

K. V. Kvitka's Correspondence with the Academicians of Petrograd-Leningrad

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Based on Unpublished Material from the 1920s

If one were to list the modern era scholars in the field of musical folklore who are outstanding for their ideas and for their scholarly methodology, then one of the foremost among them would be Klement Vasylyevych Kvitka (1880-1953). In the scholarly world he is known as a scholar of Ukrainian folk music and, more broadly, as someone who did research in Slavic, especially East Slavic, music, Russian music included. His rhythmic analysis of Russian folksong melodies has remained the basis for further scholarship for over half a century and there is not a single Russian ethnomusicologist who does not study Kvitka's research methodology. Naturally, Kvitka is an important figure in the literary life of Ukraine at the beginning of the XXth century since he was married to Lesia Ukrainka and shared many interests with her.

K. V. Kvitka's letters—17 in all—are preserved in several archives in Saint Petersburg. The letters are detailed and present a panoramic view of scholarly life of the 1920s in Ukraine. They provide a glimpse into certain aspects of the life of this scholar, aspects that were not included in his autobiographical sketches or in other materials about him. His letters are written in Russian; furthermore, they are written in such a style that they seem to have been composed yesterday, not over 80 years ago. Their style is the same as the style of our contemporary, highly intellectualized academic discourse: filled not with folkloric images and expressions, but rather with contemporary language, including items such as to *test the soil* or *vertical* in the same sense this word often has in contemporary Russia: the *vertical of power*.

Looking over the archival documents, at times I found several occurrences of the name V. G. Ivanenko, the author of biographical articles about K. V. Kvitka, in the archive's borrowing records. His articles only list several of Kvitka's addressees, but the contents of the letters are not revealed. In this article I would like to fill in the gaps.

The letters in question were written in the period of 1922–1928, that is, beginning in the year of the founding of the Musico-Ethnological Department of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, when Kvitka's

project was granted the status of an official organization. The academician was already over 40 years old, and it was only then that he decided to devote himself fully to the field of musicology. He was still completely unknown in Petrograd-Leningrad although these were the years when his best research articles were published one after another in Kyiv.

Among K. V. Kvitka's addressees in Petrograd-Leningrad were: the famous linguist/Slavist E. F. Karskii; the publisher of *The Russian Music Gazette* N. F. Findeizen, whose name then spoke volumes to every musician; the music historian A. N. Rimskii-Korsakov, one of the publishers (along with P. Suvchinskii) of another music periodical—the journal *The Musical Contemporary* (both of these publications had ceased to exist by that time); and N. I. Privalov, in those years the leading specialist in the field of folk musical instruments and at one time Pro-Rector of the Odesa Conservatory. Among Kvitka's addressees was the academician V. N. Peretts, who was exiled from Leningrad to Saratov in 1933. Kvitka's letters to him have probably not been preserved, but a correspondence with him is mentioned in letters to other individuals published here.

The occasion upon which the correspondence began is typical for academic correspondence. Specifically, it was a request for help, when it is necessary to procure a vital book or article or to ask the advice of a specialist. At the same time, this is an opportunity for a young scholar to present an edition of his/her work, thereby declaring him/herself to a more authoritative colleague. Further on, more specific and usually more interesting issues naturally arise in the correspondence. “Engaged in the same work to which you have dedicated your life,” Kvitka begins a letter to Privalov, “I have decided to turn to you with a request to send me your research, using the enclosed payment.”(1) “Please do not refuse to inform me where and how (if it is possible by means of exchange) to obtain Volume III of your *Belarusians*,”(2) he asks Karskii in his first letter to the academician.(3) Kvitka addresses Findeizen with a request to send him, using the enclosed payment, a separate off-print of A. L. Maslov's work “Wandering Minstrels in Russia and Their Melodies” published in a well-known music journal.(4)

Kvitka's works of the 1920s, which we know by their publication, demonstrate what an incredibly wide range of sources was accessible to him. And with what effort these sources were obtained! “In Kyiv there is not a single musical library that deserves that title,” he informs Findeizen, “nor is there a general library exhaustive enough for me to

perform research in the field of musicology; I am forced to run to different corners of the city, which is hard on my health, in the hope of finding, by chance, books about music and to constantly disturb Russian and foreign music scholars and practitioners with requests, similar to the one that you so kindly fulfilled.”(5) His request to Karskii concerning *The Belarusians* sounds surprisingly sincere: “Even if there are very few copies remaining, I have decided to stake a claim on one of them, as it is possible that there is no other person who needs this book more than I do.”(6)

Kvitka requested that the addressee send the book from Petrograd for Kvitka to borrow in order to copy it, if the addressee could not send it for Kvitka to keep. Apparently, a typist working in the Musico-Ethnographic Department copied Privalov's extensive work on tambour-type instruments, as described in one of Kvitka's letters to Privalov. However, at times the typist worked erratically, and Kvitka had to ask the author's pardon for the delay in returning his work. One can sense from the letters that Kvitka found this humiliating. Kvitka intended to copy E. M. Hornbostel's German article about the transcription of exotic melodies himself, but fate had mercy on him. At that time someone in Berlin obtained a copy of a book containing that article in an antiquarian book store, and he no longer needed to copy it.(7)

When he criticized the bibliographic situation in Kyiv, there was much that Kvitka failed to appreciate. Many years later, in his autobiographical sketch “A Look at my Folkloric Journey” (1942–...), he admitted that “the Kyiv University library was richer in books on Slavic Studies than were the libraries in Moscow.”(8)

What is especially touching is that Kvitka also tried to help his colleagues obtain books—especially A. Khibyns'kyi, who was at that time a professor at the University of L'viv and head of that university's musicological institute. Kvitka asked Privalov about obtaining, if possible, a copy of his work on Russian wind instruments for Khibyns'kyi as well. He asked Findeizen about sending Khibyns'kyi a copy of J. B. Thibault's *Histoire de la notation* published in Saint Petersburg in 1912.(9) The Polish scholar, it seems, did not know that Kvitka passed his request on to Findeizen. However, somehow, Findeizen did manage to help the Polish musicologist. Moreover, Khibyns'kyi collaborated with *The Russian Music Gazette*.(10) Kvitka tried to interest Findeizen in the works of another resident of L'viv—F. M. Kolessa—and sent off-prints of his works. However, it seems that this scholar left Findeizen completely indifferent.

The bibliographic aid was not unilateral. In addition to his receiving collections of songs and article off-prints, Kvitka also sent them to others. Kvitka, on Findeizen's request, sent him works about Ukrainian art—specifically, N. A. Hrinchenko's *History of Ukrainian Music*. Kvitka's attitude towards this work was very critical: "In the section on folk music there are more positions (the ones that are traditionally repeated) with which I [K. V. Kvitka—M. L.] disagree, than positions with which I agree,"(11). Kvitka also commented on the works of D. Shcherbakovskii, (12) and gave Privalov competent accounts of the works of Kurt Sachs, which were completely unknown in Leningrad at that time.(13)

Kvitka sought out people who would interest him; he sent books and received the books he wanted through his acquaintances. Apparently he was wary of relying entirely on the postal system: "Forgive me for writing to you with such delay," he excuses himself to Karskii after his almost year-long silence about *The Belarusians* that he had desired so much, "but difficult circumstances compelled me to wait for a Courier, and I have only now found somebody."(14) Kvitka's messenger to Karskii was the academician Peretts's son. His messenger to Findeizen was Karskii's colleague on the Ethnographic Commission of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, the renowned ethnographic specialist V. P. Petrov,(15) who was a nephew of A. V. Preobrazhenskii, the author of the book *Cult Music in Russia* (Leningrad 1924) and Findeizen's colleague Petrov at *The Russian Music Gazette*. Findeizen introduced Kvitka to Privalov.

Thus, these letters make it possible to account for almost the entire group of people to whom Kvitka was closest in his work, and in those years his entire life was comprised of his work in the Musico-Ethnological Department. We must add the dialectician E. B. Kurylo (mentioned, by the way, in Ivanenko's biographical sketch)(16) and the art historian F. Ernst to this list. This name occurs several times in Kvitka's letters—sometimes as a person who has kindly agreed to convey something from Kvitka to Kvitka's Leningrad acquaintances, at other times as the author of the work *Serf A-Capella Choirs in Ukraine*.(17) Hrinchenko, who was mentioned above, also worked for a time in the Musico-Ethnological Department. He was well-known in those years as a music historian and the director of the N. V. Lysenko Institute of Music and Drama, where Kvitka was also a lecturer. One can understand, based on Kvitka's judgement of Hrinchenko quoted above, why his time in the department was not very long.

The letters to his Petrograd-Leningrad addressees make little mention of Kvitka's expeditionary work to collect material, such as his trip to Khorobrichi village, Chernihiv Province (1923); the Mohylevs'ko-Dnistrov Administrative Region (1927–28?); and Novgorod-Severskii to study the folk songs of Trinity Sunday and *rusal'e* (1928).(18) He does not describe his impressions. However, the fact that he informs Karskii about his plans suggests that Kvitka developed an interest in the subject matter of Karskii's work *On the Areas of Dissemination of Several Types of Belarusian Calendar and Wedding Songs* quite early. As he writes: "I have dreamed for a long time of dedicating a year, or even more, of my life to researching Belarusian folk music, applying the methods that I developed in Ukraine, which, I am certain, would result in collecting material that is even more original and archaic."(19) Kvitka also informs Karskii about his collecting work in Kyiv, which somewhat calls to mind P. Lakh's collection of songs of Russian prisoners of war: "At present I am occupied with recording the songs of Hrodna Province from refugees currently residing in Kyiv, and I hope to publish a special anthology."(20)

Kvitka wrote much more about his publishing and academic organizational activities. Considering himself to be in frail health, he rationed every exertion while he was preparing his work for print: "The technical aspects of publication demand a great deal of hard work from the author;" he informs Findeizen, "not only did I dictate the work to the typist myself, but I also cleaned, corrected and touched up the transfer on the lithographic stone, which consumed 140 hours and, nevertheless, did not guarantee the complete accuracy of the publication, because, as it turns out, the workers in the printing office changed back, according to their guesses, the errors that I had crossed out on the lithographic stone. Apparently, I failed to scratch the lithographic stone deeply enough. The majority of Kyivan academics don't print anything these days, not because it is entirely impossible, but because it requires almost superhuman strength, primarily in order to ensure the physical production of the publication."(21) On more than one occasion books and articles that Kvitka needed as sources for his scholarly work arrived only when the work was already being printed. However, he related in letters how he had been able to convince the printing office workers to stop the presses and squeeze in the last minute additions.

If one were to look, through Kvitka's eyes at the activities of a contemporary researcher engaged in writing a book or article, one could

see that the contemporary scholar's efforts are probably not much different from the efforts of a scholar engaged in a similar task at the beginning of the 1920s. Nowadays, we type our work ourselves on the computer, format it, and so forth. Not long ago, however, the final draft of the handwritten manuscript was typed by a typist, at the expense, moreover, of the institution where the work was done.

Kvitka ascribed a great deal of significance to the organizational aspects of scholarship, because it was necessary for music ethnography in Ukraine to expand and strengthen itself both materially and in terms of faculty. Here he had the idea of surrounding his undertakings with the strongest faculty members, those who stayed or appeared in the country of the Soviets in the 1920s; not only in Ukraine, but in Russia as well. In one letter of his to Privalov he invited Privalov to publish a small article or short piece in Issue 7 of *The Ethnographic Courier*, which at that time was still in the middle of the publication/printing process. In the following letter Kvitka reminded Privalov that the addressee was a member of the Ethnographic Commission in Kyiv.(22) In Ukraine, he attempted to publish an anthology of Privalov's works *applicable to Ukraine*, including his *Observations on the Kobzars*. He finds sympathy for this project with F. M. Sobol, the head of the music section of the Ukrainian state publishing house in Kharkiv, the Ukrainian capital at that time. Unfortunately, the author's sudden death precluded the realization of this project.(23)

However, it was the especially radical projects, along with their very warm friendship, that bound K. V. Kvitka with N. F. Findeizen. Kvitka saw in him "a scholar and activist," (henceforth I provide quotations in the first person, as they appear in the letter—*M. L.*), "whom I infinitely respect and to whom I am much obliged, as are all who came of age reading your unforgettable *Gazette* with its noble, honest momentum."(24) In the 1920s Findeizen gave lectures on music paleography at the Leningrad Archaeological Institute, in connection with which Kvitka makes the following statement in the same letter: "Unfortunately, the current character of your activities will not bear noticeable fruit in Ukraine, at least, I know of no instance in which one of your students found work in a Ukrainian archive or even thought of settling here, so here the matter of paleography is quite hopeless."(25) Attracting specialists in musical archaeology from Leningrad to Ukraine was Kvitka's dream, as his letters demonstrate. He worked to procure Findeizen's invitation (and Privalov's) to the First Ukrainian Archaeological Conference in Odesa, which was supposed to take place

in 1925, but was rescheduled for the following year.(26) "I petitioned for this because musical paleography isn't represented by anyone," the author of the idea explained his position to Findeizen, "and at the conference it is essential to bring up this question with your most competent cooperation and advice. The same goes for instrumentology: neither I nor anyone else in Ukraine has investigated this to any great depth, and to hear N. I. Privalov... would be most useful."(27)

Here I allow myself a small digression. Findeizen as a creative figure was not regarded unambiguously in Petersburg musical circles. Thanks to his great talent and energy, he became a visible musical activist with world-wide authority.(28) He had to hurry his entire life in order to manage to encompass such a great volume of work, but "serving the muses does not allow for noisy distractions." At home he was acknowledged as a collector of musical source materials, as a social activist able to unite everything and everybody around his journal, and to avoid pushing his views on other people. He was not, however, considered an original thinker in the field of musicology. His outstanding work, *Sketches on Music History in Russia*, which compelled people to view him differently, was published posthumously.

It seems strange now, but in the 1920s Findeizen's name was seen neither among the instructors of the Conservatory nor among the faculty of the music department of the Zubovskii Institute of Art History. This may be due to the fact that he did not graduate from any specialized academic institution, only from the School of Commerce, and studied music only on a private basis with N. F. Sokolov. In the 1920s Findeizen was in charge of the museum of the philharmonic orchestra, conducted courses on music appreciation at United Trade School No 25, and was offered a professorship to teach musical paleography at the Archaeological Institute. It is not known who comprised his audience: future historians or musicians. In humanist circles he was highly regarded, as demonstrated by an invitation in 1925 to be the chair of the Musico-Ethnographic Department of the Geographic Society.

It is unlikely that Findeizen was satisfied with his situation in Leningrad. His health was seriously undermined by the frantic pace of his work and the difficulties of the first decade after the revolution—it is not surprising that he died at the age of 60 in 1928.

At the beginning of 1925, two of Kvitka's colleagues from the Ukrainian Academy visited Kvitka at his behest. These were V. P. Petrov, mentioned above, and D. N. Revuts'kyi. Findeizen told them that he would like to come to Kyiv. Having learned of this conversation,

Kvitka alluded to it with intense feeling when writing to Findeizen: “I was enraptured, having learned of your desire to come to Kyiv, although my joy was coupled with annoyance due to the fact that your primary motivation is your poor health. I also have problems with my lungs; in my youth they caused a great deal of difficulty. Two years in Crimea and eight years in the Caucasus strengthened me though, in the Caucasus I felt morally oppressed, because I was compelled to occupy myself with affairs that were not to my liking. Only the position that I occupy in Kyiv keeps me here. If the opportunity arose to move to the Caucasus under conditions equal to those I enjoy here, I wouldn’t hesitate. If you have a serious defect of the lungs, I would caution you against Kyiv, as the climate here is changeable to the highest degree and influenza often rages through the city. If you only feel the need for a greater quantity of warmth and light than you have in Leningrad, then Kyiv, perhaps, would satisfy you. You have much to offer Ukraine—especially with your tremendous knowledge and taste, judgments and ideas and, furthermore, with your valuable collections. You could have immediately formed a cultural-musicological center in Kyiv. I fervently agitated for the creation of a base for you in Kyiv in the spring. I even petitioned the Academy so that, in the course of the planned expansion of the Musico-Ethnographic Department and its transformation into an institute, to invite you to take the post of director of the institute. However, my project did not come to pass. It is uncertain how the Kharkiv leadership would have regarded it, as the Permanent Secretary of the Academy himself put the brakes on it at the very beginning, having taken a hostile stance towards my project. His hostility does not extend to you personally, of course, but rather to the very principle of expanding musicology within the Academy. Such a stance isn’t surprising if one takes into account the fact that the model for the leaders of the Ukrainian Academy is the Russian Academy, and the latter does not grant music studies even the modest place that it occupies here. My agitation in other ‘verticals’ also did not meet with success. What I had hoped for in the spring has not come to pass. My hopes lead me to ask colleagues to test the ground in Leningrad for people who might be able come here in the event of the fulfillment of the plans that you know well. The fact that my hopes deceived me has so affected my health and psychic state that, for several months, I was deprived of the ability to take any action.”(29)

Without a doubt, Kvitka had an unbiased understanding of Findeizen’s potential as a scholarly authority and organizer of scholarly

activities, and for him it was a bitter disappointment that he could attain nothing.

K. V. Kvitka's letters to Petrograd-Leningrad scholars highlight the curious arc of his scholarly biography. This arc is founded upon the great openness, tolerance and breadth of outlook and relationships where the advancement of scholarship is concerned. In the 1920s the scholar strove to focus the scholarly potential of the country around Kyiv, although he did not succeed. In the 1930s–1940s, regardless of all the dangerous upheavals of fate, that very openness allowed him to successfully enter the milieu of music folklore in Moscow and to found a school to study Russian folk music that continues to develop the scholarly methods that he formulated in the period of his activity in Ukraine.

However, the first acknowledgement came to K. V. Kvitka, not in Moscow, but in Leningrad. It was Privalov who turned out to be the author of the first account in Russia on Kvitka's scholarly activities.⁽³⁰⁾ Kvitka himself was forced into a 10 year long period of silence. He was arrested in Kyiv in 1933, rapidly transferred to Moscow and charged in connection with the "Slavists affair" in 1934. He was in a prison camp in Karaganda and was freed from that camp, but not allowed to live in major cities until his conviction was reversed in 1941. When finally allowed to publish, his first article was his research about the dissemination of types of Belarusian ritual songs, included in the anthology prepared by the Leningrad researcher Z. V. Eval'd.

NOTES

1 Russian National Library, Collection 615, item 511, sheet 1.

2 Here Kvitka apparently refers to one of the parts of E. F. Karskii's *Belarusians* published separately: Volume 3, Moscow, 1916, Part 1: Folk Poetry; Petrograd 1921, part 2: Old West-Russian Literature.

3 Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Saint Petersburg), Collection 292, Folder 2, Item 210, Sheet 2 (verso). The item in question is Karskii's work.

4 See *The Russian Music Gazette*, 1904, issue 2, 3; 8, 33–36.

5 Russian National Library, Manuscript Department, Collection 816, Item 1458, Sheet 3.

6 Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Saint Petersburg), Collection 292, Folder 2, Item 210, Sheet 3 (recto and verso).

7 See also: *ibid.*, Sheet 6 (verso), Sheet 8. The article in question

is: Abraham, O., von Hornbostel, E. M., “Vorschläge für die Transcription exotischer Melodien” in *Sammelbände der internationalen Musikgesellschaft*, 1910–1911, Band XI.

8 Kvitka, K. *Selected Works in Two Volumes*. Moscow: 1971. Volume 1, Page 30.

9 Russian National Library, Manuscript Department, Collection 615, Item 511, Sheet 1 (back); Collection 816, Item 1458, Sheet 3 (verso). K. V. Kvitka informs A. Khibyns'kii that Jean-Batiste Thibault's book, which he is in great need of, is known neither to him, nor to his Leningrad colleague A. B. Preobrazhenskii, a specialist in the field of musical paleography. This is entirely understandable, as the work that Khibyns'kii names is Thibault's presentation at a conference in Saint Petersburg, published separately in a luxurious edition with a small production run—apparently for a small circle of specialists.

10 In *The Russian Music Gazette*, 1912, Issue 36–37, A. Khibyns'kii published a series of sketches of the Polish composers who were his contemporaries: M. Karlovich, L. Ruzhitskii, K. Shimanovskii.

11 Russian National Library, Manuscript Department, Collection 816, Item 1458, Sheet 3 (verso).

12 Shcherbakivskii, D. Orchestras, choruses and a-capella groups in Ukraine at the time of serfdom. *Music* 1924, Issue 7–12.

13 Russian National Library, Manuscript Department, Collection 615, Item 511, Sheet 3.

14 Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Saint Petersburg), Collection 292, Folder 2, Item, 210, Sheet 3.

15 Viktor Platonovich Petrov (1894–1969); archaeologist, ethnographer, literary researcher. In the 1920s he worked in the Ethnographic Commission at the Institute for the History of Material Culture of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences.

16 Ivanenko, V. Materials for a biography of K. V. Kvitka. *Selected Works in Two Volumes*. Moscow: 1973. Volume 2, Page 353.

17 Ernst Theodor (Fyodor) Liudvigovich (1891–?)—archaeologist and art historian, author of works on the history of Kyivan architecture, the Ukrainian portrait, et cetera. In the 1920s, Director of the Art Division of the All-Ukrainian Historical Museum in Kyiv, full member of the Archaeological Society of the Pan-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. In 1934 he was exiled. In 1939 he was repressed a second time, after which his fate is unknown (I would like to thank E. I. Murzina for informing me of this). See also F. Ernst's article mentioned above in *Music* 1924, Issues 1–3.

18 Russian National Library, Manuscript Department, Collection 615, Item 511, Sheet 4.

19 Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Saint Petersburg), Collection 292, Folder 2, Item 210, Sheet 3 (back). The article that Kvitka names appeared in print in the anthology *Belarusian Folk Songs* (edited by Z. V. Evald. Moscow; Leningrad 1941, Pages 123–129), almost twenty years after the letter cited.

20 Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Saint Petersburg), Collection 292, Folder 2, Item 210, Sheet 4.

21 Russian National Library, Manuscript Department, Collection 816, Item 1458, Sheet 3.

22 Russian National Library, Manuscript Department, Collection 615, Item 511, Sheets 6 and 7. In Issue 7 (1928) of *The Ethnographic Courier* N. I. Privalov's materials are not present.

23 *Ibid.*, Sheet 4 (verso), Sheet 5. N. I. Privalov's archives contain an agreement to publish a part of the manuscript of this book (I wish to thank V. A. Bruntsev for informing me of this fact). A recent article about Privalov's letters to Kvitka brought to light another reason for the latter to be an advocate for the authoritative investigator of ethnic musical instruments. This reason is the poverty in which Privalov eked out his existence in the 1920s in Leningrad. See: Korableva K. N. I. Privalov's Leningrad Years from the Letters of His Latter Years. *Publications of the M. I. Glinka Central State Museum of Music Culture. An Almanach*. Supervisory Editor: M. Rakhmanova. Moscow: 1999. Issue 1.

24 Russian National Library, Manuscript Department, Collection 816, Item 1458, Sheet 6.

25 *Ibid.*

26 It has not been possible to determine whether the conference took place or not.

27 *Ibid.*, Sheet 6 (recto and verso).

28 See: Kosmovskaia, M. L. *The Legacy of N. F. Findeizen*. Kursk, 1997. Page 62.

29 Russian National Library, Manuscript Department, Collection 816, Item 1458, Sheet 8 (front and back).

30 Privalov, N. I. Klimentiy Kvitka's works on music ethnography. *Music Ethnography*. Edited by N. F. Findeizen. Leningrad: 1926. Pp. 45–47.