

40 Years of Higher Music Education in Macedonia
- The IRAM Phenomenon, Again -

IRAM (The Institute for Research and Archiving of Music) is undoubtedly the best proof for the progressive development of the higher education in Macedonia during the last 40 years. Although a music department at the Pedagogic Institute at the University „Sts. Cyril and Methodis“ (Visha Pedagosha Skola) was established in 1953 the beginning of the work of the UKIM FM in 1966 marked an entirely new period in the westernization and the development of the music culture in Republic of Macedonia. (Until 1979 UKIM FM worked under the name „Visoka Muzichka Shkola“). Today, we estimate that more than 90% of all employees in the cultural and educational sector of Macedonian economy were educated or are students of UKIM FM.

Speaking about the development stages of the UKIM FM, which at the moment is still the only higher education music institution in Macedonia, another cornerstone is the period between 1995-1999. During the previous decades the school developed all departments (instrumental, vocal, composition, conducting, theory, musicology and ethnomusicology) and numerous internationally renown soloists (graduated at UKIM FM) already toured around the world, or won international competitions. In the period 1995-1999 the two school ensembles started their regular annual public concert activities: the Symphony Orchestra and the Choir „Dragan Shuplevski“, performing repertoire with very high artistic demands (Strawinsky, Prokofieff, Hindemith, Wagner etc.).

The last step in the development of UKIM FM was the establishment of IRAM (on September 4, 2000, the first CD with a digital recording from the UKIM FM Concert Hall was published), which covers the digital audio and video recording, the research and the archiving of the cultural heritage. After six year of IRAM expanding activities, IRAM archives are fully documenting and reflecting all activities of the school and equally other events related to Macedonian music culture.

Although the main objective of IRAM is the digitization of the cultural heritage, IRAM activities and interests cover a much wider area:

- digitization of analogue audio and video recordings, scores, photo and other graphic material
- audio and video recordings from concerts and other cultural events
- documentary videos
- international conferences and presentations
- web site
- publishing of DVDs, CDs, books, posters and other promotion materials
- maintenance of 4 studios for digital audio/video recording, editing and postproduction.

Following the tradition of the previous four conferences „Reflections on Macedonian Music - Past and Future“, to present the annual report of IRAM activities, the main objective of this paper, once again, is to give the summary of IRAM activities. Nevertheless, having in mind the perpetual development of IRAM, the moment we post this article on Internet, it already becomes outdated.

The main value created during the period of six years is undoubtedly the impressive IRAM archive. In its audio part it consists of 150.09 GB (161,153,896,447 bytes or approximately 16,000 minutes) of digital audio in 44.1KHz/16bit stereo standard. Particularly valuable are the four collections with folk music and speech materials (the durations are given without the breaks, pauses or silent part of the tapes):

- *Firfov Collection* (1,362 folk songs) 47h 20m 18s
- *Badev Collection* (359 songs) 26h 40m 06s
- *Vidoeski Collection* (speech material, Macedonian dialects, folk tales, customs etc. on tapes and cassettes) 50h 13m 05s
- *Mile Brzanov Collection* (songs and speech materials) 7h 59m 38s

The last collection is in the process of research, and it is a part of the *Mile Brzanov* legacy, digitised and catalogued at IRAM in 2006, consisting also of other graphic materials.

In addition to the audio materials, part of the collections are supported with the transcriptions done by the same ethnomusicologists. During the last two years, IRAM enlarged its transcription collection which at the moment consists of:

- 383 transcriptions from *Firfov Collection*
- 68 transcriptions from *Mile Brzanov* collection
- 319 units with transcriptions and examples from *Turkish makams, usuls* and *music forms*.

Equally important are the audio recordings from concerts and other events. In its six years of existence, IRAM team accomplished 69 digital audio recordings with full coverage of concerts and other events. Among them are the concerts of the UKIM FM Symphony Orchestra and the Choir, chamber ensembles, percussion, singers etc. The very complex tasks related to the recordings of the symphony orchestra are the best illustration for the level and the skills of IRAM teams. Having in mind that these teams are formed mainly from the undergraduate and graduate students with 2-3 years of training and experience in digital recording techniques, the quality of the recordings is another proof for the impressive results accomplished in a very short period (the first students of the sonology department, the main source for recruitment of IRAM teams, were enrolled in 2000/2001 academic year).

The same teams are also involved in the IRAM digital video recordings. In fact, the main IRAM training strategy is to create a profile of a multimedia specialist, with skills for recording of both - digital audio and digital video. This entirely corresponds to the existing digital technology hardware and software, where most of the professional video editing software supports excellent audio editing capabilities, while the digital camera are using the digital audio standard of 48 KHz. During the period of the design of the multimedia educational program at UKIM FM, the starting point were the needs and the capacity of Macedonian economy to absorb or employ multimedia specialists. Most of the new emerging electronic, printing or Internet media can not afford a large number of employees. In this sense, IRAM trained students entirely fit into the structure of a very dynamic contemporary environment.

The first IRAM digital documentary video was recorded in November 2002, covering the first IRAM international conference - *Reflections on Macedonian Music - past and future*. Until now, IRAM video archive is enriched with over 2,000 minutes of IRAM own video production. Among them particularly important are the 2 videos from the concert of the UKIM FM Symphony Orchestra (December 6, 2004 and December 6, 2005 Army Hall, Skopje) which reflect IRAM's capacity to do video recordings from the most complicated live music events. Both videos use a very high number of shots, closely following the development of the score. The fact that sonology i.e. music students were behind the cameras contributes to the structure of the shots and the movements of the cameras. The recording was done with a very precise script, and the editing, and particularly the transitions, were done afterwards. The final video of the second concert (2005) was combined with special effects at the beginning of each movement, in accordance with the style of the compositions.

The third concert recording in IRAM archive was done in the UKIM FM Concert Hall from the *Humanitarian concert - Helping the Psychiatric Hospital in Skopje*, consisting of chamber music performance.

Among the other particularly interesting IRAM projects are the documentary videos:

- the recording of the *Yeni Yol* music society, with Rumelian repertoire (full stage, costume and lights set, all done in the IRAM studio at UKIM FM),
- 5 documentary videos: *Gjorgji Donevski*, *Bapchorki*, *Kosturchanki*, *Kalistrat Zografski* and *Tempus in Macedonia*
- the 3 *IRAM Chronicle Movies* (2003/4, 2004/5, 2005/6) with 73 short documentary videos.

Covering very different aspects of the Macedonian and wider Balkan and world music and culture, IRAM documentary videos are undoubtedly a significant contribution to the preservation of the cultural heritage. Recorded in standard definition digital video format, they could be easily moved between different carriers, thus enabling longer and

easier preservation. Supported with English subtitles and titles, they are accessible for any audience in and out of Macedonia.

All video and audio materials in the IRAM archive are also accompanied with detailed catalogues fully adjusted to international standards: ISBD (NBM), IASA, ISBD(M), ISBD(PM), ISBD(S) and Dublin core. Some of the catalogues consist of more than 60 fields written with Latin alphabet (with adequate alliteration standards) in original following the English titles of the fields.

The multimedia concept of IRAM activities is encompassed with the web site - mmc.edu.mk. The domain *mmc.edu.mk* was launched in January 1997, as a part of the promotional activities (the traditional Music Informative Centres) of the Macedonian Music Council. Later on, IRAM took the care of maintaining the site, which is among the oldest and largest of that kind in Macedonia and the Balkans. Today *mmc.edu.mk*, despite the fact there are no links (to and from) any of the portals related to Macedonia and Macedonian culture and music, has more than 100.000 users per year (in average more than 300 per day). It is composed of the following parts:

- IRAM Internet Student Radio with 64 programmes (more than 120 hours of music and speech) accessible in Real Audio G2 audio streaming format
- 73 short IRAM Chronicle Movies (in reduced mpg formats)
- XII IRAM International Conferences
- movie *Tempus in Macedonia* (in video streaming format)
- information about composers, performers, musicologists and ethnomusicologists
- 2 books by Dimitrije Buzarovski for free downloading in pdf format (“Osnovi na digitalното arhiviranje na zvukot” - *Basics of Sound Digital Archiving*, and “Uvod vo analizata na muzichkoto delo” - *Introduction into Analysis of Music Pieces*).

In addition this web site offers information regarding two international projects:

- International Competition of Young Musicians "Ohrid Pearls" - Ohrid and
- Western Balkan Project in Music Education - Winter School 2006

One can expect that these activities could not be accomplished without adequate hardware and software. IRAM possesses and maintains 4 studios for digital audio/video recording, editing and postproduction with over 500 hardware and software units for digital and analog recording and playback.

Although IRAM's main domain of interest are digital media and communication, it has developed parallel publishing activities, distributing DVDs, CDs, books, posters and other promotion hardcopy materials.

This conference is the 12th international conference organized during the last four years by IRAM in Macedonia, the United Kingdom and Switzerland. The 189 papers written, presented, published in a hardcopy edition, and posted on IRAM web site, are covering three general areas:

- Contemporary Trends in Musicology and Ethnomusicology
- Cultural Policy and Music Education and
- Reflections on Macedonian Music - Past and Future

They are also part of IRAM's numerous presentations in Europe and the US, with the goal of disseminating information and stimulating young Macedonian musicologists to research and digitise the cultural heritage and promote the eternal values of music, art and culture.

Still, the most important feature of IRAM phenomenon is the enormous enthusiasm of UKIM FM professors and students who devoted hours of their time and resources to keep this institution alive, despite all and particularly economic turbulences which accompany the complex environment of a country in a transition. In that sense IRAM phenomenon can be understood as a part of the Internet Galaxy hacker culture and the concept of public goods, to offer and use for free. The growing number of the visitors of the IRAM web site is the best argument that IRAM is *en route* in the integration of twenty first century world culture.