OUR ARCHIVES

THE BERLINER PHONOGRAMM-ARCHIV IN LENINGRAD IN 1948—1958

The Second World War led to a mass relocation of the items of cultural value. First it was Germany's preoccupation, later — the victors. Today it is not a secret for anyone that in 1944—45 significant collections of objects of art from German museums, archives, libraries, etc. showed up in the Soviet Union. In many cases the history of their relocation into the USSR was hid in the shadows. But we should also remember that the major part of these collections was later returned to the German Democratic Republic, as was, for instance Old Masters Picture Gallery of Dresden. The same happened with the part of the Berliner Phonogramm-Archiv, which was present in Leningrad from 1945 to 1958, in the Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR.

The Berliner Phonogramm-Archiv was created in 1906 by Carl Stumpf, psychologist Otto Abraham and Austrian musicologist, ethnographer and psychologist Eric Moritz von Hornbostel in the Institute of Psychology under the Berlin University. The latter headed the Photogramm-Archiv until 1933 when he was forced to emigrate to the USA after Hitler came to power. Hornbostel was one of the first creators of the so-called comparative musicology. He was first to substantiate the necessity of studying the music of nations by means of juxtaposing such characteristics as tonal system, melodies, meter, rhythmicity, instrumentality, etc. Thanks to Hornbostel an approach was consolidated in the comparative musicology, which assumes obligatory bringing in of the cultural-historical data for the purpose of interpreting musical phenomena. Hornbostel was first to use the methods and data of ethnography, psychology, acoustics and instrumentology in musicological researches. Since 1906 Hornbostel participated in many ethnographic expeditions on all continents, wherefrom he brought musical sound-records of many nations. His numerous researches (exceeding 100), first implemented on the basis of sound-record analysis of Japanese, Chinese, Arabic, African music, etc., remain exemplary until now. Hornbostel also created a complete and accurate classification system of musical instruments, which subsequently was universally adopted. Under his leadership mass sound-recordings of folklore were put into effect among the prisoners of war of the Russian Army during the years of the First World War.

The history of the appearance of the Berliner Phonogramm-Archiv in the Soviet Union is unclear. Judging by the materials of the archive of Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) of the RAS, which is the legitimate successor of the Leningrad department of the Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, the Phonogramm-Archiv happened to be in the coverage of the Red Army in the late 1944 — early 1945. It is still unclear, though, where had it been located until its reappearance in Leningrad in 1948. At any rate, it is known that 49 boxes of those goods arrived to Leningrad from Moscow, from the Moscow department of the Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences, on 02.02.1948. It is also unknown who initiated that transportation to Leningrad. In the late June — early July of 1949 a special committee under the leadership of the most prominent Soviet ethnomusicologist, professor E. V. Hippius opened and analyzed the boxes arrived. According to the committee's statement they contained 2273 wax phonoplatten, 5006 plastic phonoplatten and 7199 matrices. Besides, the committee also noted that 47 wax and 241 plasticplates were broken because of poor packing. Thus, Leningrad had 14478 articles of the Berliner Phonogramm-Archiv in its possession. In great detail and with diligence the committee took an inventory of the package of the materials, the conditions of the plates, their prior cleansing of dirt and mold. They put together a 133-page draft inventory of all the material that arrived to Leningrad (currently it is kept in the MAE) (figs. 1—2). It contains information on the collector (researcher), the region of the recording and, most importantly, the physical condition of each plate. As the statement indicates for a certain time the intact boxes were in Moscow, in the Museum of the Peoples of the USSR. The statement also indicates the German numbers which allows us to speculate that they had been...
packed in Berlin by the employees of the Phonogram-Archiv and prepared to be evacuated or they had been evacuated from Berlin. It is known that with the beginning of the bombing of German cities by the Allies of the World War II, the German authorities took large amounts of the items of cultural value to the provincial towns in order to preserve them.

Leningrad, which recently survived horrifying blockade, bombings and artillery bombardments, had no special room for the accommodation of these collections. They were temporarily settled in the Kunstkamera edifice with the intentions to move them back to Moscow in 1950, which never happened. In 1951. E. V. Hippius writes a large memorandum addressed to the director of the Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, professor S. P. Tolstov, on the state of affairs of the phonorecords in Leningrad. Having familiarized themselves with the German materials and the Phonogram-Archiv of the Institute of Russian Literature of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, he mentions an extremely complicated predicament with the preservation of the records: the lack of professional specialists, modern equipment, premises, etc. E. V. Hippius presented a whole program of solving the problem, in particular suggesting an urgent copying of the resources of the Berliner Phonogram-Archiv and keeping them at the Leningrad department of the Institute of Ethnography as well as passing of the other part of the German materials, which were at that point kept in the Moscow Conservatory. In the course of the next couple of years a series of establishments of the Academy of Sciences with the participation of the Leningrad regional committee of the CPSU argued regarding a place for keeping the records. In the course of several special sittings a particular opinion prevailed that all of the Berliner Phonogram-Archiv should be passed to the Institute of Russian Literature (The Pushkin House), which already had a phonogram archive of their own. But the Pushkin House strongly objected to accepting the recordings, stating that the admitted German material did not fit their profile, since it mostly contained recordings from Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, America and not from Russia. In 1953 a new idea arose — to pass the trophy material on to the Institute of World Literature. In 1954 the new committee of the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR for the first time brought up a question of the necessity to make a governmental decision regarding the future fate of these collections taking into consideration where it was formed. After that, in October of 1954, the Department of Science and Culture of Central Committee of the CPSU demanded detailed information regarding the fate of the collection. But the issue was still not resolved, and the materials were itemized at the Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, while physically they were kept in the phonogram archive of the Institute of Russian Literature. In 1955 a decision was made to start copying the German materials onto magnetic recording tape, and it was supposed to be carried out by the employees of the IRL, although they opposed that idea immensely. B. M. Dobrovolskii, the head of the phonogram archive of the IRL, in his notes of the 4th of April of 1956 for the first time makes a point of transferring the German materials to the German Democratic Republic, where he also notes that "there are serious thoughts to believe that there will be arguing in regards to which countries and her collections belong to". Apparently this thought emerged as a result of handing the German Democratic Republic its Dresden Gallery and Gothic Library. Further on B. M. Dobrovolskii, on the assumption of unique scientific values of the recordings, suggested intensifying the copying process.

On the 30th of June of 1958 the President of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR issues an order regarding the passing to the GDR of the items of cultural value, rescued by the Soviet Army, moved to the territory of the USSR and kept in the institutions of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. The command was accepted on the basis of the decision of the Government of the USSR of the 17th of June of 1958. Leaving all the peripets of preparing the folklore recordings for the new relocation behind (all the technical events, the preparation of containers and packaging, the packaging itself, etc.) two moments are to be dwelled on. The first one is copying. That was a complex process due to the deadline of passing of the materials to the Germans which was set for the 1st of October of 1958. That term according to the agreement of both parties involved was extended to the 1st of November of 1958. But the copying process in reality was finished only by the end of November. The second condition was even more complex. It had to do with the fate of the collection of phonorecords (167 platen) of the Russian culture figures, which belonged to the first Russian philophonist Yulii Blok. Therefore M. Dobrovolskii raised a question of leaving in Leningrad the originals of the recordings that were in the USSR until 1928 and of passing the magnetic recording tape copies to the German Democratic Republic. On the 10th of October of 1958 the decision was made and the originals, as the unique sound documents of Russian culture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, remained in the USSR.

According to the statement of the 19th of December of 1958 the expert of the Ministry of Culture of the German Democratic Republic Max Wasselanszki accepted 14 430 items of the preserved materials of the Berliner Phonogram-Archiv from the Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Science of the USSR in order to return them to Berlin (Figs. 3—4). On the 11th of December of 1958 the goods were sent to the German Democratic Republic from the Leningrad-Vitebsk station. The copies of the materials remained in Leningrad, though. And that was the end of the Leningrad odyssey of the German phonorecordings.
Illustrations


Figs. 3—4. The cover of the archival file and the list-attachment to the Act of Berliner Phonogramm-Archiv collection transfer to the representative of GDR Minister of culture dated by November 19, 1958. "Materials devoted to Berliner Phonogramm-Archiv", Archives of MAE RAS, K-IV, register 15, file 6, cover and fol. 82.

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Notes to Contributors

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Submissions

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