

Valentin Vladimirovich Dubravin (1933-1995)

Izaly Zemtsovsky

V. V. Dubravin was a Ukrainian folklorist and musicologist, a member of the Ukrainian Composers' Union, a graduate of the Kiev Conservatory, a graduate student at the Leningrad Conservatory, a professor at the Sumy Musical School and Nezhin Pedagogical Institute in Ukraine, and the author of more than one hundred published works and eighty musical compositions. Most well known were his studies of the Ukrainian kobzars (E. Movchan, E. Adamtsevich, and O. Kovshar) and of the Russian epic (the theme of his candidate's dissertation was The Musical Epic of the North-Russian Folk Tradition, 1972), and also his theoretical and pedagogical publications (for example, The Folk Music Epic (Nezhin, 1990). In Ukraine, Dubravin organized the first postwar concert of authentic folklore (1968) which showcased the work of the outstanding Romny kobzar Evgen Oleksandrovich Adamtsevich.

The numerous collections of songs belonging to Dubravin will forever remain a priceless monument of Ukrainian folklore and Russian folklore in the Ukraine. All in all more than twenty-five thousand songs and their melodies were collected by the folklorist in the course of thirty years of self-sacrificing field work. A recognition of the uniqueness of this enormous collection grows a hundredfold with the thought that all of this outstanding collection was gathered, transcribed, and systematized by a blind person, who grew up an orphan and who lost his vision at the age of nine from an injury during the war. Valentina Grigorevna Dubravina, his devoted friend, colleague, and wife, is no less unique a person. At present she is in the city of Nezhin where she continues the work of her husband who died prematurely during an unsuccessful operation.

Among the published results of Dubravin's unparalleled fieldwork there have appeared, as separate editions, the

collections Russkie kalendarnye pesni na Ukraine (1974), Pesni odnoi semi (1988) — in Ukrainian as Pisni odnieji rodini, Pesni Sumshchiny (1989, in Ukrainian), two issues of Khrestomatiia ukrainskogo narodnogo tvorchestva (Nezhin, 1994-95 - in Ukrainian). But many more songs collected by the Dubravins still await publication not as raw material but as thoroughly prepared works with scholarly commentaries and introductory articles. Among them are Pesni Chernigovshchiny, Pesni Slobo-zhanshchiny, Pesni odnogo sela (the village of Monchin in the Pogrebinshche Region of the Vinnitsa District in the Ukraine), and Khristinovskie pesni. All these books have been lying for years in the Kiev publishing house "Muzichna Ukraina," but there is no money for their publication. In his archives there are other collections — "Russkie narodnye pesni na Ukraine (sovremennye zapisi)," "Russkaia ballada 'Vdovushka' (v mnogovariantnykh zapisiakh)," and others. The fate of this priceless personal archive, that covers the folklore of the Sumy, Poltava, Kharkov, Chernigov, Kiev, Zhitomir, Cherkassy, and Vinnitsa Districts of the Ukraine, is even more problematic in comparison with the materials kept in the publishing house.

In the summer 1985 I had the good fortune to take part in the Dubravins' field work in the historical places connected with events in the "Slovo o Polku Igoreve." (The expedition was devoted to the 800th anniversary of Prince Igor's campaign against the Polovetsians and his defeat on the River Kaiala.) His ability to converse with rural experts on folklore, the thoroughness of his field recordings, his excellent knowledge of tradition, the immense kindness, the intellectual abilities and the modesty of Valentin Dubravin will remain forever in my memory along with the treasures of folklore that he brought to light and generously gave to me during our joint trip. Blessed memory to him and a deep bow.

[Translated by James O. Bailey]