusicologists became judges or organizers of samples of “authenticity”.

They worked for and with the mass media and organized concerts and festivals. Many musicologists were needed for the bureaucratic apparatus and they were to manage, monitor and regulate the musical praxis.

3. Phase: Democratic New Orientation (post 1989)

In the third period since 1989, the process of collecting authentic music was stopped. The focus then falls on re-coding the already gathered data. They try to save the collected “authentic” music as archived data in the same way they had previously saved it from the field.

The formalistic way of dealing with folk music is at the basis of the history of ethnomusicology not only in Bulgaria but also in Germany, and everywhere else. The decision to think of and treat folk songs like an opus is essential. Folk music remains a collection of autonomous objects – directly in the sense deployed by Adorno.

Since the beginning, even the most respectable scholars deal with folk music as if they are collecting material objects, no matter whether they know better. Even Bella Bartók used one and the same trip to collect both – music and insects.

Ethnomusicological work and archival work

Ethnomusicological work also means archival work. Ethnomusicologists in Bulgaria had individual research tasks and in addition to this they had to do:

- field work approximately four times a year,
- process the collected material,
- and transcribe up to five hundred music units.

In this context I would like to express my gratitude to Lyuben Botusharov. I am indebted to him for the emic information (the insider knowledge) about the history of Bulgarian ethnomusicology and its archive, including its information system. An important part of Bulgarian history of science is no longer in the archive of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

but in the private archives of the collectors. This is the case because all the administrative documents required only a five year period of preservation. And after that the units get destroyed.

These include:

- Business trips' documents and specifics [called in Bulgarian "Zapovedi za komandirovka"]
- Scholarly manuscripts ["Naučni rǎkopisi"]: for example, the completed reports on the field work trips which were conducted and the minutes from the meetings of the Institute which contained information about the quantity of work to be done and the way the task had to be approached for each and every member of staff.

Such documents can only be reconstructed using the copies and handwritten notes available in the private archives of the researchers and scholars involved. Such an undertaking is time consuming and I would like to encourage and urge our Bulgarian colleagues to do it quickly.

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The folk music archive at the Institute of Music (BAS – of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences)

Archivteile	Speichermedien
1. Phonoarchiv	1. Tonbänder, CDs, Phonographenplatten
2. Textarchiv	2. Papier
3. Filmarchiv	3. Video- und Filmband
4. Fotoarchiv	4. Negative und Fotopapier
5. Schallplattenarchiv	5. Schallplatten
6. Multimediale Datenbank	6. Server

Figure 3: The Recording media of the different sections of the archive

¹⁰ For the period before 1945 the most important documents related to the establishment of Ethnomusicology and its methods in Bulgaria appeared thanks to the efforts of Todor Todorov. Collected from various, both official and private, archives, a significant part of the original documents were published by him: Т. Тодоров, Българската музикална фолклористика до 9.9.1944, София, Акад. Изд. Проф. Марин Дринов, 1981. Тодоров, Тодор, Васил Стоин. Живот и дело, София, Акад. Изд. Проф. Марин Дринов, 2002. For the period after 1945 we are yet to see work of similar scale with regard to such documents.

The official and the most important place where one can locate the „authenticity“ of Bulgarian music is this archive. It contains approximately 250,000 music units as well as the textual units that go with them – these are the lyrics of the songs, the musical transcriptions and contextual comments, pictures and films.

	Bulgarische Beschreibung	Deutsche Übersetzung	Anzahl	Erklärung
1	Авторска	Autorenlied	46	Es kann ein Komponist nachgewiesen werden.
2	Автентична	Authentisch	13.436	Hauptkategorie
3	Под влияние на градски фолклор	Unter Einfluss von Stadtfolklore	93	
4	Заимствана	Übernommen	1	Aus anderen Kulturen, z. B. die Marseillaise auf bulgarisch
5	Няма данни за вида	Keine Angaben zur Gattung	37	
6	Нова народна песен	Neues Volkslied	39	Volkslied, welches musikalisch oder textlich darauf verweist, dass es nicht alt sein kann.
7	Обработка	Bearbeitung	-	von einem Komponisten bearbeitetes Volkslied
8	Популярна	Populäres Lied	26	kein authentisches Volkslied
9	Съвременна	Zeitgenössisches Lied	13	
10	Войнишка по народна мелодия	Soldatenlied nach Volksliedmelodie	6	Volkslied mit neuem Text
11	Войнишка по възрожденска песен	Soldatenlied nach Wiedergeburtlied	3	Lied aus dem 19. Jh. mit neuem Text
12	По-нова народна песен – от 19. век	Neues Volkslied aus dem 19. Jh.	3	

13	По-нова песен	Neueres Lied	32
14	Под влияние на църковни напеви	Unter dem Einfluss von Kirchenmusik	2
15	Народна песен по текст на поет	Volkslied nach dem Text eines Dichters	1

Figure 4: The Recording media of the different sections of the archive from Multimedia Database for Authentic Bulgarian Music Folklore

In the Multimedia Database for Authentic Bulgarian Music Folklore we can clearly see „authentic“ as a genre designation. It is based on a precisely developed analytical knowledge of the formal characteristics of this music.

The information system of this archive is already expert knowledge and is inaccessible to anybody else. It is based on the canon of knowledge, the way of thinking, and the system of values of the ethnomusicologists in Bulgaria and their own idiosyncracies. In 1995, 14,000 units were made accessible online. This is like a revolution in Ethnomusicology and its archive work but the logic of the archive is preserved in its online form as well. Where the structure is extremely complex, even powerful search engines quickly reach the limits of their capacity.

The ambivalent position of ethnomusicologists in relation to the archive continues in the way they interfere in the musical praxis. The ethnomusicologist is often also a musician, a composer, a teacher, an organizer and an evaluator.

I would like to mention some ways of transforming „authentic Bulgarian music“:

The ways of transforming (Medialities) include:

- 1. The Inserting of „authentic markers“ into high-culture music**
- 2. Composing „national folk music“ and**
- 3. The professionalization of folk musicians for folk ensembles.**

This concept from the socialist period received attention abroad and it continues to be successful. This success also leads to the establishment of more and more new ensembles, mostly amateur in nature, in every Bulgarian village. They call themselves „amateur collectives for authentic folklore“. In order to present on stage, for example at „sabori“ (meaning music festivals and competitions), they cut and regulate themselves, this music and these customs. Scholars support them in these activities. They are the specialists who are judges and advisors, who also determine the rules for participation.

In short, ethnomusicological heritage of "authentic music" is characterized by over-differentiated formal analyses and conservation of musical relics which were created and were used;

In the first phase, for national and cultural emancipation of Bulgaria;

In the second, not for the purpose of preserving traditional ways of life with music but for their radical reverse;

In the third, for the global professionalization and commercialization of music.

And, most importantly, throughout all these phases for the representation of national identity in two directions – within the country and abroad.

In the course of the above-described development, the musical exchanges characterized by musical interactions and social feedback happen during staged performances and become a one-way street. In this way communicative musical interrelations are hardly possible anymore. This is the case in a number of countries. But in Bulgaria perhaps the connection has not yet been completely severed.

Often in close proximity with the official show there unfold in parallel musical interactions. I call them "situational authenticity". It is only when there appears organizational chaos, which happens here often, the scope for a different kind of "authenticity" opens.

"Situational Authenticity"

In this context I would like to say a few words about the folklore-inspired „underground“.

These are people who try to live differently, which does not mean only living an alternative way of life but includes a different musical approach to their Bulgarian identity. I will quote here Veselin Mitev, a musician and an artist who is perhaps best known as a bagpipe player in groups such as "Исихия" [Isihiya] or "Кайно ясно слънце" [Kraino yasno slantse].

He said: “Music heals the soul. It allows for traditions to stay alive across generations and through emotions. It is invisible and I like that. The bagpipe taught me to be patient, to be able to focus on one thing, so as to learn something and to know...” (2006)

In 2005 I heard Vesco play at the bagpipe contest in Gela. The stage sound systems had to be evacuated quickly because it had started to rain. This created the silence in which Vesco began playing his bagpipe and started singing. He was accompanied by foreigners (The Rainbows) immodestly beating their drums. This horo in 9/8 (nine-eighths), counted as 1,2,3,4_, is called "Krivo horo" (Crooked horo) and it lasted about half an hour, followed by an 18-minute (eighteen-minute) encore. "Situational Authenticity" is folklore without management and rules or regulation, accidental, even intercultural, and it sounds like they attempt to come closer to each other, to feel and touch each other, how the interaction makes its first steps and how utter joy explodes once they succeed in “getting hitched” together. They focused on the emotions and the pleasure of music, without perfectionism, with mistakes and in a fundamentally authentic function – not only as a horo dance but as a play contest, because after Vesco – throughout the night – there were other bagpipe players, outside the officially judged show and normally unplugged.

Conclusion

“Authentic music” is not something which is good for us only at parties and for joyful (festive) dancing.

Paradoxically, in the exhaustive scientific definition of "authentic Bulgarian music" and its placement in archives and museums, we can also find the seed for mobilizing the "authentic" in terms of its social essence.

Through engagement with living practice, musical interactions can be made possible without the techniques of bureaucratic or commercial usage; instead of merely presenting music, space and time can be made to allow for music and living with music. Here Claude Levi-

Strauss's theory of authenticity can be relevant as a pressure valve. It gives preference to unmediated human communication and relationships.

In the Bulgarian villages, it is unlikely that we will find as-of-yet unknown "fruit" resulting from the tradition, since these songs, stories, costumes and instruments, and even the houses and production techniques have already been collected and put in museum and archive collections.

What forces us to take responsibility, however, is the tree of tradition itself. If we step back from our rushed existence and perfectionism, we will sense that singing and playing is something fundamental that makes us happy and gives us a sense of the real.

I think that taking social responsibility through music will be centrally important to finding ways to accommodate traditional music making in contemporary life.

We in our capacities of specialists can promote this in our families, in the kindergartens, in schools, colleges and universities and as spare time occupation. The issue here is about play and playing and the seriousness of playing and not about the presentation of something "already made". **It is about communicative musical togetherness.**