

# **Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm**

**An inquiry into the metrical roots of Béla Bartók's Six Dances in Vasil Stoin's first compendium of Bulgarian folk melodies.**



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"Let it suffice to say that peasant music of this kind actually is nothing but the outcome of changes wrought by a natural force whose operation is unconscious in men who are not influenced by urban culture. The melodies are therefore the embodiment of an artistic perfection of the highest order..."

-*Béla Bartók*

## **Introduction**

This thesis revolves around two men: Béla Bartók and Vasil Stoin. Stoin is my Bulgarian great-grandfather, who lived from 1880-1938. He was a violinist and a school teacher, but gradually his life's work became the collection and systematization of Bulgarian folk melodies. He spent years travelling through Bulgaria in search of those melodies, riding on his donkey from one village to the next.<sup>1</sup>

Over the course of about twelve years Stoin and his colleagues collected some 24,000 folk melodies from all across the country, each one being notated and worked out with pencil on paper, because industrial inventions like phonographs or typewriters were not yet available in Bulgaria at the time. Stoin's work appeared in eight volumes, the first being published in 1928, the last posthumously in 1975. Even though the effort of collecting all those melodies was enormous, it was their indexation that really made Stoin's collections stand out, both in Bulgaria and abroad.

My assumption is that Bartók familiarized himself with Bulgarian music mostly through the compendiums my great-grandfather made. This is not articulated literally in the available literature, but I believe it to be quite easily extractable from it. It is one of the points I would like to emphasize in this thesis. Bartók collected many folk melodies himself, though just seven in Bulgaria. He did seem to have a particular fascination for Bulgarian music because of its irregular metres, not in the last place because it made him reconsider some of the choices he had made in the past while collecting folk music in Romania.<sup>2</sup>

The connection between Stoin and Bartók is what interests me most, and the way one might have influenced the other. The direct personal connection between them was not strong, though for a while Bartók corresponded regularly with Stoin's assistant Raina Katsarova.

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1 This information is oral family history. Also, the donkey was not his only means of travel, but occasionally it happened that he could not get from one village to the next any other way.

2 Béla Bartók, "The So-Called Bulgarian Rhythm," in *Béla Bartók Essays*, ed. Benjamin Suchoff (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), 44-45.

Apart from that some of Bartók's compositions refer to Bulgaria or Bulgarian rhythm. Through those references I want to discover what it was that inspired Bartók to use Stoin's books, and whether Bulgarian musical features are traceable in Bartók's compositions. As a case study Bartók's Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm will be analysed. These dances are part of the *Mikrokosmos* series of piano music. The whole series consists of six volumes, containing a total of 153 piano works composed between 1926 and 1939. Out of these 153, the Six Dances are the last.

One term needs to be defined from the outset. What Bartók means when discussing Bulgarian rhythm is strictly speaking not dealing with rhythm but with metre. The Bulgarian element central in this study is the irregular number of counts in a bar (e.g. 5/16) or the irregular division of counts in a possibly regular metre (9/16 divided into 2+2+2+3). Bartók's Bulgarian rhythm is interchangeable with irregular metre in this study.

## Method and Questions

Vasil Stoin is rather poorly represented in English literature. Most writings about him are outdated or written in Bulgarian, and even in his home country his name is gradually ceasing to ring a bell. Neither is his name well known among musicologists in Western countries.

So apart from having the pleasure of recollecting and retelling Stoin's story, I consider it necessary to provide some of the personal, cultural and professional context that motivated his labour. The first chapters will be dedicated to that end, including Bartók's passion for ethnomusicology, which according to some was even more dear to him than composition. Furthermore Bulgarian Rhythm will be treated, and the special appeal it made to Bartók.

Chapter two will also contain a section about Stoin's compendiums of Bulgarian folk melodies, their content and most importantly their indexes, after which an analysis will follow of Bartók's Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm, guided by the structures which Stoin used in his collections.

In order to properly compare the Six Dances to Stoin's collections, their musical characteristics will be dissected in the same way Stoin dissected folk melodies. It is my ambition to discover links between Bartók's compositions and Stoin's collected works, ideally pointing towards a direct relationship between the two.

Considering the clarity of this study, only the first of Stoin's compendiums, *Narodni Pesni ot Timok do Vita*, shall be used in the comparison. Because each of Stoin's collections has a high information density, this single compendium will be abundant.

The questions guiding my research are:

1. *What is the historical and professional context Bartók and Stoin shared?*
2. *In what way are the Stoin compendiums structured, and how can one work with them?*
3. *How do the metrical structures in Bartók's Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm compare to the metrical index in Stoin's collection of Bulgarian folk music?*
4. *In his compositions, how close does Bartók stay to the structures he found in Stoin's indexes?*

## 1. Historical Background

One of the longest lasting military conflicts in European history raged between the Ottoman and Russian Empires, spanning between the 16th and 20th century. Battles for territory and power were ripping up nations and uprooting cultures, especially the ones that were geographically bound to the vicinity of the two giants. Among them was Bulgaria, which lay at the door of Constantinople: the heart of the Ottoman Empire.

The Ottomans conquered the Second Bulgarian Kingdom in 1396 AD, keeping it under command for nearly five centuries, until 1878. Bulgaria at the time of invasion was a state which identified with Eastern Orthodox Catholicism rather than topographical boundaries or language.<sup>3</sup> At first sight that did not seem to matter, because only very rarely did the Ottomans require Bulgarians to convert to Islam. The conquest did lead to Bulgaria's separation from other Eastern Orthodox countries though, and while the Ottomans were quite liberal in allowing other religious beliefs to exist within their Empire, the church as a ruling body was dismantled. According to R.J. Crampton, an English historiographer who wrote about Bulgaria, that dismantlement had such far-reaching consequences that it meant "the loss of links with the past."<sup>4</sup>

Old Bulgarian borders vanished and made way for a new Ottoman division of lands, putting local culture and national identity in danger of disappearing. This led to a flow of "foreigners" into Bulgarian cities, who used their own language and customs.<sup>5</sup> Trade and commercial activities tended to be discussed in Turkish or Greek, leading to a decrease of Bulgarian speakers. As a result, the Bulgarian language was primarily preserved in the more remote villages and rural monasteries. So unsurprisingly it was in those rural areas and secluded communities that Bulgarian identity was sought after the liberation.<sup>6</sup>

As the wind of revolution blew across Europe throughout the 19th century, Bulgarian uprising against the oppressor started to increase and the spirit of nationalism grew stronger. This development of national consciousness and longing for independence was called *vŭzrazhdane*, or national revival.<sup>7</sup>

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3 R.J. Crampton, *Bulgaria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 18.

4 Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 18-21.

5 Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 20-21.

6 Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 20-21.

7 Rumén Daskalov, *The making of a nation in the Balkans: Historiography of the Bulgarian revival* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004), 27-29.

In his *The Making of a Nation in the Balkans: Historiography of the Bulgarian Revival*, author Rumén Daskalov connects the Bulgarian revival to similar uprisings of nationalism across Europe. The countries that exemplified successful national liberation best were Greece and Serbia, for they were neighbouring countries which had managed to gain their independence from the Ottoman Empire earlier in the century, respectively in 1829 and 1835. These examples of successful revolt sparked the flame of resistance in Bulgaria as well. According to Daskalov this effect was enhanced by the national unification movements in Italy and Germany, and in a wider sense by the ideas of the French Revolution and the revolutions of 1848.<sup>8</sup> Ideologically there were traces of Italian doctrine, propagating the ideas of Giuseppe Mazzini, spearhead of the Italian revolutions.<sup>9</sup>

The increasing fighting spirit among Bulgarians did not go unnoticed by the Russians. Connected by Eastern Orthodoxy, the Russians and Bulgarians were kin. Besides that the Russians had motives of expansion at the cost of Ottoman territory.

In 1877 the Eastern Orthodox coalition was formed, led by the Russians, starting yet another Russo-Turkish war. The allied forces consisted of Bulgarians, Romanians, Serbians and Montenegrins, who all went to battle to gain independence for their countries. One year later the Ottomans had lost the war, a peace treaty was signed between the Russian and Ottoman empires and the allies retrieved their independence.

Fuelled by the newly gained autonomy, Bulgarians longed for a national identity. Many teachers, scholars and otherwise educated people took on the task of formulating that identity in order to rekindle pride in Bulgaria's lost heritage.<sup>10</sup>

Most Bulgarians still lived in rural areas, living simple lives of peasants and shepherds.<sup>11</sup> But since the Ottomans did not reach very deep into the Bulgarian mountains and forests, those were the places where Bulgarian culture had been preserved best, so when scholars and educators started recollecting and redefining their national identity they searched for it on the countryside, in folklore.

Vasil Stoin was one of those educators, who after finishing his career as a school teacher set out to collect and systematize folk songs in order to document Bulgaria's musical heritage. Donna Buchanan, Professor of Musicology specialized in Bulgarian ethnomusicology, put it as follows:

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8 Daskalov, *Bulgarian Revival*, 13.

9 Daskalov, *Bulgarian Revival*, 13.

10 Barbara Krader, "Vasil Stoin, Bulgarian Folk Song Collector," *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council Kingston* 21 (1980), 27.

11 Donna A. Buchanan, "Bartók's Bulgaria: Folk Music Collecting and Balkan Social History," *International Journal of Musicology* (2000), 72.

"The very concept of such song compendiums, in Bulgaria as elsewhere in Europe, was implicitly political; their production was tied intrinsically to the formation of national consciousness and the emergence of the nation-state."<sup>12</sup>

Folk song collection was one of the tools to reshape Bulgaria's identity, and it mainly did so in two ways. First, traditions and customs could be compared through the analysis of song texts. This was the first attempt of cultural reconstruction, dating back to the 1830's. For the first time oral traditions were put to paper, serving a comparative role between regions as well as providing an overview of customs and beliefs.<sup>13</sup>

Second, musical properties could link regional cultures, and while being more abstract they were also more resistant to changes of borders and language. On a more exclusively musical level, since societies were urbanizing and musical culture was led by professionally trained composers and musicians, the analysis of what peasant music had evolved to fascinated ethnomusicologists. This was the case in Hungary where Bartók, who did not value "high-brow" music over peasant music, started doing his research.

Peasant music is described by him as: "The term peasant music, broadly speaking, connotes all the melodies which endure within the peasant class of any nation, in a more or less wide area and for a more or less long period, and which constitute a spontaneous expression of the musical feeling of that class."<sup>14</sup>

In Bulgaria, songs were so interwoven with everyday life that they showed a detailed picture of what it entailed to be a peasant. Only a small amount of songs were sung in a context of leisure, most of them touching on more personal, moral and religious themes. And since peasant life was lived largely in the fields or hills or around the house, many songs served to make the pass of time more comfortable.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, apart from making a day of work more pleasant, songs were the perfect medium to pass on traditions and customs.<sup>16</sup>

Their motivation might have been similar, but Stoin's circumstances in Bulgaria were quite the opposite of Bartók's in Hungary. Hungary flourished at the side of Austria, bringing wealth and industry to its communities, both urban and rural. Bartók seems to have felt less of an urge to focus

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12 Buchanan, "Bartók's Bulgaria," 72-73.

13 Barbara Krader, "Bulgarian folk music research." *Ethnomusicology* (1969), 249.

14 Bartók, *Essays*, 6.

15 Boris Kremenliev, "Some social aspects of Bulgarian folksongs," *The Journal of American Folklore* 69.273 (1956), 311.

16 Kremenliev, "Some social aspects," 311.

exclusively on his home country, for his field of work was oriented much more internationally, in search of common denominators of Slavic music.

The biggest difference between Stoin and Bartók was the availability of electronic recording devices. Bartók had access to proper recording machines from very early on, enabling him to travel fast, record, and analyse his findings later in his office. Recording was of exceptional importance for Bartók, so much so that in his opinion a satisfactory result could not be gained from a scientific viewpoint when a folk song collector lacked the most essential of instruments: the phonograph.<sup>17</sup>

As Hungary was many steps ahead of Bulgaria in this development, Bartók was working in a different stage of folk music collecting than Stoin. Again borrowing professor Buchanan's words: "Bartók's folk music analysis illustrated that the musical boundaries between the Balkans' countries were not synonymous with the political borders of the region's nation-states. Consequently, no one nation could claim a 'pure' folk music style, although certainly, one incentive for Bartók's collecting activities was to locate just such a phenomenon."<sup>18</sup> He did not stop at locating the phenomenon, he used it in his compositions as well. So much so that there are some instances of Romanian variations on Hungarian songs performed in Bulgarian rhythm.<sup>19</sup>

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17 Bartók, *Essays*, 10.

18 Buchanan, "Bartók's Bulgaria," 56.

19 Raina Katsarova-Kukudova and Donna A. Buchanan, "Recollections of Béla Bartók," *International Journal of Musicology* (2000), 94.

## 2.Vasil Stoin

### 2.1 Life

In his biography on Stoin, Todor Todorov distinguished three phases after Stoin's childhood. The first one, from 1897-1910, concerns his early years as a teacher and his time studying in Brussels. During the second, from 1910-1922, he focussed on his teaching in multiple towns and cities throughout Bulgaria. Continuity of this period was disrupted multiple times by war; two Balkan wars between 1912-1913 and World War I.

In the third phase, from 1923-1938, Stoin focussed mainly on what was to become his life's work, folk song collection, until his death in 1938. According to Todorov, what connects these three phases are characteristic traits of Stoin's personality: his high regard of music, social compassion and relentlessly earnest attitude towards his work.<sup>20</sup>

Stoin was born as the fourth out of five children in the small town of Samokov in the west of Bulgaria on December 18th, 1880. His father, local shopkeeper and pharmacist Stojan Georgiev, died in 1884, leaving the children to be raised by their mother and grandmother. Stoin's musicality was recognized from an early age on, but it was not until puberty that he received his first instrument, a violin. Despite his musical talent Stoin studied theology in Samokov, an issue pressed by his family because of the high status of the program. He graduated with honours and decided to become a school teacher in his home region. Ever since he attained an instrument he received music lessons from multiple local violin teachers at the Ivan Klinkov school of music, where he was acquainted with music theory as well.<sup>21</sup>

In 1897, after finishing his theology program with honours, Stoin started his first job as a teacher in the nearby village of Dolni Okol, and from 1902 until 1907 he taught in the village of Dolna Banja, where he ended up building a summer house for his family. That house is being used by Stoin's descendants up to this day.<sup>22</sup>

Throughout his career Stoin was very active in the community, organizing field trips for children and helping railroad workers gain better working conditions. During a protest for the rights of these railroad workers in which Stoin was involved, the government intervened and decided to fire every one of the demonstrators, including Stoin.<sup>23</sup> Being put out of work, he started to re-evaluate his situation, leading him to the conclusion that he wanted to develop his musical talents. At the time in

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20 Todorov, *Vasil Stoin*, 30.

21 Todorov, *Vasil Stoin*, 13-16.

22 Family history. My Bulgarian brothers and father still visit the summer house regularly.

23 Todorov, *Vasil Stoin*, 17.

Bulgaria there were no proper schools for professional musical education, so he decided to move to Brussels in order to study violin at the Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles -of which unfortunately no records can be found- with further specializations in harmony and counterpoint. Funding for his trip came from his personal savings and a loan from his brother, but they turned out to be insufficient, forcing Stoin to finish his last two years in one. Nevertheless he graduated with honours and moved back to Bulgaria despite an offer to work for the musical department in the Belgian army.<sup>24</sup>

The second phase Todorov distinguishes started in September 1910, when Stoin continued his teaching career at a boys school in Sofia. Between 1911 and 1913 he worked in Veliko Tarnovo in the central north of Bulgaria, after which he went to Plovdiv in the south, teaching there until 1918. Not much is known about Stoin in that period. Until 1913 the two Balkan Wars were fought and at the start of WWI Bulgarians were mobilized to fight alongside the Germans. According to Todorov Stoin had most likely been an interpreter of French during those years, which he spoke well due to his time in Belgium, but no records or writings of this period survived.<sup>25</sup>

As the war came to an end in 1918 Stoin was sent back to Plovdiv, where he did not remain much longer, because of a job offer in his home town Samokov. His last five years as a full-time teacher he lived in Samokov and Sofia. Life in an urban environment did not have his preference, but his dedication to folk song research gradually intensified, necessitating his presence in the capital.<sup>26</sup>

## 2.2 Folk Song Collection

Being in his forties, Stoin came to be unsatisfied with his job as a teacher. In 1924 he was given the opportunity to work for the newly established National Academy of Music, where he became a substitute teacher in music theory, a position that he held for three years, until he was appointed as professor at that same institute. He was given the freedom to choose his research topic, this of course being folk music collection. Around the same time the Ethnographic Museum in Sofia opened a folk music department, asking Stoin to be its director. The combination of these two positions enabled him to create a team around himself to set out on the task of documenting Bulgaria's musical tradition.<sup>27</sup> Among the main researchers were Pavel Stefanov, Ivan Kamburov, Iosif Cheshmendzhiev and perhaps most importantly Raina Katsarova, who became Stoin's assistant, and would succeed him as director after his death.<sup>28</sup>

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24 Todorov, *Vasil Stoin*, 14-15.

25 Todorov, *Vasil Stoin*, 18.

26 Todorov, *Vasil Stoin*, 20.

27 Todorov, *Vasil Stoin*, 21.

28 Barbara Krader, "Bulgarian folk music research," 250.

Stoin had engaged in folk music notation since his youth, most likely inspired by one of his violin teachers Ivan Klinkov, who himself occasionally collected folk melodies. Among the few personal documents bequeathed by Stoin are old songbooks in which he made attempts to notate melodies. Some 2,000 songs were notated before 1926. Numerous as they may be, they have no value, because they contain no information about the time, place and singers.<sup>29</sup>

According to Todorov it is likely that Stoin's main interest in understanding the structure of Bulgarian folk melodies was in its metres, their nature being almost completely unknown at the time.<sup>30</sup> No mention was made of the existence of asymmetrical metres until 1886, when a man called Anastas Stojanov made notations of folk songs in 5/8 and 7/8. Three years later the first volume of the *Sbornik za Narodni Umotvoreniia* (Collection of Folklore and Ethnography) appeared, the publication of which still continues. In it, editor Ivan Shishmanov wrote an article on the ethnographic aims and necessities of Bulgarian researchers.<sup>31</sup> During the consecutive decades more different metres were successfully recognized, but it was not until 1913 that a theory concerning their nature was created by Dobri Christov (1875-1941), a Bulgarian composer and musicologist. The 1913 study, called *The Rhythmic Bases of our Folk Music*, and a book which appeared in 1928 called *The Technical Structure of Bulgarian Folk Music*, formed the basis for all later Bulgarian folk music research.<sup>32</sup>

Although Stoin's career as a folk song collector was relatively limited in length, fifteen years, his impact on Bulgarian folk song preservation was enormous. The joint work of Stoin and his colleagues resulted in some 24,000 melodies, 12,000 of which are attributed to Stoin's personal effort. All songs were notated and accompanied by their full text. Out of all these melodies only 200 were instrumental, presumably an effect of selectiveness on the collectors' part.<sup>33</sup>

The 12,000 songs that Stoin collected ended up being published in eight large volumes, of which he personally edited four. Out of the remaining four he had (partially) prepared two for publishing, and the last volume was compiled by his daughter Elena Stoin, who was an ethnomusicologist concerned with folk song in her own right.

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29 Todorov, *Vasil Stoin*, 30.

30 Todorov, *Vasil Stoin*, 31.

31 Krader, "Bulgarian Folk Research," 249.

32 Krader, "Bulgarian Folk Research," 250.

33 Krader, "Vasil Stoin," 27.

According to ethnomusicologist Barbara Krader: "These collections still remain the most important fund of Bulgarian folk songs. They are the basis for all research in folk music, and Bulgarian composers use them as well."<sup>34</sup>

Krader distinguishes four steps in the collection process. The first step consisted of exploratory surveys to decide what regions should be visited and in which order. The second step was the actual collection of the songs. The third, and presumably most time-consuming part, was the classification of all the songs, and the fourth step was publication.<sup>35</sup> Krader also notes that regardless of the meticulous effort with which the collections were put together, it are the indexes resulting from classifying that are most impressive in Stoin's work.<sup>36</sup>

As mentioned before Stoin and his co-workers had to deal with the absence of recording devices, even though the fact that these were not available seems to have been a bigger obstacle for Bartók than the Bulgarians, who had no point of reference as to what they were missing.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, every melody had to be notated without recording it, obviously requiring the observer to be highly musical. But it does leave a feeling of uncertainty, since validation is impossible. There can only be trust in the professional approach of those involved.

Stoin's personal style of collecting songs remains somewhat veiled, because he preferred to work by himself, so much so that none of his colleagues ever went collecting with him.<sup>38</sup> As a consequence, no more than the general outline of the collection process of the team is known today.

At first the songs were sung at least twice, for the collector to be able to notate all the necessary material and check it afterwards. When this was done the song was sung back, or in Stoin's case whistled back, to the singer in order for him or her to verify its truthful notation.<sup>39</sup>

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34 Krader, "Bulgarian Folk Research," 250.

35 Krader, "Vasil Stoin," 28.

36 Krader, "Vasil Stoin," 28.

37 Katsarova-Kukudova, "Recollections," 97.

38 Krader, "Vasil Stoin," 32.

39 Ivo Iliev, *Vasil Stoin en Bulgaarse Volksmuziek* (Unpublished BA thesis. University of Amsterdam, 2014), 14.

### 2.3 Appeal to Foreign Ethnomusicologists

Even though Stoin did not meet many foreign colleagues, perhaps due to his reserved nature,<sup>40</sup> his work had not gone unnoticed in other parts of Europe. Different volumes of his work were owned and used by Béla Bartók, Erich Moritz von Hornbostel and Ukrainian ethnographer Klyment Kvitka.<sup>41</sup>

Stoin did not meet any of them in person, even though occasionally plans were made to come together. For example in the case of Bartók, plans were made for a visit but they never actually happened. Regardless of Bartók's interest in Bulgarian folk music, the Bulgarian Ministry of Education refrained from inviting him, so the meeting never took place.<sup>42</sup>

Three combined elements form the main reason that Stoin's collections were so attractive to others: the sheer number of collected songs, the extensive categorization that made that vast expanse of songs manageable and the authenticity of the songs' cultural value. Klyment Kvitka, an ethnomusicologist who had done extensive fieldwork in the Ukraine put it as follows:

"This quantity is so great and the archaic features -to a considerable degree even very archaic- are so clear in many of the melodies published, that the Bulgarian material could be made the basis of a systematic work for the elucidation of the historical development of the poetic and musical song forms common to all Slavs or used by more than one Slavic people."<sup>43</sup>

Stoin's collections exemplified proper categorization and display of folk melodies, its qualities transcending the handicap of notating without the use of a recording device. The notion of a handicap came rather from outside than from within. It was especially Bartók, who pursued the acquisition of electronic recording devices for his Bulgarian colleagues. Bartók corresponded with Raina Katsarova regularly, and in a memoir she recollects the effort that Bartók made to equip the Bulgarian collectors with some kind of recording device. He connected them to institutes which had helped him acquire such machines many years earlier and sent them catalogues. He also sent them a copy of the *Southern Folklore Quarterly* (1937) so that they could read John Lomax's article called *Work in the Field with Recording Machines*.<sup>44</sup> Sadly the year that they finally got hold of a recording device, Stoin died of a heart attack.

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40 Krader, "Vasil Stoin," 32.

41 Krader, "Vasil Stoin," 37.

42 Katsarova-Kukudova, "Recollections," 94.

43 Krader, "Vasil Stoin," 37.

44 Katsarova-Kukudova, "Recollections," 97.

## 2.4 Bartók and Stoin

In spite of the fact they never met, Bartók and Stoin did correspond. Most of the references found in writings about their correspondence indicate that it was especially Stoin's assistant Raina Katsarova who maintained the contact.

In one instance in her memoirs on Bartók she writes: "In connection with Bartók's work on the Bulgarian material, a correspondence began between him, Stoin and myself."<sup>45</sup>

No such triangular correspondence can be found anywhere though; letters written by Stoin to Bartók are still to be found if they exist at all. It seems more likely that Katsarova took care of the collective professional correspondence as Stoin's assistant. All but one of the letters written by Bartók to the Bulgarian collectors were destroyed during a WWII bombing, which hit Katsarova's house, burning hundreds of letters of both personal and professional nature.<sup>46</sup> That remaining letter dates from February 27th, 1935. It starts with Bartók's apologies for not being able to make his concert trip to Bulgaria because of a last minute change of travel conditions by the Antonov Concert Office. Further on in the letter Bartók writes:

It would have interested me so much to make your acquaintance, to see how you work in the field of folk music, and perhaps go to some village to hear the peasants sing those extraordinary rhythms of theirs. But, alas, God—or rather Antonov—decreed otherwise. I have already begun to study the 1st volume of the large edition. There are a number of questions I shall want to ask you, but I can only do that in a few months when I have done more work on the subject.<sup>47</sup>

Even though this single remaining letter is short and lacking any technical depth, it shows how Bartók positions himself towards the Bulgarian collectors: humble and respectful, in order to get a chance to satisfy his curiosity towards Bulgarian rhythm.

In his essay *Folk Song Research and Nationalism*, Bartók's writes about his drive to create an overview of Slavic folk music that was as complete as possible.

Even though he was a Hungarian patriot, he realized that no such thing as pure folklore existed, and that even music found in the most remote villages shared links with other villages, both close by and far away.<sup>48</sup> He might have had multiple reasons to emerge himself in Bulgarian folk music, the first of which could even have been the same as Stoin's reason to start his research in northern

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45 Katsarova-Kukudova, "Recollections," 95.

46 Katsarova-Kukudova, "Recollections," 97.

47 János Demény, *Béla Bartók-Letters* (Budapest: Corvina Press, 1971), 237-238.

48 Bartók, *Essays*, 25.

Bulgaria: either the local tradition was particularly interesting or it was dying out most rapidly there.<sup>49</sup> And since Bartók believed in the overlap of traditions, it became, to a certain extent, a matter of national importance for him as well. Also of significance was the Bulgarian rhythm, which fascinated Bartók and drove him to study Bulgarian folklore intensively, since it was so different from comparable ethnomusicological findings until then. In his essay about Bulgarian rhythm he writes:

When I first saw these unfamiliar rhythms, in which such fine differences are decisive, I could hardly imagine that they really existed. But then I seemed to remember that in my own collection of Rumanian material I had come across similar phenomena, but at the time had not dared -if I might put it that way- to take note of them. Among my old phonograph notations there were dance melodies which, with a perfectly clear conscience, I had noted down in 4/4, in steady quarter-notes (or perhaps not with a perfectly clear conscience, because I had written on my notations: "the ends of the bars drawn out in gipsy fashion". Elsewhere, on a melody notated in 4/8, I had put down a note that reads: "transition from 4/8 to 3/4", because the third and fourth eighth-notes were prolonged).<sup>50</sup>

Since Bartók never visited Bulgaria his acquaintance with Bulgarian folk songs had to come through Stoin's collections. As Bartók wrote in his letter he meticulously studied "the 1st large volume", planning to study it for a few more months before he could formulate his questions. That first large volume was *Narodni Pesni ot Timok do Vita* (folk songs from the Timok river to the Vit river), published in 1928. It contains 4076 melodies from villages and towns in Bulgaria's north-west.

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49 Buchanan, "Bartók's Bulgaria," 72.

50 Bartók, *Essays*, 44-45.

## 2.5 Compendiums

In 1928 Stoin published his first collection: *Narodni Pesni ot Timok do Vita*. As mentioned above the choice to start in this specific region was made after exploratory research had pointed out that the tradition was dying out most rapidly in that area.<sup>51</sup>

If it had not been for the expansive indexes accompanying each of Stoin's collections, their worth and practical use would have been much less. It is one thing to have collected thousands of songs, but Stoin and his colleagues realized that without any structure there would be no way to work with that amount of melodies. The apparent importance that he attributed to the categories he came up with is staggering, they require the collector to go through thousands of songs multiple times.

In the following section the first compendium will be examined. An overview shall be given of the collection and the general way it is built up. First, the structure of the body of the compendium (i.e. the melodies) shall be illustrated, including the ways that it relates to the indexes. Furthermore the indexes will be reviewed including a short exploration of the possibilities they provide a researcher with when using the compendium.

Every melody is listed and numbered according to its function. Even though the compendiums are large, most songs fit on a single line, counting between one and approximately fifteen bars. In some cases there are no bars, and there are songs without count divisions or time signature as well.

All songs have an indication of tempo and all of the texts are provided underneath each song. Also, every song is notated in a G-clef, without key signature, because the keys we distinguish are part of the Western classical tradition, and the indication of key signature is related to our notational system.

To clarify, if no notational system exists in which symbols (notes) are linked to an exact tone, the pitch becomes less important. A major scale would just be major, regardless of starting it on what we call a C or an F-sharp. Major would only be the mode. These modes, albeit different modes than the modes found in Western classical music, form the basis of Stoin's melodic index. They will be given more attention in section 2.5.2.

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51 Krader, "Vasil Stoin," 28.

### 2.5.1 Structure

In the body of the book the songs appear in order of their function. Six groups of functions are provided, each having between one and seventeen sub-divisions. These groups of functions are:

1. Eastern Orthodox religious holidays (with seventeen sub-divisions of the different holidays that were encountered in the region).
2. Songs for secular rituals (e.g. weddings or songs again the coming of rain).
3. Work songs (for harvesting, shepherding, cleaning etc.)
4. Songs for parties (and evening get-togethers).
5. Songs sung at the table.
6. Dance songs and tunes.

In the table of contents these groups and sub-divisions are all shown with their accompanying songs. For example, the first group contains Christmas songs which are numbered 1-160. Heroic songs, headed under the fourth group, bear the numbers 2928-3088, etc.

Image 1 in the appendix shows an example of the way songs are listed. These are examples of religious songs.

One of the traditions in Eastern Orthodoxy is to celebrate name days, which are all accounted to a certain saint. Anyone whose name is derived from that saint gives a party on that day. This tradition is still widely spread among Bulgarians. Everybody participates and people will go to great creative lengths to make sure every name fits into a name day.

The top three songs, numbered 189-191 are part of a total of five songs with the title *Svinska Glava Vasilova*, literally translated as "pork head Vasilova", referring to the traditional dish of pork that was served on that day. Out of these five songs I will only analyse the three visible on the image because they will suffice in clarifying the examples.

All songs were found in different towns and villages. They are sung on *Vasilov Den* or Vasil day, celebrated on January 1st and honouring Saint Basil of Caesarea. These songs are relatively short, therefore the text can be shown directly below the music, unlike the bottom song, which only counts four bars but has a lot of text accompanying it. After song 191 the next section begins, with songs sung for the last meals before the time of fasting.

Underneath every song there is another line of information regarding the location, singer and collector. For example song 190 was sung by Gesho Ivanov, 85 years old, in the village of Aglen in February 1928 - notated by V. Stoin. On the image below the location of these three villages can be found, indicated by the yellow markers. The walking distance nowadays between the top (Krushovitsa) and middle (Rakita) villages is little over 70 kilometres.

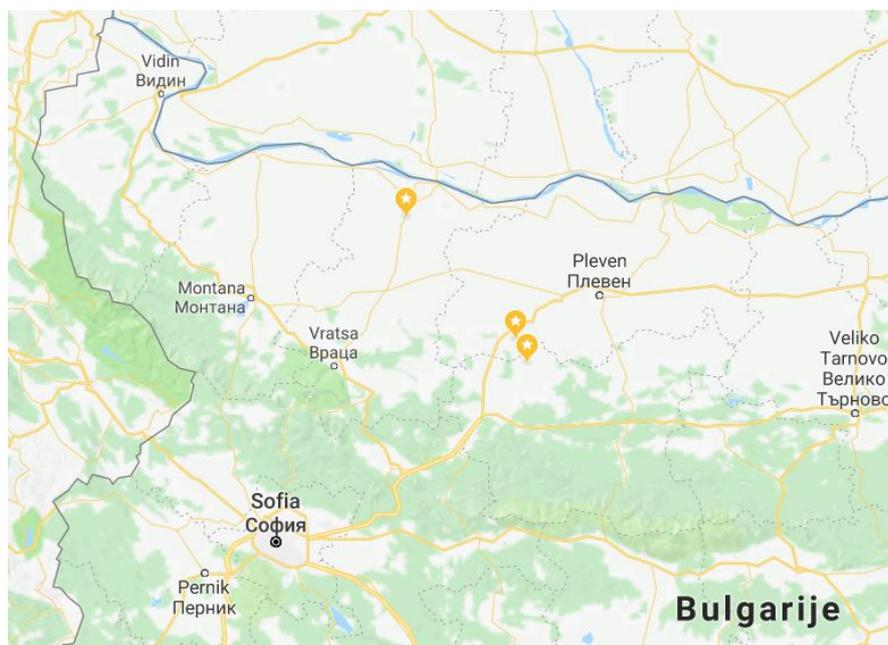


Image 1: The villages of Krushovitsa, Rakita and Aglen

These three songs are relatively easy to compare, because they are similar in metre and length and their rhythmical units are alike (i.e. they consist mainly of quarter-notes and eighth-notes).

At first sight we can conclude that all three lie within a comparatively narrow range of tempo, varying from M.M. = 140 - 160 for a quarter note. Songs 189 and 190 share a 2/4 metre, whereas 191 has no metrical indication. The first two songs also seem to have similar melodic movements and rhythmical patterns and their melodic range is short. Both songs 189 and 190 have a melody which spans between G and D, containing four notes with a minimal difference, song 189 consists of G, A, B-flat, D. Song 190 consists of G, A, C, D.

Summarizing, songs 189 and 190 are connected in multiple ways. They were found in each other's vicinity and have an identical function, metre and melodic range. Apart from that they have nearly identical melodic material and tempo. Their link is obvious. What gives this collection its strength is that it also facilitates less obvious relationships between songs.

In the example below the melodic material found in songs 189-191 is displayed. This index groups songs in a way which is not obvious, because all their textual and other musical properties are left untreated. Of course songs from every function can consist of certain melodic material. It is not said that any connection exists between these songs and most probably there is none in all but a few cases. But if a connection exists, these indexes might be a way to discover it.

By way of illustration, song 189 is linked by melodic material to song 635, as can be seen on image 5. Its function is that of wedding song. Whether links in origin between them exist apart from the melodic material remains to be investigated.

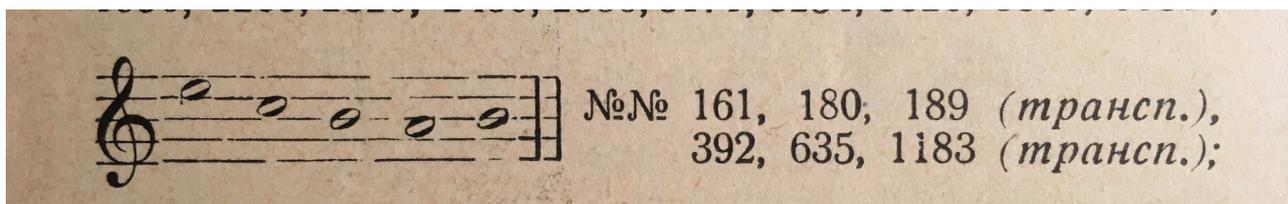


Image 2: Melodic material of song 189 (Stoin: 1124)

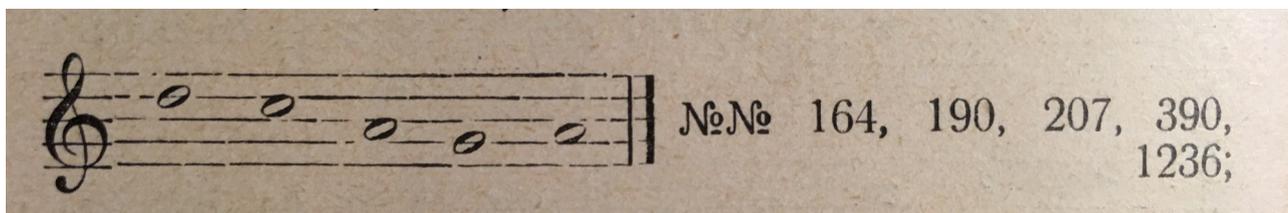


Image 3: Melodic material of song 190 (Stoin: 1118)

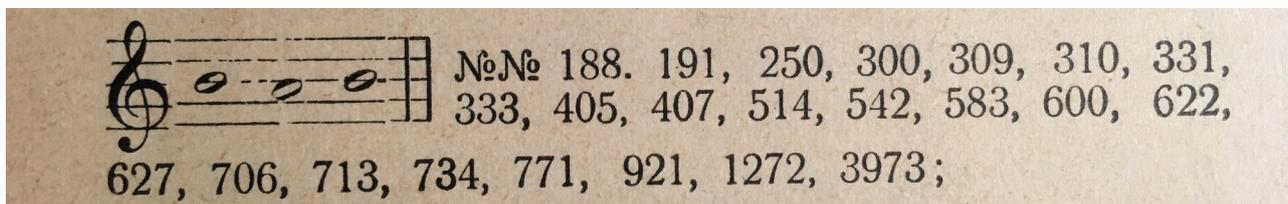


Image 4: Melodic material of song 191 (Stoin: 1124)



Image 5: Song 635 (Stoin: 147)

### 2.5.2 Indexes

In the back of the collection are the indexes, which in this case distinguishes five groups. Filed under each group are all the possible combinations of characteristics found in each song. After these characteristics follow the numbers of the songs containing them.

In the case of the first group, villages, the first village in alphabetical order is *Aleksandrovo*. In that village seven songs were collected with the numbers 1089, 1375, 1583, 2038, 2420, 3241 and 3558. The 4076 songs in this compendium were recorded in 228 villages and towns.

The second index makes a division based on metre, starting with the most simple one, working towards more complex or combined metres. Since irregular metres characterize Bulgarian music this index is very large. One hundred and thirty different metres or combinations of metres are distinguished, each followed by the numbers of songs with that metre.

The most simple metre is 2/4, but added to it are six variations. There is, for example, a song with a combination of 2/4, 3/4 and 4/4. Or a song with a combination of 2/4 and 9/16.

Metres containing more beats have more possible variations as well, because the accents within the structure of beats plays a role too. A popular metre, 7/16, can be found in two forms, namely 3+2+2 or 2+2+3. The same goes for other metres with a large amount of beats. As seen on image 6 there are three different ways to sub-divide twelve counts.

The list ends with songs in highly complex metrical combinations like 11/16, 5/16 and 13/16 or a combination of 15/16 and 9/16. An example of these metres can be seen on image 6. In total, throughout the compendium four songs remain uncategorised because they lack any metrical division.

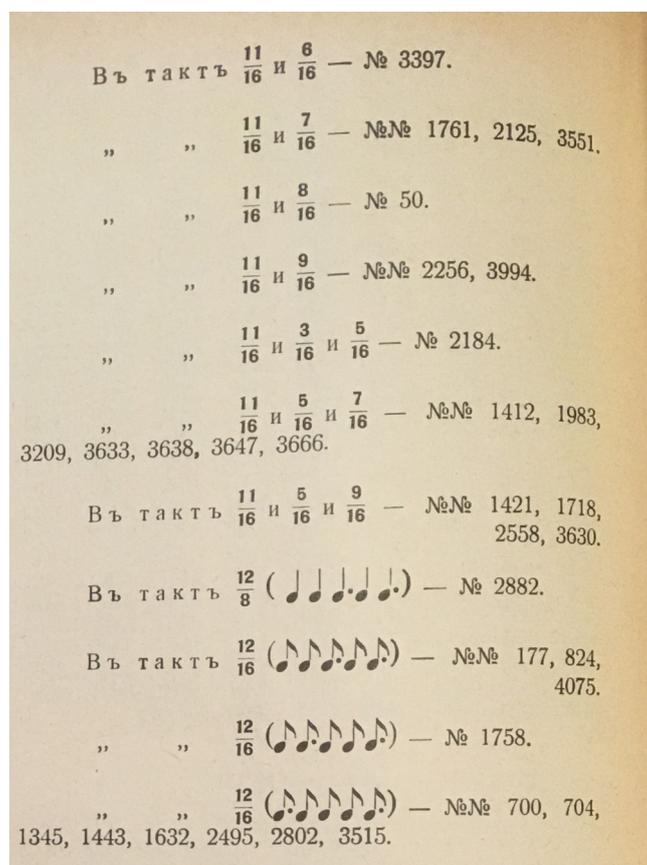


Image 6: Metrical index (Stoin: 1098)

The third index categorizes songs by metrical groups rather than metre alone as is the case above. This means that within a certain metre the amount of bars creating a musical phrase are joined. This is by far the largest section of all the indexes, because there are so many different phrases within any metre. A picture can be found in the appendix (image 2) as an example of what the index looks like.

Stoin starts with the most simple again, working his way towards the more complex and long melodies. The first group consist of songs with two bars and two metrical groups. What follows is a list of all the songs that fit into that category, sub-divided by their metre, again starting from 2/4, working towards 14/16. He then continues by categorizing every song with two metric groups and three bars, then four bars, until he reaches the category with two metric groups and eight bars. After that he starts over again by sorting songs with three metric groups with two bars each, and the process repeats itself. The last page of metrical divisions contains very specific categories, all with a single song fitting into it. An example of these highly complex metrical structures is song 1718, which has six metrical groups, prior to which there is a bar without metrical structure. Two images can be seen below, the first showing the song in the metrical group index, the second as it was notated. The term *безмензурно* indicates the lack of any metre.

$$\text{безмензурно (o)} + \frac{11,9}{16} + \frac{11,5,5}{16} + \frac{11,9}{16} + \frac{11,5,5}{16} +$$

$$\frac{11,5,5}{16} + \frac{5,5,5,5,5}{16} - \text{№ 1718;}$$

Image 7: Metrical group of song 1718 (Stoin: 1116)

Bar one: unspecified metre, introduction, not included in the metrical analysis.

Group one: two bars, measuring eleven and nine counts.

Group two: three bars, measuring eleven and five (x2).

Group three: same as group one.

Group four: same as group two.

Group five: same as group two.

Group six: five bars, all measuring five counts.

М. М.  $\text{♩} = 320$  1718.

Сто-ян Пет-ка-на го-во-ри:  
за-що ми не си ве-се-ла, ка-то фто-ра-та  
го-дй-на, ка-то трè-та-та не-дè-ля ка-то трè-та-та  
не-дè-ля, ка-то пър-ва-та ве-чè-ря.

Пѣта отъ Христо Николовъ Клати-каца, 78 год., с. Гурково, Видинско, декемврий 1926 г. —  
Записаль К. Загоровъ.

Image 8: Song 1718 (Stoin, 434)

Index four categorizes the songs based on their melodic volume and content. Examples of this index can be found in the appendix on images 3, 4 and 5.

Stoin distinguishes sixteen categories within this index, compiled based on melodic modes. No names or titles are given to these modes, they only bear their category number, making it difficult to pinpoint the exact reasoning behind the order of the modes. Categories one, fifteen and sixteen are built up differently than the rest, they will be treated briefly first.

The first category contains only one song, which is sung on a single, unspecified tone. Category fifteen and sixteen both deal with songs which have either combined or altered modes. Their melodic content is also unspecified. As can be seen on image 3 in the appendix the second category start with two notes, B going down to A. Two properties of a song can be derived from that, being the ambitus and melodic material. The smallest ambitus that was found was a major second (B-A).

Perhaps somewhat counter intuitively, as the ambitus grows the melodic material decreases. This can be seen on the following staff, which contains three notes (C-B-A), decreasing its material until only the extremes are left (C-A). After that come the songs with four notes (D-C-B-A), after which the melodic material decreases again until the minimum of notes within that ambitus is reached (D-A).

On multiple occasions in the list the text *трансп.* is added, indicating that the song was transposed, which was done to make up for differences in performance practice. Although it was necessary for the collectors to have a perfect pitch hearing, the same was not the case for the singers. When a collector heard and notated a melody, a particular mode could be sung on a slightly higher or lower pitch. Transposing the melodies made the index more readable, because it straightened out the differences in starting tone between singers. Also, it grouped songs that were using the same mode, keeping into account that changes in pitch would be encountered.

To this might be added that the encountered differences were likely to be small, because the singers were trained, although not professionally. Having sung the songs many times, maybe hundreds or thousands of times throughout their lives, decent pitch accuracy could be expected.<sup>52</sup>

On image 4, in the top left corner, the last melodic combination belonging to the second group is shown, its ambitus being an octave. After that the third groups starts, but this time the pattern rises at the end of each series (G-A), and so another property is added. From this category onward certain tones repeat themselves, as can be seen on every staff on image 4 and 5 with more than two tones. This was done because the ambitus could reach lower pitches than the tonic. In the first place the note repetition serves to always have a song end on the tonic of its mode. Secondly all the notes lower than the tonic leading up to it have to be repeated, so that a song does not appear to end with an interval jump, because sometimes that is actually the case.

The last division Stoin made was based on the content of the texts in each song. These shall be skipped because of the lack of relevance for this particular study.

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52 Oral family history coming from my father, who has perfect pitch hearing himself.

### 3. Béla Bartók

This thesis is built around the assumption that Bartók used Stoin's compendiums as a source of inspiration for his Six Dances. To summarize some of the arguments in favour of that assumption:

1. Bartók had no first-hand contact with Bulgarian music and its rhythms after 1912, when he notated seven melodies sung by Bulgarian peasants living in Romania.
2. Bartók's letter to Katsarova shows that he was eager to learn from Stoin and Katsarova about their methods of field work.
3. Even though Bartók was trying to learn Bulgarian, his level was not high enough to visit Bulgaria on his own. Folk song notation required trust from the singers, which would be difficult to attain as a foreigner. Therefore Stoin was Bartók's doorway to these 'extraordinary rhythms'.<sup>53</sup>
4. Bartók was thoroughly studying Stoin's work, as he wrote in the letter to Katsarova. As far as the literature reveals, Bartók had no other source of Bulgarian folk music collections.
5. Bartók wanted to study Bulgarian rhythm at first hand, but because of the lack of recorded material his only option was to use notated collections by others.
6. Bartók was of the opinion that to fully understand the relevance of a song and its meaning, one needs to know its proper social context. In other words there is no successful ethnography without an insider.<sup>54</sup>

#### 3.1 Bulgarian Rhythm

Bartók came across Bulgarian rhythm through the works of Dobri Christov, the above mentioned *The Rhythmic Bases of our Folk Music*, and a pamphlet written by Stoin called *Grundriß der Metrik und der Rhythmik der Bulgarischen Volksmusik*. In his essay *The so-called Bulgarian Rhythm* Bartók explains the following about that pamphlet:

Then in 1927 a little pamphlet by Vasil Stoin appeared, entitled *Grundriß der Metrik und der Rhythmik der Bulgarischen Volksmusik*, containing 187 songs as examples, mostly from his own collection. Concerning the so-called Bulgarian rhythm Stoin has this to say: 'Die musikalische Zählzeit ist in der (abendländische) Musik immer gleichmässig', that is, that the principle metrical quantities in Western music, within a given bar, are of equal length. By 'principal quantity' he means a quarter-note of about M.M. = 150-200. He then goes on roughly as follows: 'In nearly half the Bulgarian

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53 Demény, *Béla Bartók-Letters*, 337.

54 Demény, *Béla Bartók-Letters*, 330-331.

folk songs the principal quantities of individual bars are not of identical length: usually the value of one, and sometimes of two or three among them, is prolonged by half.

This then is how Stoin quite correctly defines the so-called Bulgarian rhythm, except that one should add that the principle quantities described are quite short -about M.M. = 150-200.<sup>55</sup>

The unevenness of Bulgarian rhythms does not only appear in metres that have an irregular time division, like 5/16 and 7/16. Several metres with a high pulse count that would be divided evenly in the Western tradition are also divided unevenly in Bulgarian music. For instance 8/16 can be divided into 3+2+3, giving it a completely different feel from a "regular" 4/4. And 9/16 can be divided into 2+2+2+3, again creating a very different feel than we are accustomed to, for usually in Western musical culture nine counts would be split into 3+3+3.

### 3.2 Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm

The Six Dances are the last pieces of the *Mikrokosmos*, a set of 153 piano pieces published in six volumes. They were composed between 1926 and 1939 and were meant as a complete set of materials for the beginning pianist. The first four volumes contain simpler pieces with specific technical exercises, the other two are more difficult and complex. Quite a few of the pieces have an irregular metre, since Bartók found it important that children would learn how to deal with these "Bulgarian rhythms". He explained himself through an example in his essay on Bulgarian rhythm, concerning professional musicians in Frankfurt. They were having immense trouble to correctly perform a musical dance by Bartók in 5/8 metre, continuously trying to convert it to 6/8.<sup>56</sup> Counting to five is not what troubled the musicians. It was the irregular count division combined with the fast tempo, in this case M.M. = 200 for an eighth-note.

The table below shows an overview of the Six Dances, discerning their metre, tempo and key. Every piece shall be compared to the Stoin compendium in order to find out whether patterns of overlap can be found.

Column one shows the number of the dance. Column two contains the metres of each of the dances, followed by the division of counts in brackets. The third column shows the tempo of each dance, the units of measurement are sixteenth-notes. The right column shows the key of the dance. They are specified no further than the tonic because Bartók used a compositional technique called

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55 Bartók, *Essays*, 43.

56 Bartók, *Essays*, 42.

polymodal chromaticism, making the exact key(s) complex to isolate.<sup>57</sup> Also, defining each of the specific modes is irrelevant for the comparison to Stoin's compendiums. The comparison will revolve mainly around metre, since that is the theme Bartók composed his dances on.

Dance	Metre	Tempo	Key
1	9/8 (4+2+3)	M.M. = 350	E
2	7/8 (2+2+3)	M.M. = 420	C
3	5/8 (2+3)	M.M. = 400	E → A
4	8/8 (3+2+3)	M.M. = 400	C
5	9/8 (2+2+2+3)	M.M. = 360	A
6	8/8 (3+3+2)	M.M. = 448	E

Table 1

### Dance 1

Dance no. 1 has a 9/8 metre with a subordinated count division of 4+2+3. Throughout Bartók's composition the metre does not change, so the section under which to search for in Stoin's index is plainly 9/8. In the compendium's metrical index 26 songs can be found with an exclusive 9/8 metre. There is a large difference between the 9/8 and the 9/16 metre sections. In the former, Stoin does not differentiate any variation of count division, while the latter is divided into two groups, namely 2+3+2+2 and 2+2+2+3. Of these the second is by far the most popular, containing 286 songs, while the first contains 29. Bartók's choice to compose the dance in 4+2+3 metre stands out, because strictly speaking no such metre exists in Bulgarian music. Dobri Christov made a chart containing the Bulgarian irregular metres, and even though 9/16 is well represented with four different combinations, 4+2+3 is not one of them. All of the rhythms come in combinations of 2 and 3, the one resembling it most is 2+2+2+3,<sup>58</sup> so from the perspective of Bulgarian rhythm Bartók created his own irregular metre in this dance.

Without a doubt Bartók was aware of this, after all the 5th dance, which is also in 9/8 metre does have 2+2+2+3 division. So why did he choose one over the other in this case? The answer to that question seems to lie in the rhythmical structure of the melody of the dance, which might be said to impose a metrical division of 4+2+3 rather than 2+2+2+3.

Analysis of the sheet music clarifies this point, supported by a recording of Bartók himself performing these pieces. The full score can be found in the appendix and an excerpt of the opening

57 Ivan F. Waldbauer, "Polymodal Chromaticism and Tonal Plan in the First of Bartók's Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm," *Studia Musicologica* (1990), 241-262.

58 Buchanan, "Bartók's Bulgaria," 69.

bars is shown below. The objective of this analysis is to find out whether problems would arise when the metre would be changed to 9/8 (2+2+2+3).

In a 4+2+3 metrical division the accented beats are 1, 5 and 7. The first three bars introduce the piece. They are clearly grouped as the metrical division prescribes, the bass note filling in the gap of the eight-note rest on the first count in the melody. Derived from the score, the introduction might not suffer from our alternative metrical division of 2+2+2+3. But, if the performance practice is also taken into account, the character of the piece could give off an impression that is too Bulgarian if the metrical division would have been changed. A recording of these pieces by Bartók himself ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cj306a\\_qTPk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cj306a_qTPk)) helps to elucidate that assumption. It does not sound like he intends to stress typical Bulgarianness in these opening bars, for the soft ascending line Bartók plays might as well have been a 3+3+3 division, a feeling which is enhanced by the last three notes of each bar in the accompaniment.

In bar four the main theme starts. The former right-hand part is continued by the left hand, except that the last three notes are left out. The main theme starts syncopated, which might answer our question from the angle of notational practicality. Because if the metrical division were 2+2+2+3, putting the accents on beat 1, 3, 5, 7, the second accent would disappear, thus creating a bigger notational fuss. Instead of an eight-note E followed by a dotted quarter-note E these first four beats would consist of an eight-note E followed by another eight-note E which would have to be connected to a quarter-note E by a slur each time.

Image 9: Dance 1

## Dance 2

The second dance of the set has a 7/8 (2+2+3) metre. Similarly to the first dance, this exact metre of 7/8 is very rare in the compendium, only counting three songs. The faster variation however, 7/16, is one of the most popular. Again there are multiple ways to interpret this metre, one being 3+2+2, the other 2+2+3. Logically, one would expect a 2+3+2 metre as well, but in Stoin's compendiums there is no mention of it. That does not deny its existence, merely that no such metre has been found in the regions of collection. Dobri Christov does mention it in the metrical chart in his 1913 study, however he adds in a footnote that the pattern 7/16 (2+3+2) exists in theory only.<sup>59</sup>

In the compendium, the 7/16 (3+2+2) contains 25 songs. The other, 7/16 (2+2+3), is far more popular, counting 306 songs. This second metre is found, for example, in the popular wedding dance *ruchenitsa*. Timothy Rice, who encountered a *ruchenitsa* in another Bartók composition, emphasizes the close relationship between the drone-like repetition in the lower register to the one-pitch instrumental drones which are common in Eastern European traditional music.<sup>60</sup>

Even though not incessantly, for most part of this second dance that drone-like pattern is also present, as can be seen on page 12 in the appendix. The image shows the last page of the second dance. Multiple variations of this drone-like structure can be seen in the left hand part. Especially the accompaniment in bars 45-54 emphasize the "feel" of a *ruchenitsa*, because of the accented chords and a rest on the last beat, making the short-short-long character of the metrical structure of the dance very distinct. Whether Bartók's inspiration was actually a *ruchenitsa* is unknown, but it seems likely through their shared characteristics.

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59 Christov, cited in Donna A. Buchanan, "Bartók's Bulgaria: Folk Music Collecting and Balkan Social History," *International Journal of Musicology* (2000), 69.

60 Timothy Rice, "Béla Bartók and Bulgarian rhythm," *Bartók perspectives: Man, composer, and ethnomusicologist* (2000), 198.

### Dance 3

The third dance has a 5/8 (2+3) metre. Along with the 7/16 metre it is the most common one of the volume.<sup>61</sup> According to Rice this dance is the one with most Bulgarian features of the set.<sup>62</sup> He writes: "The metre itself is quite common, used for the dance generically titled *pajdushko horo*, and many other features of the piece correspond rather exactly to Bulgarian features."<sup>63</sup> As opposed to the big difference in representation between the 7/8 and 7/16 metres described above, 5/8 and 5/16 are much more alike. The former contains 105 songs in the compendium, the latter 322. What stands out is that no alternative division of counts is being provided. All of the songs are have a 2+3 division.

The image below shows the opening bars of the third dance. As was the case with the second dance, the left hand starts playing a drone-like accompaniment to a melody which has a rhythm of one note per count. In the opening bars, 1-4, the 2+3 count division can be easily recognized as such. But in the second section, in this example from bar 4 until the end of the image, the feel of that same count division is shaken, once again aided by the recording of the piece by Bartók which can be found here: [https://youtu.be/Cj306a\\_qTPk?t=3m15s](https://youtu.be/Cj306a_qTPk?t=3m15s).

Starting from bar seven, the eighth-note leading to a quarter-note in the lower voices of both hands interferes with the sense of rigid rhythm, as if the drone-like pattern which fixed the rhythmical character in the opening bars is disturbed on purpose. Naturally, the ear seems to hold on to the last quarter-note, an effect increased by the fast tempo, leaving the eighth-note to sound like it is merely passed through. This strongly contrasts with the opening bars, which had a stable dotted quarter-note accompaniment.

Unfortunately no comments by Bartók on the rhythmical structure of this dance could be found, but it seems plausible from a didactic point of view that this figure is created with the intention of challenging a student, because after all the *Mikrokosmos* is a piano method.

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61 Rice, "Bartók Bulgarian Rhythm," 196.

62 As he acknowledges in his essay, his analysis illustrates some of the Bulgarian aspects in the dances rather than looking deeply into their connectedness. His description of the extent to which this third dance is Bulgarian remains quite vague.

63 Rice, "Bartók Bulgarian Rhythm," 198.

3.  $\text{♩} = 80$

150

*p leggero*

*sf* *f marc.*

7

Image 10: Dance 3

## Dance 4

This dance has a 8/8 (3+2+3) metre. And even though it is part of the Bulgarian dances, Bartók's comment on it was: "Very much in the style of Gerschwin. American folk song feeling."<sup>64</sup>

In Stoin's compendium songs with eight counts come in three categories: 8/4, 8/8 and 8/16. The first was found on a single occasion, the second appears just twice. The third category contains 169 songs. Curiously, in none of the cases a subdivision of counts was made.

Below two images can be seen showing the songs found in Stoin's metrical index with 8/8 metre.

At first sight both of these songs seem simple in rhythmical structure. But when played both do not seem to fit into a clear-cut rhythmical framework that obviously. However, in Dobri Christov's overview of Bulgarian rhythms as displayed in Donna Buchanan's article the only possible Bulgarian rhythm in a 8/8 metre is 3+2+3, so that should be the case here as well. To a Western eye the second bar of song 3476 does not seem to comply with that, of course acknowledging that subtleties of the song's structure are unknown. Whatever the case of these songs might be, Bartók in both notation and performance follows the common structure of this metre.



Image 11: Song 376 (Stoin: 90)

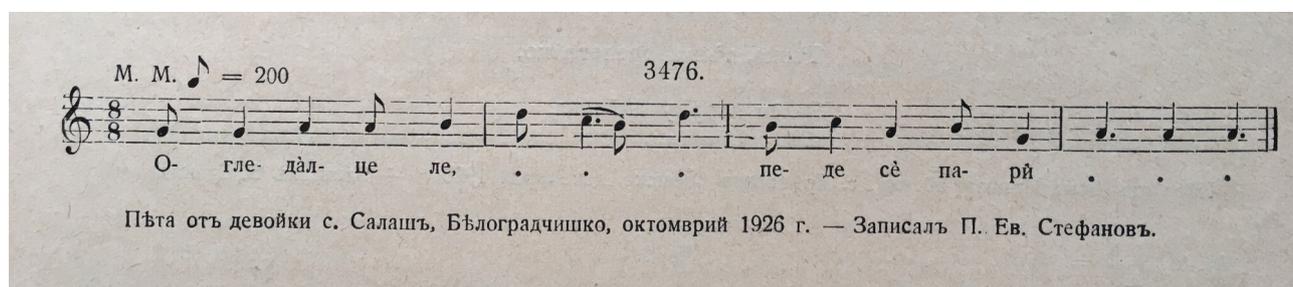


Image 12: Song 3476 (Stoin: 920)

64 Benjamin Suchoff, *Guide to Bartók's Mikrokosmos*. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), 138.

## Dance 5

The fifth dance has a 9/8 metre, like the first dance, but as mentioned before Bartók made use of the literal sub-division of counts as it is found in Bulgarian folk music: 2+2+2+3. The way in which the metre compares to the Stoin compendium can be found under the first section of dance 1, leaving little to add in this section except for audible differences between the two dances based on Bartók's performance of the pieces.

Judging by Bartók's recording, it seems like the first dance has a stronger emphasis on the first beat, whereas the fifth dance sticks to the more typically Bulgarian short-short-short-long structure, which naturally emphasizes the long beat. Even though it is true that the first dance emphasizes the longest beat as well, a division of short and long cannot be made in the way it is commonly done in Bulgarian music because there are three metrical figures (of 4, 2 and 3 counts) instead of two (a combination of 2 and 3).

We had already seen that Bartók had taken more compositional freedom in his first dance by giving it a 4+2+3 metrical division, and this less traditional structure makes the dance less dance-like than the fifth, because it lacks a clear-cut division of metrical phrases and bars.

To what extent this contrasting metrical feel between the first and fifth dances emerges from the subtle difference in metre cannot be said with certainty, but it seems possible that Bartók's intent to create an authentic Bulgarian dance was stronger in his fifth dance than in the first.

## Dance 6

The last Bulgarian dance has a 8/8 (3+3+2) metre, which proves to be another example of the compositional freedom Bartók took in writing these pieces, because this metre does not exist in Bulgarian folk music. As seen in the fourth dance, the only Bulgarian division of 8/8 is 3+2+3. Timothy Rice does therefore not use this dance in his examples. He only notes that: "Among the least Bulgarian of these pieces are those in metres that logically could exist as Bulgarian metres but in fact do not, such as those in 8/8 (3+3+2) and 5/8 (3+2)."<sup>65</sup>

In Christov's chart there is no mention of it, nor is there an example of this metrical indication in the Stoin compendium. For those reasons this dance seems of the least value to this particular study and therefore shall not be treated in more detail.

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65 Rice, "Bartók Bulgarian Rhythm," 198.

## Conclusion

In this study, I enquired into the relationship between Vasil Stoin and Béla Bartók, and the extent to which Stoin's work served as an inspiration for Bartók's Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm.

On the canvas of emerging nationalism and the disappearance of folklore through urbanization, both folk song collectors dedicated their time to the documentation of local musical traditions, and in Bartók's case using some of his findings actively in his compositions.

In Bulgarian music especially the irregular metres, called "Bulgarian rhythms" by Bartók, fascinated him. It has become clear that prior to composing these dances, Bartók had thoroughly investigated these metrical structures, the only vast documented source of which existed in Stoin's compendiums. The extent to which Bartók literally used material he had found in Stoin's compendiums is difficult to qualify. As far as metrical structures go, Bartók stayed true to traditional Bulgarian metres in four of the six dances. In the other two cases he took more compositional freedom, creating his own variations based on existing Bulgarian metres. Also, it seems likely that in some instances Bartók chose performative expression over authentic Bulgarianness, bearing in mind that after all the *Mikrokosmos* is a collection of piano pieces meant as a teaching method. Bartók, in other words, had a more varied agenda than promoting Bulgarian music alone.

It is my impression that because Bartók had more in mind than displaying Bulgarian music in his works, the melodic material of the dances seems incompatible with Stoin's melodic index. I have come to believe that, rather than using Stoin's compendiums in search of material for his compositions, Bartók studied the collections rigorously until they were internalized to such an extent that he could freely use them in a creative way, rather than merely borrowing musical elements.

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