

Zhivko Firfov's Transcriptions

Zhivko Firfov is one of the founders of the Macedonian Ethnomusicology, as well as one of the first educated composers and pedagogues in our country. After the World War II he dedicated most of his career to the Macedonian music folklore, and he also played a very big role in the development of the music culture in Macedonia. He actively organized many festivals, being a founder and conductor of different choirs, author of music school books, and part of many other activities.

“Within the scope of activities developed by the Institute of Folklore, ... Firfov had set the foundations of the ethnomusicology in contemporary conditions.” (Ortakov Dragoslav 1999)

Apart from all other things, I will mention only a few crucial instances that were closely related to the role of Firfov in the development of the Macedonian Ethnomusicology:

- a. one of the founders of the Macedonian Institute of Folklore
- b. one of the founders of the National Ensemble of songs and dances - “Tanec”, and
- c. a producer of folk music with the National Radio, where he established many singing groups, as well as folk orchestras

A major part of the transcriptions of folk songs Firfov made, were aimed for use by these groups and orchestras that were performing on the radio.

Firfov's transcriptions

“With no doubt, Firfov's transcribed material represents a big pool for the young folklorists, not only as groundwork for learning the transcribing technique and the ethnomusicological methods, but also as a possibility for researching the Macedonian singing tradition.”
(Ortakov Dragoslav, 1999)

According to what Firfov himself stated, as heard on one of the radio programs dedicated to him, he started collecting Macedonian music folklore in 1923. He was very active at that time working on the intensifying of the cultural life in Veles, the town where he was born. Together with a few colleagues, he founded various amateur choirs and ensembles. They successfully organized their performances as well as other cultural happenings in the town. In order to create an interesting repertoire for the choirs and ensembles, Firfov started collecting folk songs, and transposing them for the choirs. The love for the national folklore inspired him to persist in collecting music folklore and presenting it in its authentic form, as well as highly stylized one in his compositions, including Macedonian dances as well.

In the available materials we found information that Zhivko Firfov, together with his coworkers, made more than 9000 transcriptions of folk songs and dances, out of which 6500 are kept in the archive of the Macedonian Institute of Folklore. Many published collections of folk songs came out of Firfov's fruitful work:

- Macedonian Music Folklore – songs I and II
- Macedonian Folk Dances
- Macedonian Transcribers from the end of the XIX century
- Sokol mi leta visoko (A Falcon Flying High)

Moreover, Firfov was an author of many research papers, published in different anthologies from international conferences where he participated, musicology magazines etc.

If we look at the Firfov's published materials chronologically, we can actually follow the development of the Macedonian ethnomusicology, and Firfov's personal growth as an ethnomusicologist.

In line with this, we will make a short overview of the contents of Firfov's collections mentioned before.

Macedonian Music Folklore – songs I

This collection is the first of that type in Macedonia and throughout its contents, we can plainly see the beginnings of ethnomusicology as a science in our country. Firfov appears here both as an editor and as a transcriber. We can also find other transcribers in this collection. They were

other researchers that worked in the Macedonian Institute of Folklore. The collection was published in 1959.

According to the categorization of the material made by Firfov, and according to the explanations in the preface of this collection, we can see that Firfov did not stop at the point of merely collecting and publishing this material, he also tried to make systematization, as well as other analyses of the same material.

There are 208 published folk songs, collected from different areas of Macedonia, representing mainly urban folklore. The transcriptions are divided in three parts:

- transcriptions in Major
- transcriptions in Minor, and
- transcriptions with western influence

For the process of analyzing the transcriptions, Firfov and his coworkers used the so called Finland Method of Umari Krohn and O. Vaisanen, adapted to our music folklore.

The transcriptions are transposed in a way that they all have the same finalis. After each transcription, we can find some basic data about that transcription, which actually came out from the previous analysis. This data is divided into the following 5 groups:

- melodic material
- basic tone of the tonality
- ambitus
- cadenzas of the melodic lines with four or more signs
- form

Having in mind the oriental influence to the development of our music folklore, Firfov tried to make a kind of psychological analysis of every transcription, by giving the oriental title of the tonality in which the transcription fits in. This title is given in the first of the previously mentioned groups. For example, in transcription No. 208, instead of 'inverted harmonic minor', due to the obvious oriental character of the tune, we can see the title of the makam, named *makam hajis*.

Firfov also mentioned that this way of presenting tonalities had the purpose of helping other scholars who would analyze this material.

On the left side of every transcription, we can find the metronome tempo of the song, and on the right – the dialect region.

At the end of the collection there are the registers, according to the following characteristics:

- ambitus
- meter
- tonality
- dialect region of the transcriptions
- dictionary of foreign words
- date of transcription
- transcribers and singers' names

In the preface of this collection, Firfov says that in the period of transcription of the material, transcribers were trying to stick to the authentic content and the dialect of the songs. They were putting accents on the lyrics in accordance with the dialect of the song. For a more precise marking of the dialect accents, they even used a letter that does not exist in our alphabet, but it is used in our speech (in some dialects).

Macedonian Music Folklore – songs II

Six years after the publishing of the first collection, the Institute of Folklore published the second part of the same collection, called *Macedonian Music Folklore – songs II*. A more organized and systematic effort can be noticed in this collection, as well as an advanced approach towards the material and the analysis made. In the preface, the author himself mentions that during the period between the publication of the two collections, the Institute team was working on collecting as much genuine folklore material as possible, learning new methods and gaining necessary experience for the following research work, that he announced in the same text.

Apart from Zhivko Firfov, there were some other transcribers involved in the transcription of this material, who worked as his coworkers in the Institute of Folklore at that time. Some of the transcribers were Risto and Gancho Pajtondziev, Marika Hadzi-Pecova, Risto Prodanov, Metodija Simonovski etc.

The material published in this collection was collected in the period between June 1953 and June 1956, and it is entirely recorded during fieldwork on magnetic tapes.

This material is of a heterogeneous character, we can find both rural and urban folklore. This choice was deliberate, as Firfov says, with the purpose of showing the complete character of the Macedonian song.

The preface in this collection reveals Firfov's "future" plans in reference to his transcription activities. He announces a wider research of the music folklore on the territory of Macedonia, saying that this collection should be understood as a preparation for a huge systematic regional research of our music, and as an introduction to a brand new practice of publishing music folklore in our country. Further to the announcement of the subsequent activities, Firfov actually promotes the new approach towards collecting folklore, which he already started implementing, i.e. recording the material during fieldwork. He states the following:

"Until now, recording the collected music folklore during fieldwork was not usually practiced as a method in our country. In these years, when we can witness the beginnings of a mechanized musicological approach, we should abandon our old methods, and start using audio recording as a method of fieldwork in gathering materials."

In line with this, at the end of this collection, we can find the archive numbers of the magnetic tapes, under which each song is registered within the annals of the Institute of Folklore.

The collection is divided into two sections:

- Tunes
- Lyrics

Firfov considered that division as a more practical one due to the regular arrangement of the tunes and the texts separately.

Tunes

In this part the tunes are grouped by their meter. Firfov spatially took care of the rhythmic quantitative extension of the tunes. In the short explanation about this part of the collection, it is clearly stated that the use of a corona somewhere in the tune primarily resembles a psychological effect.

Under every transcription, we can find brief information about its characteristics, i.e.:

- ambitus
- metr structure (ex. 2+2+3)
- form

At the end of the collection there is a complete overview of the meter structure, tonality and ambitus of every transcription.

As in the first part of the Macedonian Music Folklore, the transcriptions here are also transposed with the same finalis. In the short explanation referring to this part, Firfov elaborates his opinion in reference to this issue, claiming that this kind of transposition of the tunes enables “their tonality material to be presented in scale strings that are deliberately unnamed, but their character has already been prefigured by the very manner in which they have been arranged.”

Lyrics

The lyrics are numbered by two digit numbers: the first giving the ordinary number of the lyrics, the second standing for the ordinary number of the tune of the same song presented in the first part of the collection.

Firfov wanted to keep the genuineness i.e. the archaic version of the lyrics; therefore he presented the original lyrics in this collection as they were recorded on the field, without any lexical or stylistic corrections. He had an intention of giving the audience an original picture of the vernacular expressions in our language. In this way, Firfov enabled this material to become open for further research of the development of the folk song in Macedonia.

This part of the collection (lyrics) is divided in three groups according to the content of the lyrics, their similarities in the motives etc. Firfov says that this kind of categorization of the lyrics is not final because of the complexity of the content of the lyrics. This complexity makes it difficult to determine to which group they belong to. In this part of the collection, there are the following groups:

- Holiday and Custom songs (Easter songs, wedding songs, etc.)
- Songs about the Ottoman period
- Songs about religious conflicts
- Komitadji songs

- Family songs
- Gurbet songs
- Love songs
- Ballads
- Humoristic and satirical songs
- Everyday life songs
- Rhymes

At the end of the collection we can find two pastoral songs, one of them being a children's song in two versions, and the other incorporating seven fragments from an incomplete songs.

Firfov asserts that most of the songs, in reference to their text, have a form of song lyrics lined up one after another. It means that each lyric coincides with the given tune. In the rest of the songs, the tune corresponds with two, three or even more lyrics.

To facilitate singing of these songs, he printed them in a form of verses combining two, three or more lyrics.

After this categorization, in the explanation about the lyrics, a detailed overview follows as well as categorizations of the lyrics, according to the structure of the lyrics and the metrics of the lyric expression.

We have to mention that, as in the first part of the collection, these lyrics are written with the accents of the dialect that the song is supposed to be sung in. Moreover, again as in the previous collection, with the same purpose of preserving the authentic form of the lyrics, Firfov made some deviations from the orthography of the Macedonian literary language, solely to maintain the authenticity of the dialect. For example, some of the songs include "*deved godini*" (nine years written with a wrong consonant) instead of "*devet godini*" (nine years), etc. "The dark sound" that is not pronounced in the same way as the sound marked with an apostrophe in our orthography, as Firfov says: "is marked with the sign 'Љ', regardless of the origin of that sound."

At the end, after every transcription in the collection, there is a reference of the place where the song was recorded and the name of the informant, i.e. the singer.

The registers are at the very end of the collection, and there, we can see all the analysis of the material. This presentation of data represents a type of presentation of frequent distribution of

data about the collection. In particular, we can find the following registers in this collection:

- Dictionary of foreign words
- Alphabetical order of songs
- Meter
- Tonality
- Ambitus
- Transcribers' names

This concept of registers, presents very useful information and it is a good basis for further ethnomusicological research.

The Macedonian Transcribers from the end of the XIXth century

Although Zhivko Firfov is not a transcriber in this book but an editor, we considered it as important to be mentioned in this paper, since by publishing this book, Firfov, together with the other editor, Simonovski, highly contributed to the affirmation of the early stages of the collecting and transcribing activities in Macedonia.

As we mentioned before, the reason for publishing this book was the affirmation of the pioneers of the Macedonian music culture, by offering the readers the materials that actually resulted from the work of the first Macedonian transcribers.

The book is divided into three sections:

- The first Macedonian transcribers and their work
- Selection of transcriptions made by the same transcribers
- Registers

The first part deals with the first Macedonian transcribers of the Macedonian music folklore - brothers Dimitar and Kostantin Miladinov and their followers up until the beginning of the XX century.

In this part, we can read about Naum Miladinov, Kuzman Shapkarev, Marko Cepenkov, Todor Gavazov, Todor Netkov etc. There are brief explanations about their activities and their relation to the transcription of Macedonian folk songs. Moreover, we can read about a few

Bulgarian transcribers like Ivan Klinkov and some other, who transcribed around twenty Macedonian songs. Atanas Badev and Stevan Mokranjac are also mentioned in this book, because they transcribed a few Macedonian folk songs but later made harmonized versions of the same songs. Because of that, these transcriptions were not considered in this book, and also because these two musicians were active in the early XX century, which is out of the period that is the subject of this book.

The transcriptions of folk songs made by the mentioned transcribers were originally published in the period between 1890 and 1900 in the Sofia *Anthologies of Folk literature, science, and orthography*. Actually, in this period, Macedonia was in its early stages of adopting the modern notation. The total number of published transcriptions from that time was 391.

Firfov mentioned that the transcribers from this period (end of XIX century), made some mistakes in the correct marking of the metrical and rhythmical characteristics of Macedonian folklore. Considering the period they were working in, these mistakes were expected. Anyway, some cases were mentioned where for the first time the existence of the hemiolic rhythm in our folklore was pointed out.

In order to facilitate the usage of the transcribed material published in this book, this part also incorporates classification of songs according to the editors, as well as a review of the metrical structures of the lyrics.

In the second part of the book, there is a selection of transcriptions from the previously mentioned transcribers. They are grouped according to the transcribers that transcribed them, and they are:

- Todor Gavazov
- Aleksandar Konev
- Georgi L'zev
- Todor Netkov
- Georgi Smickov
- Ivan Klinkov
- Angel Bukuresliev

These transcriptions are of great importance, presenting a material that grasps the atmosphere of a specific time and is of quite an interest for ethnomusicological, musicological and other research.

The third part incorporates the following registers:

- Dictionary of foreign and unfamiliar words
- Review of choruses
- Review of the tonality material of the tunes
- Review of the meter as marked in the original
- Alphabetic register of songs with a parallel review of their tune, lyric, lyric-tune variations published in important anthologies and collections of folk songs within the region of the south Slavic folklore.

Sokol mi leta visoko (A Falcon Flying High)

“In ethnomusicological sense, the collection “A Falcon Flying High” particularly contributes to the discovery of one part of the Macedonian folklore-music tradition originating from the Aegean Macedonia.” (Smokvarski, 1978)

As we can conclude from the previous quote, the material published in this collection presents a part of the tradition in Aegean Macedonia. All the songs were collected by Gjorgi Donevski. In the preface of this book, he says that he collected the songs in the region of the present day Macedonia, visiting the families that moved from the Aegean Macedonia. First, he recorded them on a tape and later all the material was transcribed by Zivko Firfov.

The most frequently mentioned informants in this collection, by Donevski, are Lefterija Sankovska, Leta Bardzieva, Vaska Klandzeva, Dosta Donevska (members of the “Bapcorki” group), then Kosta Manov, Tina Taseva, Marija Gaceva, Pante Branov, Risto Jovanovski and all the members of the female singing group “Kosturcanki”.

According to the contents, this collection incorporates two types of songs: revolutionary and lyrical songs. In line with that, the collection is divided into two parts, dedicated to the types of the songs.

All the songs from this collection were previously recorded and performed on Radio Skopje, mostly by the groups “Bapcorki”, “Vodenki” and “Kosturcanki”

Macedonian folk dances

Besides their appearance as transcribers, Zivko Firfov and Ganco Pajtondziev are also authors of the choreographic notation used in this collection for marking the choreographic movements. This choreographic notation is the first and only of that type created in our country. Except for its usage for marking the dances in this collection, there are no other data about its usage somewhere else. In any case, it is important to mention that this collection is the first work prepared at the Musicological-choreographic department at the Folklore Institute established sometime at the end of 1948.

The collection contains 20 Macedonian folk dances, each presented as a musical-choreographic score. We already mentioned that the authors of the choreographic notation used in the collection were the current co-workers at the Folklore Institute, Zivko Firfov and Ganco Pajtondziev. Each choreographic score incorporates more segments, like for example:

- Dance-leading tune, given in the stave. If it was combined with singing, the lyrics are given under the tune
- Percussions
- Music signs marking the rhythm of the choreographic steps (named as choreographic rhythmic line)
- The choreographic movements etc.

In the end of the introduction of the collection, there is a legend of the choreographic notation used in the dances. It is emphasised that these scores incorporate the steps only and that other movements of the body are not included.

The Firfov Transcription Collection at IRAM

Zivko Firfov created this collection in the 1970s of the last century. The Firfov family donated it to IRAM, having the assumption that most of these transcribers have not been published at all. The collection was digitized at IRAM in 2004, and thus it was maintained and used for further scientific and research work.

The collection incorporates 383 transcriptions in total.

Some of these transcriptions include various data about the informants or the transcription itself, whereas other lack basic data. Another source of secondary data (except for these notes) does not exist. We found various data on the transcriptions, like the following:

- function of the song
- data about informants (name, age, place of origin)
- first transcription of the song
- authentic tonality of the song
- date of recording
- etc.

Except for the data about the informants, origin of the song, Firfov also included other data, like for example, a note that the original tone is higher, or that the transcription is authentic, who was it aimed at if recorded, and so on.

All these data that could not fit in a certain field in the catalogue, like for example the information about the informant or the origin of the song, entered in the field of 'comments' as a comment of the transcriber. Since we also had some comments in case of particular transcriptions, regarding the fact whether a part of the tune is missing or something similar, we classified the data in this field into two categories:

- **TC** – transcriber's comments
- **OC** - our comments

These comments, particularly notes left by Firfov, are actually very useful as a supportive material for all the prior and prospective researches, as well as a good groundwork for a brand new research that would lead to a completely new dimension of this collection.

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