

## R E S U M E

### Folk Songs of East Czechoslovakia:

### Methods of Performance and Notation

by Dr. Karel Vetterl (Brno)

---

Description of folk music festival in Straznice in Moravia. 2'000 participants - very few of their songs have been collected, although 20'000 folk songs of the Czechoslovak Republic have been published and over 30'000 recorded in the State Institute for Folk Songs. The young sang just as well and in as pure a style as the old people.

Czechoslovak folk music falls into two distinct main groups each with numerous subdivisions. The dividing line runs roughly along the river March. West of the March the songs have distinct Western European characteristics. Songs East of the March have a freer construction than those of the West. One finds in them a close connection between word and tone, melisma, free modulation, short melodic phrases and motives derived from prosody - characteristics similar to those in the music culture of the Orient.

Hitherto, notation of these songs has been incomplete, and inaccurate, but two young scholars, Antonin Sychra and Theodor Hirner have recently devoted themselves to the study of these songs. Also the Moravian scholar Ulehla has made an exhaustive study of the songs in the region of Straznice.

The melody of the eastern songs soars up and down without vertical impulse; the steps from note to note are bridged; always a strong latent legato. The phrasing gets away from the accented beats, starting a fraction of a second later. (Example: Jurenko). Can also be sung in strict time. Difference in style may be accounted for by different method required for singing outdoors and indoors, or perhaps it has its origin in the connection of dance and song and the difference between the walking and springing dances of mediaeval times.

Development of folk song influenced by natural surroundings, but race a more important factor, for instance songs of Moravia and Slovakia have same characteristics in construction and style of singing. Mostly of an indefinite harmonic nature. (Ex: Ach Marmicko). Often intervals that cannot be noted in our scales. Usual to ascribe these to Gregorian influence but Hirner has proved that they go back to the melodic-harmonic basis of the original Slav music, which still survives in remote parts of Moravia and Slovakia. Gregorian chant has overlaid this harmonic-melodic system with a purely melodic one.

Western civilisation was imported into the country by foreign masters and did not touch the population as such, in spite of the fact that it began to be thrust upon them in the

12th century. Hirner derives the harmonical foundation of this original Slav music from the overtones of the shepherds' pipes, arranged in scales which happen to co-incide occasionally with the church modes, but are of a totally different origin. Nearly 50 % of the songs of Slovakia and S.E. Moravia belong to this group.

Up to the 11th century the songs of all Slav people were identical. Differentiation set in in the 12th century. The Czechs were drawn into the western sphere of culture. The rhythmical formulae of the Eastern songs. Syncopation and dotted notes are rare.

The influence of the cult dance (Ex: Letelsokol).

Eastern songs have phrases of 8, 10 and 14 bars in contrast to the international 4 + 4. 2-, 5- and 7-time are frequent.

Ulehla's recordings have proved that crotchets, quavers etc. do not fall exactly on the beat.

When singing, the singers swing their bodies with a pendulum-like motion from right to left. The melody, however, usually comes a fraction after the bodily motion. The singers can keep this up for hours, not varying the regular 2/4 movement of the body which consequently can be noted down as the basic rhythm. The actual time of the melody in 3, 5 or 7 can be noted down on this substratum as triplets, quintuplets or septets.

It can be proved by means of ancient song-books that in Moravia & Slovakia songs have continued practically unchanged for six centuries. In an instance from Choden (of a South-Slovakian community) Ulehla finds prehistoric Hellenistic influence. Moravian and Slovakian hymnals show Byzantine and Dinaric elements in their ornamentation and consequently one can conclude that the folksongs of Czechoslovak Republic are the expressions of an original Slavonic cultural group from the linguistic, melodic and musical stylistic point of view.

The festival at Straznice showed that these traditions are still alive in our day.