

# JOSIP ŠIROKI: SINGER AND TRANSCRIBER AT THE SAME TIME. AN ANALYSIS OF HIS AIMS, METHODS, AND FINDINGS

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*The author's aim was to discover what influence Josip Široki's activities have had on folk song collection. This is of special interest because he was working on a collection of folk songs at the same time that the Austrian program Austrian Folk Songs was being carried out. It is shown that Široki's methods differed significantly from the common methods applied at his time. In addition, light is shed on Široki's possible motivation to collect folk songs and how his work was influenced by other disciplines.*

Keywords: Josip Široki, Vienna, phonograph collection, Slavists, interdisciplinary work.

*Avtorica poskuša razkriti, kako pomembna je dejavnost Josipa Širokija za zbirko ljudskih pesmi. Ta je namreč posebnega pomena, saj je pripravljala zbirko ljudskih pesmi v času, ko se je izvajal avstrijski projekt Das Volkslied in Österreich. Avtorica ugotavlja, da so se Širokove metode zelo razlikovale od splošnih metod tistega časa. Ob tem osvetljuje morebitne spodbude za zbirko ljudskih pesmi in govori o tem, kako so na njegovo delo vplivale druge vede.*

Ključne besede: Josip Široki, Dunaj, fonografska zbirka, slavisti, interdisciplinarno delo.

## JOSIP ŠIROKI

Josip Široki has a special position among collectors of folk songs. As an introduction, it is worth taking a quick look at his life.

Born on 8 March 1882 as the oldest child<sup>1</sup> in a farmers' family in Virje (Podravina, Croatia), a scholarship offered him the chance to attend high school in the towns of Bjelovar (Podravina), Sremski Karlovci (Vojvodina), and Zagreb, where he passed his final exams in 1902. After this he enrolled at the university. First he studied law in Zagreb, but in 1903 he moved to Vienna, where he studied philosophy and music<sup>2</sup> [UA Wien 1906] together with studies in philology (Slavic and German studies) and pedagogy.

He wrote his dissertation in philosophy and obtained his Ph.D. in 1909 after passing his comprehensive exams in musicology and philosophy. In his home country he was celebrated as the first Croatian doctor of musicology [IEF 770; Pettan 1982: 4–6].

In Vienna he left his traces not only at the Viennese patent office for his invention of the *Universaltonometer* but also at the Viennese Audiovisual Research Archive (Germ. *Phonogrammarchiv*), which is discussed below. After this he returned to his home village of Virje in

<sup>1</sup> This is why his nickname is *baček* (a term applied to an older brother), under which he is still known in the region around Virje.

<sup>2</sup> As was usual for that time, the study of philosophy and the natural sciences was a prerequisite for studying music.

1914. There, Široki's main occupation was collecting folklore material: musical instruments, objects of daily life and art, drawings of traditional bridges and mills, and so on.

Here the question arises how a collector of folklore material could survive at that time. Široki was creative and clever in solving this problem. As a singer he himself gave life to the songs of his collection. He wandered from house to house pursuing a special system he had invented. Specifically, he kept a list of the inhabitants of the village and the surroundings by noting down their name-days, birthdays, marriage days, and so on in order to surprise them with the presentation of a song. In doing so he was always provided with gifts in kind as a reward, or at least a warm meal. Eventually, he became famous throughout the entire region.

However, after visiting his home village, it was sadly discovered that Široki and his work were not taken seriously by the general public. When talking to local people, adjectives such as *strange*, *crazy*, and *Bohemian* were used to describe his personality. In fact, at the end of his life he was lonely, and he died almost forgotten on 9 January 1963 in the hospital in Koprivnica.

#### THE ŠIROKI COLLECTION IN THE AUDIOVISUAL RESEARCH ARCHIVE OF THE AUSTRIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

As mentioned above, at the Viennese Audiovisual Research Archive Josip Široki left behind a total of 141 musical recordings [ÖAW-Alm 1914/64: 400]. He recorded them all directly at the Department of Physiology in Vienna (Germ. *Physiologisches Institut Wien*) between July 1913 and December 1914. He himself sang the songs (in a baritone voice) or played the instruments (including the flute, shepherd's flute, gusle, mouth harp, tamboura, violin, and mouth organ).

Although he called himself a "music researcher" (Germ. *Musikforscher*) according to the recording-sheets (Germ. *Protokollblätter*), he did not follow the required methods of research. To start with, he recorded songs sung by himself instead of recording another person. In addition, he recorded in the studio in place of recording in the natural environment of the reliable native informants – that is, in the field.

However, it seems that it was Široki's aim later on, after he had come back to Virje, to record musical documents there in the field as well, especially on old traditional instruments such as harps. This can be seen from the letters Josip Široki exchanged with Josef Hajek, the head of the Audiovisual Research Archive, in the 1920s.<sup>3</sup> Walter Graf, Hajek's successor, also commented on Široki's recording activities in South Slavic regions [Hajek 1928: 13; Graf 1964: 24]. However, no field recordings by Široki have yet been found.

It is not clear how Široki established contact with the Viennese Audiovisual Research Archive. Documents about his work there are missing. It can be assumed that his invention

<sup>3</sup> The letters are held in a private archive in Zagreb.

of the *Universaltonometer*, which he presented in June 1913 to the Academy of Sciences, drew attention to him. Because the Academy of Sciences also included the Audiovisual Research Archive, he probably established contact with its founder Sigmund Exner, and it is plausible that Exner's and Široki's interests were very similar – that they especially shared the idea of recording the characteristics of a regionally spoken language. This is what Široki accomplished later on with his recordings of the dialect of Virje.

The comments by Josip Široki in the notes to the recordings provide information about (1) the title, (2) the character (content of the song, on which occasion the songs were sung), (3) the tonality, (4) the rhythm (in Menzel's metronome notation, MM), (5) the original region of the song or dance, and sometimes (5) the particularities of the lyrics.

Široki added examples of (musical) notes only for a few dance pieces as well. Unfortunately, he did not write down the lyrics of the songs, although this would have been required by the Audiovisual Research Archive (see Figure 1). He recorded solely one verse of a song, most probably with the intention of being able to record as many songs as possible on a given disc.<sup>4</sup>

**Des Phonographierten** Platte Nr. 2303

Vor- und Zuname *Dr. Josip Široki*

Geschlecht *männlich* Rasse, Stamm *Slovane*

Alter *21 Jahre* Beruf *Musikführer*

Geburtsort-Provinz-Land *Virje, Krain, Österreich*

Wohnort-Provinz-Land *Wien, Österreich*

Wär früher seßhaft in *Virje, Spalato, Zagreb bis 1910*

Wohnt-Provinz-Land der Eltern *Virje, Krain*

Wohnort-Provinz-Land der Eltern *Virje, Krain*

Matr. des Vaters *Spalato* der Mutter *Spalato*

**Inhalt:**

*Slovenische Lieder (aus Sprain).*

I. *In jeneru blin Triglava* ..... in *F* *Mp. M.* *J = 50*

II. *Ehe pa pojdem vna Slovensko?* ..... *B* , , *J = 54*

Zum Teile durch Ausstreichen zu erledigen.

**Der Aufnahme** Touren pro Minute 70

Datum, Ort-Provinz-Land *8. VII. 1913, Biologisches Institut*

Art des Gegenstandes *Slovenische Volksmusik*

Eigenes, Fremdes, schon Gedrucktes *Eigene Interpretation*

Sprache, Dialekt, Mundart *Slovenisch*

Musik, vokal oder instrumental

ein- oder mehrstimmig

Stimmgattung oder Instrumente *Baryton*

Geräusche, Schreien etc.

Art der Membran *Gelbhorn* des Trichters *Metall*

Name des Phonographisten *Dr. Josip Široki* Beruf *Musikführer*

**Transkription oder Uebersetzung**

(Des Transkriptors Name, Beruf, Muttersprache)

Figure 1: Protokollblatt to record no. 2,303 from the Viennese Audiovisual Research Archive (ÖAW/PhA). Vienna 1913.

Here one should not overlook an advantage of Široki's recording work in the studio – that is, the good quality of his recordings.

Regarding the characters of the songs, Široki established the following classification (perhaps following the model of Franjo Kuhač):

Patriotic songs (especially hymns, both official and unofficial, from Bulgaria, Montenegro, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia, etc.): 10<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The available recording time was limited to between 1.2 and 2 minutes per disc.

<sup>5</sup> = number of recorded songs.

Love songs<sup>6</sup> from Croatia: 8  
 Love songs from Srem (Karlovci): 3  
 Love songs from Bosnia: 2  
 Love songs with a general South Slavic melody: 4  
 Other love songs: 23  
 Songs of rakes (Cro. *bečarske pjesme*): 13  
 Lyrical songs: 7  
 Humorous songs: 4  
 Drinking songs: 6  
 Slovenian songs from Carniola:<sup>7</sup> 6  
 Songs from the Croatian and Austrian coastal region, the Kvarner islands, and Dalmatia: 16  
 Songs from Virje: 10  
 Dance songs: 4  
 Wedding songs: 3  
 Easter songs (accompanying the *kolo* dance): 2  
 15 other songs for which the category in the field *re* is missing

#### ANALYSIS OF ŠIROKI'S COLLECTION OF SONGS

The pieces that Široki recorded cover almost the entire South Slavic part of Europe. In addition, there are some songs from Poland. Some of his contemporaries were even convinced that he would continue the previous achievements of Franjo Kuhač [Vlašićak 1923: 219]. Indeed, Široki shows some similarities with his predecessor Kuhač. This can be seen from Široki's last major scholarly work that was published by the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation in Paris in the 2nd volume of *Folklore musical* in 1939. There he described the musical folklore in Yugoslavia in great detail in 61 pages [Pettan 1982: 6].

However, in addition to this publication Široki never carried out any systematic research on folk songs. In any case, there still remains the question of where Široki obtained the repertoire for his recordings at the Audiovisual Research Archive. Was it his aim to record the most popular songs sung at that time all over Yugoslavia – and even in the diaspora – for example, in Vienna? That is, songs that everyone knew by heart? Most probably the numerous singing societies at that time played an important role in the popularization of songs such as those that Široki recorded.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> In Široki's collection, as in Kuhač's, the category of love songs contains the largest number of songs: 40 out of 120.

<sup>7</sup> On discs no. 2,303 and 2,304, recorded on 8 July 1913 at the Physiology Department in Vienna: Po jezeru bliz Triglava (Along the Lake Near Triglav), Jaz pa pojdem na Gorenjsko (I'm Going to Upper Carniola), ...

<sup>8</sup> In Široki's hometown of Virje one of the first singing societies, the Hrvatski pjevačko društvo 'Rusan' (Rusan Croatian Singing Society), was founded in 1884.

Another question is whether Široki sang based on music from songbooks<sup>9</sup> or whether he sang all of his songs from memory. Even though he noted the rhythm and tonality, the second possibility is more probable: that he did not use a written model for the song.

In fact, it seems that Josip Široki did not intend to record special folk music rarities, but to preserve the status quo of the most popular folk songs, which can be referred to as the hits of that time, accompanied by common classical instruments such as the violin, piano, and so on. From this point of view, his recordings are in any case valuable because they are authentic in their own way. Široki's approach differs from that of Božidar Širola and Milovan Gavazzi, who sought to record only ancient "treasures" of folk music (Cro. *starinske pjesme*) by only using original folk music instruments and only recording in the field.

As a result, Josip Široki succeeded without any doubt in providing a balanced, broad cross section of the contemporary hits from the Southern Slavonic region.

Nevertheless, almost more interesting than Široki's folk song recordings are his linguistic studies. Among his musical recordings he recorded examples of the dialect of Virje (words, imitated dialogues, stories, etc.) on 14 discs. From a comment by Široki written on a record sheet,<sup>10</sup> we know that he planned a major phonetic study of the dialect of Virje, which he intended to publish with the Academy of Sciences (*Mitteilungen der Phonogramm-Archiv-Kommission*). It has not yet been learned whether he primarily intended to make the recordings for this dialectological study and had therefore entered into a contract with the Audiovisual Research Archive for this activity and to do the recordings only on the side. He prepared quite systematically for this phonetic study, although for most of the linguistic recordings the transcriptions are missing. Unfortunately, his planned study, which was never published, has never been found. In any case, interest in language as well as in music<sup>11</sup> was inextricably connected in Široki's personality. Further details are given below.

## LINGUISTICS AND FOLK SONGS

It goes without saying that the language and culture of an ethnic group are closely linked to each other. However, it is interesting to take a look at the attitude of linguists towards folk songs.

It was Friedrich Salomon Krauss (1859–1938), an active researcher of Slavonian Jewish origin living and working in Vienna, that vehemently emphasized the complementary relationship between language and culture<sup>12</sup> [Krauss 1914: viiii]. Krauss even criticized some

<sup>9</sup> For example, the Album hrvatskih pjesama (Album of Croatian Songs) published by Ante Stöhr in Zagreb, ca. 1900.

<sup>10</sup> Protokollblatt of the Audiovisual Research Archive of the Austrian Academy of Sciences for disc no. 2,436 (29 September 1914).

<sup>11</sup> Or generally speech including all acoustic phenomena (cf. his invention of the Universaltonometer, a machine to analyze all acoustic phenomena.)

<sup>12</sup> And consequently between linguistics and ethnology/ethnography; his idea was that the study of a language is not possible without familiarization with the folklore of an ethnic group.

great linguists of that time in Vienna – for example, Vatroslav Jagić – that in his opinion were too narrow-minded in their discipline. Although most linguists did not take him seriously, several linguists shared Krauss's idea. Even before Krauss, the famous Slavist Vuk Stefanović Karadžić worked according to this view.

The awareness of the interrelation between language and folk songs was increasing at the beginning of the 19th century. This can be seen from the names of the participants in the project *Das Volkslied in Österreich* [Deutsch 2000]. This included names such as Milan Rešetar, Karol Štrekelj, and Matija Murko, who were among the most famous Slavists in the Austrian-Hungarian Empire at that time.

Milan Rešetar (1860–1942), Vatroslav Jagić's successor at the Department of Slavic Languages in Vienna and the co-founder of the Audiovisual Research Archive, showed interest in folk songs as well: He wrote a small study about South Slavic folk songs [Rešetar 1911: 201–209], he referred to folk music in his major linguistic study of the Croatian minority in Southern Italy (the *molisanski hrvati*), and, like Široki, he too recorded one folk song sung by himself. Karol Štrekelj (1859–1912), a Slavist in Graz – in addition to his participation in *Das Volkslied in Österreich* – contributed much to the collection of folk songs with his publication *Slovenske narodne pesmi* (Slovenian Folk Songs) in 1923 [Marošević 1989: 130]. Matija Murko (1861–1951) was the head of the Department of Slavic Languages at the University of Graz, but became famous through his intensive folk music research in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where he made phonograph recordings on behalf of the Academy of Sciences.

Last but not least, Franjo Fancev (1882–1943) should be mentioned, one of the most famous Croatian Slavists. There is evidence that he was in contact and even cooperated with Josip Široki. Born in the same year and in the village of Virje, like Široki, he also did his studies in Vienna. He graduated from the Department of Slavic Languages after producing a doctoral dissertation on the dialect of Virje [Fancev 1907: 305–389], in which he cited findings from Široki's phonetic study, especially transcriptions of intonation. Thus the paths of these two men from Virje, who were born in the same year, crossed again at the Department of Slavic Languages and Široki conducted studies as a Slavist as well. Fancev's study of Croatian oral (folk) literature, which also included an interest in folk songs, can be traced from the beginning of his scholarly work, and his anthology of Croatian drinking songs (283 songs, and for 12 songs he even added (musical) notes, should be mentioned as an exceptionally valuable work) [Botica 1998: 139].

Again the question arises whether Široki was influenced by the researchers mentioned above – that is, those Slavists that were connecting both disciplines. In any case, it is clear that Široki combined his knowledge of linguistics and musicology in a very intense way, and even approached his numerous interests primarily from the point of view of a linguist. Some of his notebooks contain not only various comments on the elements of spoken language, but also various transcriptions of songs often connected with an analysis of the lyrics.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Some of these notebooks are preserved in private archives in Virje and Zagreb.

## VARIOUS INFLUENCES ON JOSIP ŠIROKI'S ACTIVITIES STEMMING FROM HIS SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

One might ask oneself if and to what extent Široki was inspired in his folklore collection by other personalities and contemporaries of his environment in Croatia.

It appears that his native village of Virje hosted an especially high number of people interested in the collection of folklore material. Half of a century before Široki's birth, there was Ferdo Rusan (1810–1879), who started to collect folk songs. Because of him and his melograph, and Ferdo Lugarić (1824–1902), an important teacher and organ player in Virje, a large number of folk songs has been preserved.

Mention must again be made of Široki's colleague Franjo Fancev, discussed above, and Franjo Viktor Šignjar. All three, born in 1882, influenced one another. Šignjar, for example, was even born in the same month as Široki, just 12 days later, and showed clear parallels with Široki's interests. He dedicated himself to the collection of folklore material and drawings of landscape motifs. Even now it appears that thanks to the commitment of several inhabitants of Virje the appreciation of the collection of folklore materials and preserving musical tradition is robust.

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## JOSIP ŠIROKI, PEVEC IN ZAPISOVALEC HKRATI. ANALIZA NJEGOVIH CILJEV, METOD IN UGOTOVITEV

*Hrvaški raziskovalec in zbiralec folklornega gradiva Josip Široki je skorajda neznan, čeprav se je udeleževal v številnih znanstvenih disciplinah in prispeval številna dela, ki so dragocena za poznavanje hrvaške kulturne dediščine. Najbolje je ohranjena njegova zvočna zbirka v Phonogrammarchivu Avstrijske akademije znanosti, kjer je pred prvo svetovno vojno posnel več kot*



*120 pesmi. Čeprav ni uporabljal običajnih raziskovalnih metod – posnel je namreč svoj lastni glas in je v studiu na Dunaju sam igral na instrumente – so rezultati njegovega dela za nas dragoceni dokumenti.*

*Zdi se, da je Široki v svoji zbirki na poseben način povezal ljudsko gradivo z glasbenim in jezikoslovnim znanjem. V prispevku zato avtorica osvetljuje splošno zanimanje jezikoslovcev (slavistov) takratnega časa za ljudske pesmi.*

*Širokijevo delo je v tedanjem času edinstveno. Njegovo zbirko ljudskih pesmi bi lahko imeli za pomembno izvirno delo, ki bi ga bilo potrebno podrobneje raziskati.*

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