

SLOVENE FOLK SONGS AND INSTRUMENTS I

(Bogdana Herman, Mira Omerzel-Terlep, Matija Terlep)

Each new record of Slovene folk music denotes a special occasion for ethnologists and, hopefully, also for Slovene public. Although the wealth of Slovene folk music is extensive, the amount of recorded material on records is rather small due to different reasons. Lately there have been some gratifying changes because we managed to release several records with Slovene folk vocal and instrumental songs. As you have probably noticed, the English section of the Bulletin has been regularly publishing information about them.

Since this is a very special record, we will talk about it more than usual. It is namely the first one on which various folk singers from the country have not been recorded in a studio. Instead, the record has been made by a group of three young enthusiasts and experts from a city. This has been made possible because of the following reasons:

Mira Omerzel - Terlep and Matija Terlep have been researching folk instruments, their role and significance, for several years. Mira Omerzel-Terlep is a graduate in musicology and has studied ethnology. She and Matija Terlep, a mechanical engineer and flautist, have also collected folk instruments and with their field work have added to ethnomusicological knowledge of the Slovene cultural heritage. Bogdana Herman, a graduate in Slavic studies, joined them in 1978 and since then all three have engaged in reviving and presenting the archive records of folk songs.

During the last three years the group has been successfully giving numerous concerts around Slovenia, on radio and TV and thus popularizing folk music and instruments in the most vivid and direct way.

Before describing the record in detail we will quote the introductory text written by Mira Omerzel-Terlep (and translated by Margaret Davis):

Folk song and instrumental music represent a particular aspect of Slovene culture and life-style. Few details are available about the instruments, a consequence of the relatively late interest in instrumental music, while practically no details exist about the musicians' melodies and style of playing, so that a reliable reconstruction of the instrumental music is almost impossible. All the more welcome, therefore, are the details which the few still living players of old instruments can give us. The instruments can be simple, often home-made or improvised, or bought or taken over from neighbouring peoples, for there are no insulated cultures and ethnical boundaries do not coincide with state ones. Slovene folk tradition belongs to a unified and broader Central European culture and Slav heritage, born in a common original homeland, - Asia. If an instrument serves Slovenes in their everyday life, it can be acknowledged as a folk instrument, and consequently of interest to us. The same holds true for the song tradition. Much more song material has been collected and the interpretations are faithful to the notation preserved by the Section for Musical Ethnography in the Institute of Slovene Ethnography at the Slovene Academy of Science and Arts. Rare but necessary deviations occur only where it was essential to find a compromise between the record of the text and the melody (since older recorders did not write down changes in the text occurring in the course of the stanzas), and where the performer adds his own contribution to the interpretation with on-the-spot inspiration. The selection of accompanying instruments, which from

the musical point of view partly helps us to recognize a particular region, is somewhat adapted to the selection of songs, which are mostly of a narrative or ballad nature. Thus we present ten instruments which (apart from the guitar) are most characteristic of the Slovene ethnic area; some are also the oldest. The archives of song material remain unexhausted, and many are the varied instruments, acoustic possibilities, interesting improvisations and instrumental combinations, which we will try to present on future records.

The songs and instrumental melodies presented belong to different tonal styles from probably the oldest untempered series with its few notes, via the pentatonic scale and old modes to diatonic major and minor scales. In intonation, folk instruments only approximate a tempered series, very often it is not possible to tune them accurately, or else with the slightest changes of temperature they slip out of tune. This uncertainty along with other factors brought about their more or less swift decline and paved the way for new, fashionable and intonationally reliable instruments such as the accordion and zither, as well as brass instruments and, between the two wars, members of the tamburitsa family. The songs presented sank all the more into oblivion on account of their untopical social problems and with changing social consciousness, thought and feeling. Our purpose is not to label the music presented here as "original", "pure", etc. as nowadays we like to designate any such endeavour. We must realize that the music (whether song or instrumental melody) is torn out from a broader context of something essentially different. Its image is dependent on its social functions. Changes in these or their disappearance and adaptation to the new aesthetic taste of the time, which we try to trace in our researches, and to indicate in our musical presentation and the accompanying commentary, lead in time to an amalgamation of "old and new" or to the unavoidable decline of the instrument and the forgetting of song themes. As music changes, so does its role, its construction and manner of execution. Every archive record is thus a unique picture of a temporary state, each performance is an unrepeatable moment.

The record is in the form of a double album. On the jacket there are the photographs of eleven folk instruments together with inscriptions. On the inside jacket there are the texts of all seven vocal songs; especially interesting is the text which accompanies the record.

This text contains seven pages and can be divided into three parts. The first one speaks about the contents of the record. Side A has nine songs, three of which are vocal. Their title is mentioned first, then their duration and origin. With the instrumental songs the sort of instrument being used is first mentioned and the title follows next. Side B has eight songs, four of which are vocal.

The second part of the text comprises an introduction and the third part includes various details connected to the origin of the songs, their musical characteristics, their contents, the time and place of recording – thus referring to all of the seven vocal songs. Besides this all of the eleven folk instruments are drawn, described and explained. The author of the texts is Mira Omerzel–Terlep together with Matija Terlep and Bogdana Herman.

All Slovene texts are translated into English.

The record is composed in such a way as to present in a logical succession all the different instruments – played with a great deal of feeling, musical ear and technical knowledge by mainly Mira and Matija Terlep – and extraordinary interesting and specially trained voice of Bogdana Herman who sings three of the songs without any instrumental background.

The songs come from different ethnic parts of Slovenia, thus also from Italy and Austria, but most of them are from the regions of Bela krajina (5) and Prekmurje (4).

Technical Data

SLOVENE FOLK SONGS AND INSTRUMENTS I (Stereo 2510065), BOGDANA HERMAN – voice, MIRA OMERZEL–TERLEP – dulcimer (oprekelj), pipes (piščali), ocarina (okarina), guitar (kitara), tamburitsa (1. in 2. bisernica), MATIJA TERLEP – flute (žvegla), pan-pipes (trstenke), jew's harp (drumelca), pipes (piščali), ocarina (okarina), double flute (dvojnica), bag-pipes (diple z mehom), tamburitsa (1. bisernica).

TAMBURITSA PLAYERS: 1. bisernica – Matija Terlep, Mira Omerzel–Terlep, 2. bisernica – Mira Omerzel–Terlep, brač – Marija Padar, bugarija – Mitja Ferenc, berde – Metod Filipič. The duration of the record: Side A 16,08 minutes, Side B 19,07 minutes. The shortest song lasts for 40 seconds and the longest for 3 minutes and 23 seconds.

Editor – Stanko Teržič, Reviewer and Producer – Boris Kovačič, Design – Bojan Kirn, Translation – Margaret Davis, Sound Engineer – Aco Razbornik, Produkcija gramofonskih ploča RTB Beograd, Makedonska 21.

DAMJAN OVSEC