

Macedonian Folk Music - Introduction

For many years I have often been asked for sources of Macedonian folk music and have passed around photocopies of my handwritten transcriptions of pieces. Sometimes years later I would come across those transcriptions but obviously about a dozen photocopies later. This book is an attempt to put between two covers the small fraction of Macedonian music that I know. It is not an attempt at an academic or exhaustive collection of material, but rather a collection of the melodies that I have learnt from a variety of sources. Because this music is not easily available to many people, we are here providing another source of that material.

I learnt most of this music from various people during the eight months that I spent in Macedonia. In particular I am indebted to my gaida (Macedonian bagpipe) teacher Lazo Nikolovski with whom I studied in the winter of 1977-1978 for three months. I also learnt various pieces from Mile Kolarov, Mendo Milevski, Slavco Angelovski, Milan Trajanov and indirectly from Pece Atanasovski (all musicians in Macedonia). Of course there are other musicians I am indebted to for help, encouragement and material such as Chris Gunstone, Ken Ward and Destan Destanovski.

It is important at this point to remark that the transcription of each piece of music is only one version. This music is the product of an aural tradition. Because of this, pieces mutate, and this contributes to the richness of the repertoire. I have heard in some cases eight different versions of the same piece of music. I have not attempted to include the intricate and varied ornamentation which is used and is an important feature of the music. This varies a great deal from player to player and depends on the instrument used. In my attempt to learn Macedonian music I found it was necessary to go and live in Macedonia and learn directly from another musician to understand what was happening when the fingers were moving at a million miles an hour. Therefore I am the most recent link in that "aural tradition" and will have created mutations in some of these pieces.

Most of the music in this book was collected in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Some of the pieces are played all over Macedonia and therefore can also be heard in Northern Greece and Western Bulgaria. Other pieces are specific to certain villages in Macedonia. Much of the material comes from Skopje, Kicevo and Bitola, as the musicians who taught me were from those towns.

The music included here is only one part of an overall picture. Most of this music is dance music and many of the pieces are also songs. The Dance, the Music and the Songs are part of a culture that is very much alive. I hope the people using this collection, if not familiar with Macedonia, are curious enough to try and find out more. For those of you like ourselves living in Australia, you need to be aware that there are very many Macedonians now living here. With them has travelled a rich cultural tradition. In Sydney, Melbourne, Wollongong, Perth and Newcastle (to name a few) there are Macedonian musicians, bands, dance groups and individuals carrying on that tradition. It may be a changing tradition, but so it is in Macedonia where people are moving from villages to cities. Unfortunately this also means that some of the traditional instruments such as gaida (bagpipe), kaval (end-blown flute) and tambura (long-necked lute) are being replaced by clarinet, accordion and electric guitar and that some of the rich variety of dances and music is being lost. This collection of music is one small way to express my appreciation, and encourage the maintenance and development of this rich tradition.

In conclusion I would like to dedicate this collection to three people:

Lazo Nikolovski - who taught me how to play the gaida;
- whose record collection first put me in touch with that wonderful
instrument and the whole world that it eventually unfolded;
and Mile Kolarov - one of the "great" Macedonian musicians whose kaval melodies
live on.

I would like to thank Philip Griffin who encouraged me to put this collection together and who has published this present edition. Thanks also to Petre and Liljana Gjorgjievski for their help.

Linsey Pollak
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