

Musical Cultures of Russia

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The Archival Funds of the E. V. Gippius Music and Ethnographic Center: Issues of Preservation and Cataloguing*

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Abstract. In the course of the waning of the tradition of folk music, the significance of archival funds of folk musical and ethnographic material as repositories of the intangible cultural heritage is increasing. One of the largest collections of this kind is the archive of the E. V. Gippius Music and Ethnographic Center, located at the Gnesin Russian Academy of Music. It is based on the fund of fieldwork audio and video materials, the collection of which is carried out by a special program that makes it possible to obtain rather extensive and diverse information from researched objects of traditional culture. The museum fund of the archive contains a significant number of ethnographic specimens. The E. V. Gippius Music and Ethnographic Center also possesses an abundant fund of manuscript materials and a specialized library, which includes books in Russian and in other Slavic languages. The article outlines a set of issues relevant to folk music collections, including the issues of preservation of information on magnetic recording media and adequate cataloging of the materials stored in the fund. In recent years the interest to the intangible cultural heritage in Russia has increased and has been fixed at the level of the state cultural policy, which would be conducive to solving any problems the keepers of the unique folk musical and ethnographic archives are confronted with.

Keywords: E. V. Gippius Music and Ethnographic Center, ethnomusicology, traditional culture, folk song, field study, cataloging, copying, nonmaterial cultural heritage

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The Structure of the Funds of the E. V. Gippius Music and Ethnographic Center

The E. V. Gippius Music and Ethnographic Center is one of the structural subsections of the Gnesin Russian Academy of Music. During the course of over 60 years, its members have constantly participated in the scholarly life of the Gnesin House, while the center itself presents one of the “attraction points” for Russian ethnomusicology. In the 1970s and 1980s within these walls, an inherent school of ethnomusicologists was formed, and the most advanced methods of study of traditional musical culture were developed and adopted. The absolute majority of research carried out by the Gnesin ethnomusicologists is based on the materials of the proprietary funds of the E. V. Gippius Music and Ethnographic Center.¹ Special attention has always been devoted to traditional culture at the Gnesin Institute (subsequently, the Gnesin Academy). The Laboratory for Folk Music was opened here

already in 1958. Vladimir Iosifovich Kharkov (Il. 1), a well-known folk music researcher, who by that time had acquired massive experience in field work, was chosen as its chairman.² It was particularly he who initiated the systematic activities of collecting folk music, which for the most part was carried out by the faculty members and students of two major fields of study — musicologists and composers.³

The Laboratory’s funds already began to be formed back in the very first years of his activities, since at that stage the field expedition work had formed the main direction of folklorists’ work. As a result, at the present time, over half a century later, the Gnesin Russian Music Academy is the proprietor of a unique collection, which includes a whole set of compilations in which traditional culture (for the most part, Eastern Slavic) is presented in a vivid and multifaceted way. The collections encompass a broad geographic span and include specimens of all the well-known musical genres, while the recordings from later times possess a broad scale of ethnographic material.

¹ The Center obtained its present title in 2016; from 1958 to 1994 it was called the Laboratory for Folk Music, and from 1994 to 2016 — the Problem Setting Scholarly Research Laboratory for the Study of Traditional Musical Cultures.

² During the years 1927–1937, the place of work for Kharkov (1900–1974) was the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, wherein starting from 1936, he headed the Folk Music Sector at the Institute of Ukrainian Folklore. Under the scholar’s direction, over 30 folk music expeditions were carried out, which resulted in unique recordings of Ukrainian, Belorussian and Moldavian folk songs. Vladimir Kharkov’s research activities were interrupted by his arrest and resumed in 1947 with his collaboration with the Laboratory for Study of Musical Creativity of the Peoples of the USSR of the Tchaikovsky Moscow State Conservatory, which was directed by his teacher, one of the “fathers” of Russian ethnomusicology — Kliment Kvitka.

³ In addition to the representatives of the History, Theory and Composition Department at the Gnesin State Musical-Pedagogical Institute, occasionally students of other major fields of study also took part in the folk music expeditions. One such experiment resulted in the unique collection of tunes for the violin written down by Tatiana Kazanskaya at the Smolensk Region. Such trips were made by Tatiana Nikolayevna during the course of many years, when she was already a violin teacher at the Gnesin Institute, and subsequently the collected melodies she had written down became the basis for the dissertation for the degree of Candidate of the Arts. In 2022 this research work was published as a monograph (see: *Smolenskii muzykal'no-etnograficheskii sbornik. Tom 6. Traditsionnoe iskusstvo smolenskikh skripachei. Ekspeditsionnye materialy i issledovanie T. N. Kazanskoi* [The Smolensk Musical-Ethnographical Compilation. Vol. 6: The Traditional Art of Smolensk-Based Violinists: Expedition Materials and Research by Tatiana Kazanskaya]. Moscow: Gnesin Russian Academy of Music, 2022. 346 p.).



Il. 1. Vladimir Iosifovich Kharkov

The primal part of the funds of the E. V. Gippius Music and Ethnographic Center is comprised of collections of audio and video recordings. The former, undoubtedly, prevail quantitatively, since the opportunity of capturing the process of field work on video appeared for the ethnomusicologists only in the middle of the 1990s. The greater part of the video materials is presented by means of digital recordings and is stored on disc drives. The recordings of the audio materials include both digital and analog recordings; the latter are preserved on magnetic media.⁴

Besides the field recordings, which form the base quantity of the audio and video fund, the center is also in possession of the so-called demonstrational fund. This is a rather motley collection in its makeup, and it includes the following positions:

- a) recordings of ethnographic concerts of different years;
- b) collections of folk songs and instrumental tunes published by various scholarly organizations;

- c) published recordings of professional, student and amateur folk music ensembles;

- d) thematic selections of folk songs and tunes from the main archive of audio recordings.

The demonstrational fund is actively used by the faculty members and students of the Gnesin Russian Academy of Music and the members of the center for scholarly, performing and creative activities, and also as an indispensable component of theoretical tutorial courses of the ethnomusicological direction.

The methodology of field work developed by the specialists at the Center for Musical Ethnography presumes elaborate documentation not only of the folk songs and the interviews with their performers, but also of the visual sources of information, such as various household items, architectural objects, etc. With this aim, the collectors engage in photographic documentation, which allows them, among other things, to affix the faces of the folk music performers. The photographs made in various years comprise the collection of photo materials preserved as photographic print, as well as in digital format, on the Academy's internet server.

Of special interest is the center's museum archive. Its exhibit items include elements of folk costume, musical instruments (Il. 2, 3 and 4), as well as traditional household items and ritual attributes, as a rule, presented to the folklorists during their expedition trips. The museum fund is constantly replenished, at the same time, its exhibit items are regularly used — as unique teaching aids (for example, in the course of "The Basics of Ethnic Organology"), and also as accessories for the concert performances of the folk music ensemble of the Gnesin Russian Academy of Music. Unfortunately, the absence of special exhibition venues, which would make it possible

⁴ At the present time, the audio material on CD and DVD disc drives comprises over 6000 shelving units, approximately as many of them stored on magnetic media; the video recordings comprise about 3500 DVD.

to provide a broader and more regular access to the museum memorabilia, remains a problem.



Il. 2. Exhibit Items from the Museum Fund of the E. V. Gippius Music and Ethnographic Center



Il. 3. Musical Instruments and Textiles from the Museum Fund of the E. V. Gippius Music and Ethnographic Center



Il. 4. A Tambourine and a Ratchet from the Museum Fund of the E. V. Gippius Music and Ethnographic Center

The manuscript collection of the E. V. Gippius Music and Ethnographic Center includes the results of the development of field materials. These are comprised by reports of the expedition groups, the collectors' field notebooks and diaries, transcriptions of folk songs and conversations with the performers, as well as analytic cards — a format of research that makes it possible to provide systematization for the diverse song material at the initial stage of its study.

The center's archive of books comprises a library consisting of dozens of systematic editions, many of which are endowed with authorial autographs. They also include copies of diploma works by ethnomusicology students from the Gnesin Academy, as well as dissertations by the faculty members and employees of the Ethnomusicology Department.



Il. 5. Editions of the E. V. Gippius Music and Ethnographic Center

A special part of the book archive is comprised by editions published by the employees of the center, including periodical editions (Il. 5). Among these, first of all, mention must be made of the *Smolenskii muzykal'no-etnograficheskii sbornik* [The Smolensk Musical Ethnographic Compilation], conceived of as an anthology of folk music of the Smolensk Region in its ethnographic context. To date, five thematic books of this series have come out devoted to various spheres of the folklore culture of that region: Volume 1: *Kalendarnye obryady i pesni* [Calendar Rites and Songs] [1]; Volume 2: *Pokhoronnyi obryad. Plachi i pominal'nye stikhi* [Funeral Rites. Lamentations and Memorial Verses] [2]; Volume 3: *Sezonno priurochennye liricheskie pesni* [Lyrical Songs Timed for Particular Seasons] [3]; Volume 4: *Svad'ba dneprovskogo pravoberezh'ya: Ritual i muzyka* [Weddings on the Right Bank of the Dniepr River: Rites and Music] [4]; Volume 6: *Traditsionnoe iskusstvo smolenskikh skripachei: Ekspeditsionnye materialy i issledovanie T. N. Kazanskoi* [The Traditional Art of Smolensk-Based Violinists: Expedition Materials and Research by Tatiana Kazanskaya]. [5]

During the 2023–2024 academic year, the ethnomusicologists from the Gnesin Academy published a two-volume edition: *Zolotaya kollektsiya muzykal'nogo fol'klora kazakov Rossii* [The Golden Collection of Folk Music of the Cossacks of Russia] is the first fundamental compilation of the best specimens of songs by Russian Cossacks in the history of Russian folk music studies. [6; 7] Moreover, starting from 2012, the E. V. Gippius Music and Ethnographic Center has carried out the publication of the only profiled periodical in Russia — the academic journal *Voprosy etnomuzykoznaniiya* [Issues of Ethnomusicology], all of the issues of which are also stored in the center's archive of books.

The Problems of Preservation and Cataloguing: Solutions and Prospects

The archive funds of the Gippius Center are not only diverse in their compilation, but also quite extensive in their quantity. The number of depository items the Center stores is in the tens of thousands. The ownership of such a collection of an undoubted scholarly and cultural value presumes observing a whole number of conditions connected with its preservation and acquisitions of new items.

First of all, the necessity of providing the scholarly and cultural value of the components of the archive remains relative. For this reason, all the contemporary field research carried out by the ethnomusicologists from the Gnesin Academy are carried out in correspondence with a special methodology developed in the 1980s. Its main principles are described in Margarita Yengovatova's article *Gnesinskaya shkola fol'kloristov: istoriya i perspektivy* [The Gnesin School of Folklorists: History and Perspectives]. [8] This comprehensive investigation of the chosen regions, the fixation on the entire capacity of traditional culture in each locality includes recording the conversations with the performers (about the ethnographic context and the forms of traditional musical realities and performance process), the musical repertoire, the notation of folk terminology and verbal genres, as well as the unacceptability of a selection of the materials based on subjective causes. [Ibid., p. 51]

The musical-ethnographic material not adhering to the present demands (compiled during earlier years or arriving once again from private collections) is required to be provided with detailed description and sometimes the reclamation of part of the information with the use of various open access and archival sources.

Among the problems connected with the preservation of the available fund, the most

acute one is that of the possible destruction of the magnetic carriers of information, which may lead to the danger of the loss of unique audio materials. The necessity of their swiftest transferal into digital format is obvious. The sound engineers of the E. V. Gippius Music and Ethnographic Center are carrying out this work in a systematic fashion, reconstructing and restoring phonograms.

The problem of cataloguing the funds is also relevant for the present day. Its solution is perceived in the creation of an electronic database which would contain a rubricated catalogue of the available audio and video materials with references to their digitalized copies. At the present time, a certain portion of the digitized audio recordings has been systematized particularly following such a principle, however, the main bulk of the work must still be done in the future. The requirement of a constantly expanding scale of protected internet space for the preservation of audiovisual information also remains a separate problem.

Cataloguing the demonstrational fund presents a special difficulty. Being rather motley in its makeup, it is in need of a special form of systematization with the use of various parameters that would make it maximally accessible for usage.

The indicated problems are relevant for the majority of folklore-ethnographic archives, not only in our country, [9] but also of the entire post-Soviet space, as well as other countries. [10] On the one hand, such archives are

repositories of intangible cultural heritage, the careful treatment of which has been affixed on a governmental level during the past decade. Thus, in the Russian Federation the Conception of the Preservation and Development of the nonmaterial ethno-cultural legacy of the Russian Federation throughout the period up to the year 2030 has been implemented⁵; the positive changes in the state polity of Belarus in regard to its cultural and natural heritage have been the subject matter of the articles of Natalia Shelupenko [11] and Denis Filipchik, [12] while the selfsame changes in the state polity of Latvia have been dwelt upon by Zans Badins. [13] On the other hand, most apparent is the imperfect state of the material-technical basis of most of the archives, which does not make it possible to solve the current and strategical problems efficiently and operatively. These and other problems were discussed at the Second All-Russian Seminar devoted to Archival Funds of Folklore-Ethnographical materials, which took place on April 10, 2018 at the Center for Russian Folklore of the V. D. Polenov State Russian House of Folk Creativity. It resulted in the adoption of the resolution with proposals to the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation for the creation of mechanisms of preservation and development of such funds.⁶

One of the questions touched upon at the seminar became that of integration of funds preserving audiovisual materials into the contemporary informational space.

⁵ *The Conception for the Preservation and Development of the Nonmaterial Ethno-Cultural Legacy of the Russian Federation during the period up to the Year 2030.* URL: <http://government.ru/docs/all/152075/> (accessed: 23.01.2025).

⁶ *Fondy fol'klorno-etnograficheskikh materialov: problemy i perspektivy: Rezolyutsiya Kruglogo stola II Vserossiiskogo seminaru po arkhivnym fondam fol'klorno-etnograficheskikh materialov 10 aprelya 2018 goda* [The Funds of the Folklore-Ethnographic Materials: Problems and Prospects: the Resolution of the Round Table of the 2nd All-Russian Seminar devoted to Archival Funds of Folklore-Ethnographic Materials on April 10, 2018]. URL: <https://www.folkcentr.ru/rezolyuciya-kruglogo-stola-fondy-folklorno-etnograficheskix-materialov-problemy-i-perspektivy-ii-vserossiiskogo-seminara-po-arxivnym-fondam-folklorno-etnograficheskix-materialov/> (accessed: 23.01.2025).

For the fund of the E. V. Gippius Center, the work of which is closely connected with the educational process of the Gnesin Russian Academy of Music and the scholarly activities of its employees, this theme is very relevant. It is obvious that in order to be used frequently, the archival materials are in need of copying. At the same time, there arises the danger of the copies being brought into the internet space, where they may be depersonalized, and their historical, geographical and authorial identity devalued. The experience of archives

and libraries in Russia and in other countries shows that the tendencies in the approaches to this questions vary — from permission to copy the materials freely to completely prohibiting any copying. [14] In this range of policies, each organization solves this problem in its own way. At the present time, the employees of the E. V. Gippius Music and Ethnographic Center are developing optimal forms of access for the students and faculty members of the Academy, as well as other interested people to the archive.

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