

"When Can I Hear the Cylinders?": Photographs from a Trip to Ukraine

By Joseph C. Hickerson

On March 22, 1994, I traveled to Kyiv to pursue a joint project the American Folklife Center and the Ryl's'kyi Institute of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences initiated in 1992, as well as to explore additional acquisitions of Ukrainian folklore and music. The joint project with the institute seeks to preserve an important collection of wax cylinders (*valiky*) and other formats documenting village musicians of Ukraine from the first four decades of this century (see *Folklife Center News*, spring 1993). While in Kyiv, I spent several days at the institute's manuscript and folklore divisions arranging for the duplication of additional cylinders and a collection of photographs, as well as the acquisition of thirty newly published monographs and ten serial publications. I also surveyed their audiotape (1,700 reels) and manuscript holdings and consulted on their duplication.

I later met with the director of the V. I. Vernadsky Central Scientific Library of the Academy of Sciences and the director of its Jewish division concerning their collection of approximately 1,200 cylinders and accompanying catalogs, manuscripts, and photographs of Jewish folk music and folklore recorded between 1912 and 1967. In addition, I participated in (1) a field trip to the village of Irpen' to document current practitioners of the *kobzar* tradition; (2) a filming for Ukrainian TV of a concert of Ukrainian and American folksongs in the village of Skybyntsi; and (3) a ceremony inaugurating the opening of the expanded quarters for the Center for the Study of Oral History and Culture in Kyiv and the appearance of issue number 7 of *Rodovid*, their ethnographic journal. I also presented lecture/concerts on American folksong at the Ryl's'kyi Institute and the University of Kyiv.

The cylinders of Ukrainian folk music, like those of Native Americans and others that the American Folklife Center has been preserving through its Archive of Folk Culture and the Library's Recording Laboratory, are not merely relics of a bygone age. These documents, once transferred to modern tape, can provide a dynamic link between past, present, and future. But is this connection only of interest to archivists and scholars? Not so for the eighteen-year-old apprentice who wistfully asked me as I was leaving the village of Irpen': "When can I hear the cylinders?" Soon, *druzhe*, very soon!

The meetings and events for this trip to Ukraine were arranged by Valentyna Borysenko, director of the manuscript department and chief archivist at the institute, and American

ethnomusicologist William (Bill) Noll, codirector of the study center. Travel expenses were provided by the Renaissance Fund of the Soros Foundation in Kyiv. Work on the joint project has also benefitted from generous donations by the Maria Yasinsky Murowany Foundation of Greenville, Delaware, and the Rex Foundation of San Anselmo, California. I would like to thank Daria Lassowsky Nebesh, an ethnomusicology graduate student at the University of Maryland, for her assistance on this project as part of her internship with the Folklife Center. Thanks also to Natalie A. Gawdiak of the Library of Congress's Law Library for her assistance in the preparation of this article. Photographs were taken by Bill Noll and others during my nine-day stay.

I first visited the Ryl's'kyi Institute of Art Studies, Folklore, and Ethnology on March 24. After presenting a number of the Center's publications and a cassette duplication of five of the cylinders thus far duplicated at the Library of Congress, I posed with staff members in the director's office. Pictured, left to right, are institute director Oleksandr H. Kostiuk, me, Valentyna Borysenko, and three of her staff members: Tanya Loboda, Svetlana Stefanovich, and Inna Shcheterbak.



Here Valentyna Borysenko and I are examining cylinders in the sound recording room of the institute's manuscript department. Approximately two-hundred of the cylinders have already been transported to the Folklife Center, where they are being copied onto tape by Recording Laboratory technical specialist John E. Howell. Approximately sixty remain to be brought over for duplication.



On March 26, I accompanied Bill Noll and video cameraman Dmytro Klochko on a field trip to Irpen', a village thirty kilometers northwest of Kyiv. Bill has been the chief liaison and facilitator in the Folklife Center's project with the Ryl's'kyi Institute. For the past several years, he has also been documenting the current musical practice derived from the bardic traditions that were all but wiped out during the Soviet purges of the 1930s. As part of this fieldwork, he is preparing three one-hour videotapes highlighting Mykola Budnyk, one of the first musicians to apprentice with a surviving blind bardic singer (*kobzar*), and several of the musicians who have learned from him. The audio- and videotaping is taking place at Budnyk's home, which functions as a combination workshop, social club, and mecca for a number of younger apprentices who are learning to make and play the *bandura* and *lyra* and to sing the *dumy* and *psal'my* (epics and religious songs) in the style of the old masters. After the recording session, I posed with a number of the musicians and apprentices, including Mykhail Khai (on my right), Oleksandr "Smyk" Sanin (upper right), and Budnyk (far right).



Here I am enjoying a midday meal on March 27 at the apartment of Bill and his wife, Lidia "Leda" Lykhach. Leda is an anthropologist who edits and publishes *Rodovid*, volume 6 of which featured an article on the cylinder project and an interview with me. Bill and Leda are codirectors of the Center for the Study of Oral History and Culture.



Later that day Bill and Leda took me to several historic sites, including *Babi (Babin) Yar*. The monument there commemorates the martyrdom of the hundred-thousand Jews and others who were slaughtered at this ravine by the Nazis during World War II.



On March 29, we traveled over two hours to the west of Kyiv to the village of Skybyntsi. There approximately 150 residents assembled in their cultural center to witness a filming by a Ukrainian TV crew of interviews and performances by a group of ten village women, singer Nina Matvienko, and myself. In this photo they are singing (and I am humming) one of their songs. On my right is Kateryna Bozhko, a director from Ukrainian TV; on my immediate left are Matvienko and Borysenko.

On March 30, I visited the Jewish department of the Institute of Manuscripts of the Vernadsky Library, where I examined a collection and catalog of 1,200 cylinders of Jewish folk music and narrative. This collection was amassed by folklorist Moshe Beregovski and his students beginning in 1927. It includes over 600 cylinders made during two expeditions conducted in 1912 and 1913 by Shlomo Ansky, assisted by Iulii Engel, Solomon "Sergei" Ludovin, and Zinoii Kiselgof. I am pictured here with department director Irina Sergeeva and staff members Ludmila Sholochova (who is doing a dissertation on the collection), Yohanan Petrovsky, and Elena Galtchenko.



On March 31, I met with Oleksii S. Onyschenko, director of the Vernadsky Library, to discuss the possibilities of setting up a recording laboratory at their library or finding other means of transferring their cylinders onto tape. Here I pose with Onyschenko and Sergeeva under the watchful eye of V. I. Vernadsky.

During my sojourn in Ukraine, I stayed at the home of Valentyna Borysenko and her son, Myroslav "Slava," and enjoyed their gracious hospitality. Slava acted as a splendid guide and interpreter. Here we are about to have my farewell lunch at their home on March 31. Thank you, Valentyna and Slava!

