

Eduard Alexeyev

Cand. Sc. (Art Studies)
Senior Fellow, USSR Institute of Art Studies
Vice-President, Folklore Board, USSR Composers Union

FOLKLORE IN THE CONTEXT
OF MODERN CULTURE
(Folk-Song: Reflections on its Fortunes)

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BY WAY OF A PRÉCIS

THINGS LOOK PROMISING

(A Folklorist Facing Folklore)

A receding phenomenon.— ? — But by no means a moribund one. Moreover, in a sense it's coming back.— Paradoxical though it may seem, folklore can be expected to hold a key position in culture. Far be it from us to assert folklore to be thriving, but we cannot help feeling that the spiritual forces inherent in folklore are still able to realize their full potential as things go nowadays.

Views on the nature of folklore differ widely. In striving to contribute to the elucidation of that nexus of problems, the author of the present book puts forward a number of propositions having relation to the domain of methodology (p. 10): — 1. A complicated syncretistic entity, folklore has not yet been properly located within the framework of scholarly knowledge. 2. In the process of folklore being researched into, a conglomeration of contradictory — and rather hypothetical — ideas can be observed coming up; those ideas, borrowed from different disciplines, can hardly be said to make up a coherent whole. 3. Hence, there is no alternative but to systematically coordinate several — at least three — different approaches to the issue, viz. those provided by aesthetics, by social studies, and by psychological research, with other departments of learning being consulted if need be. 4. The science of folklore should be considered, therefore, a synthetic branch of knowledge, which, after the periods of describing (as well as collecting) and analysing certain data, has reached the experimentation stage. 5. The working-out of a new methodology of folklore studies is likely to be conducive to a further advance of the humanities.

The "polyhedron" of folklore does not get readily "inscribed" in the edifice of human knowledge so that hitherto it has been incapable of getting possession of a clearly delimited compartment in the existent structure of research activities. Taken as an indissoluble unit, in its qualitative integrity, folklore may well appear to be out of line with what the scholars do. Conceptualized in terms of academic ("textual") analysis, traditional folklore turns out virtually incomprehensible as far as its "contextual" essence is concerned. To be able to adequately grasp the nature of musical folklore, ethnomusicology (including "musical

folkloristics", as this country's experts in folk music usually call their department of scholarship) should not be a mere modification of the more time-honoured subjects from among the humanities, though it should be armed with a specific harmonious system of some of the methods (appropriately modified) of aesthetical disciplines, social science, and psychology, to mention only those branches of knowledge which are absolutely indispensable to the purpose. In short, ethnomusicological studies ought to be conceived as a self-dependent, albeit genetically interdisciplinary, province of learning and research.

Rightly enough, folklore is often regarded either as a **situation-inseparable** (or, rather, **intra-situational**) **aesthetic** phenomenon (**REALITY-inwrought ART**) or, vice versa, as an aesthetically conditioned form of taking part in certain events — as an **aesthetically** regulated form of, let us say, getting inside certain **situations** (**ARTISTICALLY** organized **REALITY**); and it is this dual nature of folklore that makes it equally incumbent (on those who turn their hand to such an intricate phenomenon) to draw on what has been worked out both in the field of art studies (in our case, musicology) and in the area of sociological research. The gap between these two approaches is to be bridged over by adding a third one — an approach which would be able to "reconcile" the aesthetics of folklore with its social nature; such a mediation is within the power of the science of psychology. Thus the whole point is that the three approaches ought to be somehow harmonized with one another; it must be said that in pursuit of such a harmony we cannot do without intuition provided we are really willing to cope with all the difficulties that confront us on this road. Of great importance for all who specialize in musical folklore is, of course, a close contact with sociologists, psychologists, and experts in other fields of study, as well as the never-to-be-neglected task of adopting whatever stands to their credit. But it is no less exigent for us to be fully aware of the place occupied by modern ethnomusicology among other related subjects and, besides, to be conscious of the circumstance that for some time now folklorists have given up their passive attitude to musical folklore as such.

The question touched upon at the very ending of the foregoing paragraph deserves to be lingered over at greater length. There is every reason to affirm that our discipline has entered into an immediate interplay with what any one of us should be supposed — judging by how things used to stand a score of years or so ago — to deal with but in the capacity of an observer and analyst. Well, it is only natural for students of folk music to quit holding aloof from processes which are literally jeopardizing the very existence of folklore. Small wonder that they are no longer apt to let the grass grow under their feet: now that traditions are irreversibly decaying, now that Life itself is, so to speak, incessantly experimenting upon folklore by testing it for viability, the ethnomusicologist is undeniably entitled — and, what is more, he ought — to take the road of experimentation so as to intervene in the course of events. After all, what matters most is not so much the preservation and restoration of certain pieces (and, more than that,

of certain genres) of folk music of the past, as a steadfast application of every conceivable method with the object of resuscitating the inmost generative mechanisms of folklore, rehabilitating this very type of creative activity, revivifying this very form of creativity. One of the feasible ways of what is, in this context, meant by "experimentation" in ethnomusicology is practical assimilation of certain forms of music-making on the part of ethnomusicologists themselves; for the matter of that, excellent results have been obtained — suffice it to refer to Dmitry Pokrovsky and his famous group of young Moscow enthusiasts of Russian folk music. The phenomenon of a folklorist becoming, to some extent, a bearer of a traditional culture betokens a new stage in the process of going to the heart of folklore and its values.

Ever has there been an ocean of music — showing all signs of genuine art — beyond the boundary of what is labelled as "art music"; and ever has the written-matter-oriented "standard" musicology retained — at any rate to a certain degree — its Euro-centric and "academic" biases as regards whatever isn't supposed to be covered by that label. Not only are all the prosperous varieties of commercial pop music being as good as disregarded in musicological circles (as if such an indifference towards the realities were a matter of course), not only are the aesthetic principles of traditional folklore, to say nothing of its extra-musical motive forces, still being given no heed by many a scholar who is expected to bring to light the nature of evolution of musical art and, in the final analysis, the universally operative mechanisms of thinking in terms of music: no less neglected, save for specialized studies, remain even those sophisticated, existentially autonomous and aesthetically momentous phenomena of certain non-European musical cultures which have virtually nothing to do with folklore in that they are in possession of highly developed, deliberately cultivated — and, for that matter, since olden times institutionalized — classical forms of their own, and of their own repertoire of masterpieces. In fact, in the well-ordered buildings dwelt in by music history, and theory too, there's little space left for such things as Arab *maqām*, Indian *rāga*, Kazakh *kyui*, etc. The same holds true, to speak of relatively recent developments, for classical and modern jazz, let alone such less refined types of "informal" ("alternative") music as, e. g., American hootenanny and its counterparts in the rest of the world, British and American folk rock, West European "rock in opposition", this country's "independent" solo song (also called "guitar song"), and so forth, and so on. The discipline which claims to be *the* history of music is actually a history of what the prejudiced academics mean by "art music". It is badly needed for the general science of music to overcome its narrow-mindedness — to inorb all the phenomena referred to above into the range of subjects of scholarly consideration and, furthermore, to look at the familiar values of "art music" the same way as the rest of the *musique vivante* is looked at. A methodology to answer that purpose is not far to seek: such a methodology has been elaborated and tested out in ethnomusicology — in musical ethnography, in what is known as comparative musicology, and in what has been

continuously pursued by those who are engaged in meticulous researches into the facts and mainsprings of musical folklore. In any case, an eventual integration of folklore studies — as a fundamental discipline — into the fabric of musical scholarship will no doubt prove helpful in working out a truly consistent approach to man's musical culture in its entirety. After all, the history of music reaches back to ages which are far beyond the times the earliest available scriptures date from — it does not start with what the academic courses in the subject start with.

Folklore researches have become inconceivable without sociological analysis. On the other hand, the sociology of culture cannot afford to overlook the millenia-old practice of musical folklore, a phenomenon which is optimally suitable for a sociological modelling. For the student of folk music, urban and rural data on labour and pastime can be useful, as well as many other bits of statistical information. But the main thing to remember is that *all* aspects of folk music (and of art in general) — even scalar patterns — are, in some way or other, socially determined, only we ought to be careful not to relapse into vulgarization of that determination.

Both ethnomusicologists and sociologists are preoccupied with the problem of the origin of art; in this connection, archaic songs, man's constant companions in primitive society, serve as exceptionally precious source material. Such a song was in no way a self-sufficing thing: it was in a threefold manner — and very tightly — socially conditioned in that it had its existence, for one thing, within the framework of a rite (or of a labour process); for another, in the pattern of a given culture; and lastly, in the context of communal life. Any song was manifestly functional and firmly bound up with that particular tribal culture to which it appertained, so it was "closed" for the external world: not infrequently, it was "impenetrable" even for those belonging to the neighbouring tribes. Even at the post-primitive stages in evolution this introversion still remains characteristic of traditional folklore. To be capable of penetrating into the world of a traditional culture, the scholar should — and this is a *sine qua non* — give up regarding folklore as a sum total of "works" of "folk poetry", or "folk music", or "folk figurative art", and so on: what we should consider to be constitutive of a folklore-natured culture is not a series of "opuses" (or artefacts, or pieces of an art), but integrative "acts" (rites, in a broad sense), which are always socially motivated — but far from always aesthetically stimulated. Of crucial importance, then, is the social function immanent in any one of those "acts" — it is the main factor in organizing and contextualizing the syncretistic "text" of such a rite. Of course, he who is going to gain an understanding of so hermetic a phenomenon will not do without going into the semantic nature of that "text". Some experts in African studies suggest segmenting every "act" into elementary sense-bearing particles, "actons", subject to a subsequent processing in terms of theory of information. Anyhow, semiotical methods of research are bound to become indispensable to the modern science of folklore. But whatever methods we choose, we must keep in mind the

fundamental truth that folk music as a living entity is in a most direct manner interwoven with all the other aspects of reality — it is part and parcel of everyday life. In authentic folklore, no matter whether traditional or modern, a song — unless it is brought into an extraneous environment — is neither sung nor listened to with a merely aesthetic purpose. E. g., the procedure of singing at wedding, with certain customs and conventions being strictly observed, used to be intended primarily as a way of sanctioning the bond of wedlock, as a form of public approval in respect of the very fact of marriage — not as a matter of art (which circumstance implies, of course, no such thing as coming short of artistic quality). In fulfilling its social functions, folklore makes people sociable; at the same time, sociability is one of their motives for singing, dancing, playing an instrument, etc.

So folklore is an aesthetically tintured means of social intercourse. That is why it lends itself to a discussion in terms of communication. Any act of communicating is supposed to have at least three functions — denotative, connotative, and motive (suggestive). In most cases inequivalent in significance if compared with one another, those functions may be complemented, or even virtually substituted for, by a focusing on the aesthetic aspect of the message, or on the very process of getting in touch with a person (or group), or, finally, on making for mutual understanding by dint of specification of the actual meaning of what constitutes the code (system of signs) used (or to be used) in the message, the number of conceivable functions of communication thus amounting to six. In traditional folklore, for all its apparently extra-personal character, the dominating role is — much often than not — factually taken on either (a) by the connotative factor, with personal (individual) nuances being in a most manifest manner superinduced onto what is being denoted (referred to) in the message (and what is presumed to be *ab initio* familiar to the recipient), which fact confirms that individuals are not merely bearers of a collective tradition but its co-creators; or (b) by the suggestive aspect of the message, which is addressed — in ritual folklore — as a rule to a definite person (or animal, or sprite, etc.), or group of persons (animals, sprites, etc.), with the purpose of influencing him (her, them) in one way or another; or, what is no less typical, (c) by the contact-establishing (or rather, contact-maintaining) line of behaviour. Just the other way about, the aesthetic function is rather incidental than intrinsic to the folklore-patterned intercourse, and the codification-explicative (or code-modificatory) function proves, for the most part, irrelevant to it in view of the fact that the code (the nature of the “language”, the “rules of the game”, etc.) can be regarded — with respect to the act of communicating in terms of traditional folklore — as, so to speak, pre-established from without and built-in from within; this code, of which the intercommunicators themselves are extremely seldom aware, is — unlike what is observable in the case of “art music” — subject to no experimentation whatsoever.

It should be also borne in mind that in the context proper to the really living folk music no clear-cut distinction can be drawn between those singing and the audience, and that no “message”, in authentic

folklore, is liable to be a mere reiteration of a previous one even though it is true that hardly ever will there be an altogether "new thing" within the framework of a definite folklore tradition. In point of fact, no folk singer originates any novel ideas (or even claims to do so). This notwithstanding, any singer of the kind unfailingly modifies the matter he has long imbibed, occasionally changing it even into what his fellow villagers may quite well regard as a song of his own, which, at the same time, cannot but remain a song of *their* own, a song which, in its full semantic ponderability (and with all the aesthetic overtones it bears), makes sense — just in the course of immediate perception — but in their own circle (if only by reason of its pronouncedly regional nature). Significantly enough, any attempt at excontextualizing (and, consequently, "universalizing") folk songs and dances results in their virtual "defolklorization" — suffice it to remind of our "state folk choirs" and other show-oriented bodies. Quite apart from other considerations, there is no question of genuine folk singers being described as "performers"; still less applicable to them is the term "composer". And all the same, they are — in a certain sense — both composers and performers; and listeners into the bargain. In any event, traditional folk-songs, inherently variable in every respect, are no "opuses" to be performed (interpreted), no "texts" to be "read" — no self-sufficient entities. Thence, obviously, no *objets d'art*. And nevertheless, they are facts of art — and facts of life. Facts which are most indicative of the very gist of traditional folklore in that they are **strictly contextualized** — and, necessarily, **contextually restricted**.

Just as we distinguish between spoken and written language, we must keep two vehicles of conveying musical entities distinct — oral tradition and musical literacy. "Diglottism", in this sense, is characteristic of contemporary culture in general (e. g., something of the kind is observed in modern physics) — such a "bilingualism" seems to reflect a universal quality of human consciousness admitting of two divergent ways of thinking ("non-linear" and "linear"). But more clearly than anywhere else is this duality perceptible in verbal language and in the language of music (apart from another kind of musical "multilingualism" — coexistence, interpenetration and well-nigh worldwide appeal of certain styles of music having their origins in different national cultures). Incidentally, only what can be generally described as oral culture is capable of making for memorizing an epic several hundred verses long. "Translating" from oral musical "language" into the "language" that has taken shape in the realm of musical literacy is rather a problematic undertaking — hardly ever does it result in perfect "translations", nonetheless, attempts at turning certain values of musical folklore into the "language" of professional musicians indubitably conduce to the advancement of folklore studies and, notably, to the never-ceasing enrichment of "art music" with idioms of the ever more difficult-to-"translate" layers of music of oral tradition. The two types of thinking in terms of music have generated four cardinal categories of musical activity: (1) musical folklore proper, (2) skilful singing or playing on the basis of specialization in certain genres of music of oral

tradition, (3) literate "art music", and (4) amateurship patterned on professionalism and, therefore, following in the tracks of literate — and well-educated — musicians. It stands to reason that those categories are "communicating vessels", with vague and unsteady boundaries (particularly in our time).— The notion of professionalism is a great trouble to anyone who takes up categorizing the realities of musical life. The sociological acceptance of this term is not congruent with the meaning it assumes whenever we come to regard it from the angle of psychology, and both of those conceptions are far from being coincident with what aesthetical considerations tend to read into that very term; besides, the sense in which it can be rightly used in the context of one culture may prove inapplicable to the conditions of another culture. As far as the category of musical amateurship is concerned, this widespread form of musical activity may be described as an unremunerated side-line occupation which is not likely to satisfy the experts; yet another indication of amateurism is lack of specialized schooling. Now, while the first two of the above-mentioned factors may add to the attraction of music-making, the other two are definitely negative aspects of amateur activities. Where, then, is the way out? — It seems expedient (though, admittedly, too difficult a task) to revive the folklore-natured mechanisms of intercommunication in terms of music (which by no means implies giving preference to the obsolete forms of music-making!). In any case, musical amateurship should not pattern itself exclusively on what is associated with professionalism in musical art. The task of folklorizing (at least partially) the sphere of organized amateur activities appears enormously important in these days. After all, folklore is, so to speak, amateurship on an oral basis. The two constituents of what was referred to above as musical "diglottism" ("bilingualism") ought to be mutually complementary. We must foster creativity, we must encourage the youth in their natural bent for spontaneous self-expression, we must rear "professionalized amateurs" by revitalizing and developing the oral forms of cultivation of musicianship — along with the well-tried channels of spreading and utilizing musical literacy. And our motto should be "PASTIME FOR THE SAKE OF ART" — rather than "Art for the sake of pastime".

SOME MORE POINTS — in key words: —

Transcriptions (for all their usefulness): incapable of adequately reflecting the specificity of authentic musical folklore.

Recordings (for all their indispensability to the student of musical folklore): inevitably detracting from the effectiveness of the "real thing".

Regrettably, the nearer to the purity of a folklore tradition, the less the probability of a song getting recorded and published.— Aware of this circumstance, we must use caution.

Fieldwork: while recording a piece of folk music, no dread of "casual" noises!

The record: why not keep a "sounding field-diary" to be edited and released as a disc?

Sleeve-notes: as detailed as possible! (And never without photographs!)
Filming: wherever possible, no scripts! And: as far as possible, no retakes! No "concertization"! (Incidentally, costumes: better incomplete than unauthentic!)

Authentic folklore in the concert hall: strictly speaking, a contradiction in terms.— Why, then, not try and "loosen the scenario"?

Songs: "I don't remember them properly, but whenever I start singing on my own — it so turns out that the tunes are just like those which people once used to sing." (!)

Tune (or rather, a "mould tune"): often just a "container" for verbal improvisations — a "container" which, however, may undergo considerable modifications.

Improvisation in musical folklore: with certain "intonemes" (idioms) ever-recurring.

Gradual professionalization of a folk musician: either (a) within or (b) beyond the framework of oral tradition.— Case "a" can be described as "folk professionalism".

Folklore traditions: capable of coming back to life after a long period of apparent extinction, with the "resonance factor" coming into play (occasionally under the influence of ethnomusicologists appearing "on the spot").

Any folklore tradition, in plurality and variability of its manifestations: comparable to the toy known as top — keeping upright as long as in motion.

"Anonymous": it does not mean "no man's"! (And not infrequently, there is no anonymity at all.)

Folklore: comprehensible to all?

Folklore: not only a product of a certain socio-cultural environment but also one of its formative factors.

Folklore: the "vegetation" of culture (whereas all literature, including "Euro-compositorial" music, is comparable both to the flora and to the fauna).— Folklore is characterized by a certain "immobility", conservatism, a bent to remain ethnically pure, etc. And yet: "one's own" and "somebody else's", "forefathers' things" and "a-go-go" — not incompatible!

The cardinal function of folklore: (re)humanization of society. (Noteworthy, implanting traditional art in the consciousness of the rising generation contributes greatly to their "deconsumerization".) In this connection — to reiterate —

— organized amateur activities: to be substantially restructured (in a sense, "folklorized")!

Professional musical activities today: tending to assimilate some of the generative mechanisms inherent in the oral type of music-making (rather than but some of the fruits of folklore creativity, as was the case in former times).

Traditional folklore today: in vogue? (Folklore festivals, etc.)

Mass media: making the walls of concert halls quasi-non-existent, and thence, making the art of music virtually omnipresent.— Is the folklore-natured creativity likely to cope with these conditions? —

— To be expected: a new — modern-technology-determined — type of informal oral culture taking shape in coexistence with the nation-wide (and international) communications networks.

An acceptable (admissible) DEFINITION OF FOLKLORE — in full:

“Folklore (including musical folklore) is a specific sphere of spiritual culture, viz. a collective (joint, concerted), or individual,— but non-specialized (non-professionalized) — artistic (in our case, musical) creative activity which (a) is, in its aesthetic norms, inseparable from the socially significant vital activity of individuals, or groups, (b) takes shape and historically develops as an orally transmitted tradition (i. e., as an unbroken memory of generations which does not recur to any material imprints), (c) is subject to a strict control on the part of collective experience, and (d) patterns itself, in psychological terms, after an immediate intercourse within fairly stable socio-cultural groups consolidated by virtue of multifarious personal (informal) contacts.” (p. 166)

And here are essential CHARACTERISTICS OF the four CARDINAL CATEGORIES OF MUSICAL ACTIVITY as specific spheres of spiritual culture: —

(In the following, F — Folklore
FP — “Folk Professionalism”;
EP — “Euro-Professionalism”;
A — Amateurism.)

General character: F, A — non-specialized; FP, EP — specialized.

Form of manifestation of the aesthetic element: F — intra-situational; FP, EP, A — autonomous.

Socio-cultural environment: F — “closed” (confined); FP — “open-and-closed”; EP, A — “open”.

Mode of existence: F, FP — oral tradition; EP — written-matter-conditioned tradition (plus personal contact by way of teaching); A — borrowing certain values from the “stocks” of both oral and written-matter-conditioned traditions.

Type of artistic products: F, FP — variable, plural; EP — “opus” (complete-in-itself); A — mainly “opus”.

Form of artistic consciousness: F — collective; FP — both collective and individual; EP — individual; A — mainly individual.

Character of intercourse with the audience: F, FP — immediate, informal; EP — mediate (through the instrumentality of the note picture, and of the performer); A — both immediate and mediate.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: —

Musical folklore studies: to be restructured.— To cover the *whole* of what can be referred to as folklore-natured musical activity! To research into the mechanisms of *all* forms of that activity! Not to be guided by purely aesthetic criteria! To learn the “languages” of folklore traditions! To be aware of the realities — not to focus but on the archaic phenomena (which are actually receding)!

Folk - Song: alive.
Its Fortunes: abounding with severe trials. And nevertheless —
— A Folklorist Facing Folklore (and "Folklorists' Lore") makes
us believe in what constitutes the ideological trend of this highly
informative book — makes us believe that there is every reason to be
optimistic. After all, *estas ja nature kredi je naturo* — it is only natural
to believe in Nature.

Valery Yerokhin

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Русские народные песни Забайкалья (семейский распев). Сборник народных песен.

СПИСОК ЗАМЕЧЕННЫХ ОПЕЧАТОК

Страница	Строка	Напечатано	Следует читать
4	2 сн.	Way	way
6	2 сн.	и прочее).	и прочее)?
12	1 сн.	неродившегося	не родившегося
18	21 сн.	разъяснению	разъятию
22	2 св.	также	так же
23	11 сн.	видение	видение
25	14 св.	процесса,	процесса
94	10 сн.	полнокровным	полноправным
95	25-26 св.	музыки особенно в восточных культурах	музыки, особенно в восточных культурах,
между 96 и 97	подпись к фото 21	Шенталинского	Шенталинского
перед с. 97	к фото 33	масленнице	масленице
100	24 св.	круговорот	кругозор
107	7 сн.	ни одного	не одного
108	5 сн.	а тем более,	а тем более
"	1-2 сн.	"Джаз. Генезис, музыкальный язык, эстетика",	"Джаз: Генезис. Музыкальный язык. Эстетика".
117	1 сн.	С.К.	код.
118	7 сн.	обстановку	атмосферу
128	8 св.	поводом,	поводом
134	10 сн.	"Сборов	"Соборов
137	19 св.	самозвучание	само звучание
153	2 сн.	образы	обряды
158	8 св.	я и	и я
162	1 сн.	какой-нибудь	какой-нибудь
166	3-4 сн.	социологического, искусствоведческого (в его коммуникативном аспекте) и психологического взгляда	искусствоведческого, социологического и психологического (в его коммуникативном аспекте) взглядов
173	16 сн.	"пятачков"	"пятачков",
179	6 сн.	Как и в го-	Как и в ги-
211	16 св.	винского (II),	винского, см. II),
225	22 сн.	Musikverständnis	Musikverständnis
"	8 сн.	Suliteanu... Contributia	Suliteanu... Contributia
"	7 сн.	Bucuresti	Bucuresti
"	6 сн.	2. Aufg.	2. Aufl.
"	3 сн.	Wroclaw	Wroclaw
226	8 св.	its	Its
"	12 сн.	(addressec)	(addressee)
227	13 сн.	enviroment	environment
230	19 св.	music being as	music as
"	22 св.	still being given	still given
231	14 св.	rula	rural
233	22 св.	objets d'art	objets d'art.
"	8 сн.	"translations",	"translations";
236	16 сн.	oral	(oral
"	15 сн.	-conditioned	-conditioned)

6 р. ф. и. } 11 1 сн.
66 13 св.
147 5 св.

1976
1973
реализма

1977
1971
оптимизма