

## History of the Phonogram Archive in St. Petersburg and the use of its audio materials for the study of endangered cultures in Russia

Tjeerd de Graaf

*Frisian Academy and Mercator Centre  
Leeuwarden, Netherlands  
tdegraaf@fryske-akademy.nl*

Natalia Dmitrievna Svetozarova

*Saint-Petersburg State University  
Saint-Petersburg, Russia  
ndsvetozar@gmail.com*

The Phonogram Archive at the Pushkin House in St. Petersburg houses an important collection of historical sound recordings. They are related to investigations in the field of ethnomusicology and ethnolinguistics. The archive is involved in the recording, restoration, description and study of the audio materials on folklore, language and ethnography, as well as their publication in the form of academic collections and audio anthologies. The materials in the Phonogram Archive form the basis for a multifaceted study of Russian folklore, interethnic relations in Russia and other aspects of culture in the country. Many of these recordings have been used in joint projects with the Pushkin House in which the authors have participated since 1995. In this article, following a description of the history of the Phonogram Archive, some of these projects will be considered. The resulting digital data have enriched the collections at the Pushkin House and will likely play an important role in the study, teaching and safeguarding of endangered languages and musical cultures in Russia.

**Keywords:** sound archives, endangered languages, Yiddish, German in Russia, digitalization

**For citation:** Graaf T. de, Svetozarova N. D. History of the Phonogram Archive in St. Petersburg and the use of its audio materials for the study of endangered cultures in Russia. *Rodnoy yazyk*, 2025, 1: 16–40.  
**DOI:** 10.37892/2313-5816-2025-1-16-40

## **История Фонограммархива в Санкт-Петербурге и использование его звуковых материалов для изучения исчезающих культур в России**

Тьерд де Грааф

*Фризская Академия и Меркатор Центр  
Леуварден, Нидерланды  
tdegraaf@fryske-akademy.nl*

Наталья Дмитриевна Светозарова

*Санкт-Петербургский университет  
Санкт-Петербург, Россия  
ndsvetozarov@gmail.com*

Фонограммархив Института русской литературы (Пушкинский Дом) РАН в Санкт-Петербурге хранит ценные коллекции исторических звукозаписей. Они связаны с исследованиями в области этномузыкологии и этнолингвистики. Архив занимается записью, реставрацией, описанием и изучением звуковых материалов по фольклору, языку и этнографии, а также их научной публикацией в виде академических сборников и аудиоантологий. Материалы Фонограммархива составляют основу для многогранного изучения русского фольклора, межнациональных связей и других аспектов культуры России. Многие из этих записей использовались в совместных проектах с Пушкинским Домом, в которых авторы данной публикации участвуют с 1995 г. В этой статье после описания истории Фонограммархива рассматриваются некоторые из этих проектов. Полученные цифровые данные существенно обогатили коллекции Пушкинского Дома и, несомненно, сыграют важную роль в изучении, препода-

вании и сохранении исчезающих языков и музыкальных культур в России.

**Ключевые слова:** звуковые архивы, языки под угрозой исчезновения, идиш, немецкий в России, оцифровка

**Для цитирования:** Грааф Т. де, Светозарова Н. Д. История Фонограммархива в Санкт-Петербурге и использование его звуковых материалов для изучения исчезающих культур в России. *Родной язык*, 2025, 1: 16–40.

**DOI:** 10.37892/2313-5816-2025-1-16-40

## 1. Introduction: The History of the Phonogram Archive and the Pushkinsky Dom

The Institute of Russian Literature at the Pushkinsky Dom (Pushkin House) of the Russian Academy of Sciences is the location of many handwritten and audio materials related to different languages and ethnic groups in the Russian Federation and the former Soviet Union. These sound recordings are kept in the local Phonogram Archive, while most written and printed documents can be found in the Manuscript Department of the Institute. They also represent the rich and complicated history of Russian culture and literature.

The Pushkinsky Dom began its existence in December 1905 as the main centre for studies on the famous Russian poet Alexander Pushkin in Imperial Russia. With the aim of preserving Pushkin's original manuscripts, a commission in charge of erecting a monument for the poet in St. Petersburg, led by Sergei Oldenburg and Aleksey Shakhmatov, suggested that a permanent institution be set up. Originally, this institution was a non-governmental organization specializing in these studies, which over time were recognized by Russian authorities as a separate branch of scholarly inquiry. The Russian Revolution led to the shutdown of all non-governmental institutions, but the Pushkinsky Dom was spared and in 1918 put under the umbrella of the Russian Academy of Sciences. In 1927, the Pushkinsky Dom moved from the building of the Academy of Sciences to the magnificent neo-Palladian Customs House,

built after Giovanni Francesco Lucchini's design in 1829–1832. The building remained open during the Siege of Leningrad during WWII, although most of the staff and manuscripts were evacuated to other cities. Following the war, the institute continued its work, employing scholars such as Boris Eikhenbaum and Dmitry Likhachov.

The Phonogram Archive at the Pushkinsky Dom dates back to the Phonogram Archive of the 1st Slavic Branch of the Library of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, which was created at the very beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century at the initiative of A. A. Shakhmatov [Korguzalov&Troitskaya 1993]. The first curator and head of the Phonographic Archive was Eduard Alexandrovich Volter (1856–1941), Master of Philology and librarian of the second department of the Academy of Sciences. At that time, the collection of the Phonographic Archive consisted of recordings on wax cylinders with samples of the folklore of the peoples of Russia and Eastern Europe, collected during folkloristic and linguistic expeditions conducted by E. A. Volter himself as well as by A. A. Shakhmatov, N. S. Derzhavin and other scholars.

After 1917, the materials of the Phonogram Archive were transferred to the State Institute of Art History and combined with the collections of the Commission for the Study of the Folklore of the Peoples of the USSR, which were based on materials gathered during research expeditions to the north of Russia. In 1926, the musicologist Evgeny Vladimirovich Gippius (1903–1985) became the custodian of the united archive.

In 1931, the Presidium of the USSR Academy of Sciences decided to transfer the Phonogram Archive to the Folklore Section (later the Folklore Commission) of the new Institute for the Study of the Peoples of the USSR. This section was headed by Mark Konstantinovich Azadovsky (1888–1954); the Phonogram Archive remained headed by Gippius. Here, the collections of the Folklore Commission were combined with the sound archives of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences, which included folkloristic and dialectological sound recordings of the peoples of Siberia, the Far East and Central Asia. Other institutions also added their col-

lections, such as the Leningrad State Conservatory, the State Institute of Musical Science and the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences. In this way, the Phonogram Archive became the owner of an extensive and diverse archive of audio recordings of folklore from more than a hundred ethnic groups.

In 1933, the Phonogram Archive, as part of the Folklore Commission, moved to the Institute of Anthropology and Ethnography of the USSR Academy of Sciences, which had been newly created as a result of the merger of two institutes. Later, in 1939, and together with the Folklore Commission and the Manuscript Repository containing expedition materials, the Archive moved to the Institute of Russian Literature of the Academy of Sciences. Since then, it has remained there as part of the Department of Russian Folklore.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the staff of the Phonogram Archive not only continued field work by collecting folklore samples from various peoples in the form of audio recordings, but also conducted this work in Leningrad, using the opportunity to interview representatives of various ethnic groups of the USSR and foreign countries. This is the period in which phonographic recordings were created consisting of samples of various genres of oral folk art of the minority peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East. These were collected from students at the Northern Department of the Leningrad Oriental Institute, and later from students at the Institute of the Peoples of the North.

Currently, the Phonogram Archive has more than 150,000 storage units. Along with recordings of Russian folklore, which make up the bulk of the collections, the archive contains audio materials from various ethnic groups, both those living in Russia and those abroad. Thus, the value of the Phonogram Archive lies in the rich variety of its collections, formed over almost a century. The earliest recordings of speech samples and specimens of oral folk art on the first recording devices – phonographs – were made in Russia at the end of the 19th century, shortly after the invention of the phonograph. This took

place in the same period when the other oldest European phonogram archives, those in Vienna and Berlin, started their work.

Since 1971, the Phonogram Archive has held the status of the central repository of audio recordings in the Academy of Sciences. In the 1970s, the information that had been on wax cylinders was rewritten on magnetic tapes, and in recent years, with the development of digital technologies, it has become possible to transfer archival recordings from analogue to digital format, which makes them more readily available for further study.

The collections of the Phonogram Archive, sound recordings and manuscripts preserving the rarest examples of oral folklore are of great value for the history of the world's culture. For this very reason, in 1991 UNESCO included these collections into its program "Memory of the World".

Nevertheless, the very rich audio and handwritten collections of the Phonogram Archive were not well known to specialists, since its catalogues have not been fully published. The first description of the collections was published in the journal "Soviet Ethnography", and in 1936, a Russian article by E. V. Gippius appeared in the journal "Soviet Folklore" [Гиппиус 1936]. This article described the history of the collections of the Phonogram Archive of the Folklore Section, their structure and principles. It was followed by the "List of collections of the Phonogram Archive" compiled by Sofia Davydovna Magid (1892–1954). This employee of the Folklore Section provided an inventory of the collections reflecting the state of affairs as of January 1936 [Магид 1936]. Magid's list of collections contains data on the time and place of recording, the collector, the recorded ethnos and the number of storage units. The inventory consists of five sections. In chronological order, starting with the oldest collection of Y. E. Linyova (1897–1901), the list gives a description of 125 collections with a total of 4054 wax cylinders. The inventory includes not only a geographical index and an alphabetical list of peoples and 63 ethnic groups, but also an alphabetical list of 61 collectors.

The work of Sofia Magid will be described in greater detail in Section 3.

For many years, Sofia Magid's list remained almost the only publication to give an idea of the content and volume of the collections of the Phonogram Archive. Meanwhile, the collections were constantly growing, primarily thanks to the addition of new expedition materials, but this process was not systematically reflected in the printed material. At present, the Phonogram Archive, along with other materials, houses numerous recordings as well as transcripts of texts and tunes, which before WWII were prepared for the series "Songs of the Peoples of the USSR".

The popularization of the unique recordings in the Phonogram Archive is facilitated by the publication of special albums [14]. This process started in 1983, and since 2000 a series of CDs has also been produced, such as compact discs on "Non-Russian Traditions" and "Russian Folk Traditions". An equally important role in the use and study of the collection of sound recordings is played by the series of international projects based on these recordings in which the authors have participated since 1995. The first of these projects, "The Use of Acoustic Databases in the Study of Language Change" (1995–1998) was financially supported by the INTAS organization of the European Union in Brussels. In a second INTAS project, "St. Petersburg Sound Archives on the World Wide Web" (1998–2001), some of the sound recordings were made available online and are now accessible for further study [de Graaf 2002]. Some of these projects will be considered in the following sections of this article. They also illustrate important cultural events in Russia during the history of the Phonogram Archive.

## **2. What did the Russian Germans sing? Zhirmunski's Archive of Russian German Folk Songs**

In 1995, the staff of the Phonogram Archive drew our attention to some old wax plates which presumably came from the research expeditions carried out by the outstanding Russian philologist Viktor Maksimovich Zhirmunsky to German colonies in the USSR. In total, the collection contained 321 wax plates, some of which were arranged by numbers while others were in a state of complete disarray. The numbers were repeated on the records. It was obvious that different parts of the collection had their own entry numbers.

Although there is mention of 323 wax plates with recordings of songs by German colonists that had been collected by Zhirmunsky in 1927–1930, as reported by Sofia Magid, these were not catalogued. They were referred to as the group of “Temporary working originals”, and their existence was forgotten for almost 60 years. The reconstruction and study of this material has become an integral part of our international project “The Use of Acoustic Databases in the Study of Language Change”.

Comparing the written data with Zhirmunsky's publications left no doubt that the records form part of the “Leningrad Archive of German Folk Songs”, created by Zhirmunsky in the 1920s as the result of a series of expeditions to German colonies in the USSR. Along with the wax plates, Zhirmunsky also used a phonograph to record melodies. Phonographic cylinders with recordings of German songs (a total of 93 have been preserved) were received by the Phonogram Archive after 1936. As for the full lyrics of the songs, the place of their storage turned out to be the Manuscript Department the Institute of Russian Literature, where the material was stored as the “Collection of Academician Viktor M. Zhirmunsky (German colonists) 1926–1930”.

According to the entry in the inventory book, collection no. 104 contains the findings of the expedition of the State In-



stitute of Art History and the Leningrad Branch of the State Academy of Art History. The collection was transferred to the Institute by Viktor Zhirmunsky himself around 1940. In the first months of the war, many people with connections to the Pushkinsky Dom, apparently anticipating evacuation from Leningrad, transferred their archival materials to the Institute for temporary storage, which most often became permanent. This is what Viktor Zhirmunsky did, depositing in the Pushkinsky Dom the results of his huge amount of work on the song folklore of Russian Germans.

It gradually became clear that the materials stored in the Phonogram Archive and the Manuscript Department of the Institute of Russian Literature form a single unit and represent the very “Leningrad Archive of German Folk Songs” which Viktor Zhirmunsky repeatedly mentioned in his works. Some important materials related to the archive, for example Zhirmunsky’s reports on expeditions as well as duplicates of some texts and catalogues, are stored in Zhirmunsky’s personal collection at the St. Petersburg branch of the Archive of the Academy of Sciences.

The Leningrad Archive of German Songs is a systematized collection of typewritten texts, recordings of melodies (on phonographs, records or in notes) and catalogues. The basis of this collection consists of texts and melodies of German ballads and songs of various genres, which in the period from 1926 to 1930 were recorded by Viktor Zhirmunsky, his colleagues and students in the German colonies within the USSR. Well-planned expeditions were complex in nature, and their purpose here was a study of the German colonies in terms of their history, dialectology, folklore and ethnography.

In the period 1929-1933, Zhirmunsky published several articles on the materials of the expeditions, mainly in German, partly in the USSR, partly in Germany. These publications reflect only a small fraction of the truly gigantic work. A significant part of the collected material was obviously almost ready for publication. Thus, an article in 1930 reported on the forthcoming publication of an extensive collection of “Deutsche Volkslieder aus dem Newa-Gebiet”. However, it has not yet

been possible to find this publication. In the early 1930s, due to the political situation in the country, Viktor Zhirmunsky completely stopped all research on German colonies in the USSR and practically did not mention them in his subsequent publications. Zhirmunsky's closest collaborators in the expeditions, Ellinor Johanson and Alfred Ström, were repressed and died.

The first INTAS project studying the Zhirmunsky collection was conducted in the period 1995-1997 under the leadership of Liya V. Bondarko and Tjeerd de Graaf, together with the participation of Natalia D. Svetozarova and other colleagues from the Department of Phonetics of St. Petersburg University and employees of the Phonogram Archive. The project was not only concerned with a description of the content and structure of the "Leningrad Archive of German Folk Song": as part of the project, all wax records were rewritten on magnetic tape in the Vienna Phonogram Archive, and some of them were presented in an audio database developed at the Department of Phonetics of St. Petersburg State University. This opened up a small part of the "Leningrad Archive of German Folk Songs" to researchers and anyone interested in German folklore.

The database includes 176 recordings from 88 records, which were selected on the basis of their better preservation and higher sound quality. The sound was digitized and processed in a computer. The database on CD-ROM makes it possible to listen to (part of) the recordings, access acoustic data and read transcriptions and song texts. This has been combined with all the information contained in the inscriptions on the plates, the notebooks, the catalogues and the publications compiled by Zhirmunsky.

The first brief publication on Zhirmunsky's collection [Svetozarova 1996] in the final report on the project attracted the attention of specialists in German song folklore, in particular, L. E. Naidich, the author of a book on the language and folklore of the St. Petersburg German colonists [Najdič 1997]. She introduced our research to Eckhard John, a researcher at the largest repository of German folk songs – the "German Folk Song

Archive” (Deutsches Volksliedarchiv, Freiburg im Breisgau), and this led to new international collaboration during which the study of Zhirmunsky’s materials was continued. Cooperation with German colleagues was especially interesting because Zhirmunsky had corresponded with the founder of the Freiburg Archive, John Meyer, repeatedly visited the archive there and transferred copies of German ballads recorded in Russia to Freiburg.

In 2001–2002, within the framework of the project “Popular Songs of Russian Germans” [Schirmunski 2001], a detailed description of all materials related to the Archive of Zhirmunsky was carried out [Bertleff et al. 2018], and a consolidated catalogue of texts and melodies was compiled. One of the most peculiar genres of island song folklore – colonist songs – was studied in great detail [John&Svetozarowa 2001].

In 2002–2003, a cooperation agreement was concluded between the German Folk Song Archive and the Institute of Russian Literature. The purpose was to make the sound and text materials of the Archive of German Folk Songs in Leningrad, created by Viktor Zhirmunsky, available to researchers in Germany.

As a result of this work, the German Folk Song Archive received a complete set of CDs with reproduced audio materials, as well as a catalogue related to them. The Phonogram Archive received another set of CDs and a copy of the catalogue. In this way, 4,000 texts and more than 1,000 melodies of German songs that were once sung by Russian Germans were added to the 250,000-strong collection of the Freiburg Archive. Thus, what Zhirmunsky could not do in his time for historical reasons was accomplished during our project activities.

### **3. Voices from the Shtetl. Sofia Davydovna Magid and her collection of Jewish folklore**

In 1999, we initiated a new international project with the financial support of the Netherlands Foundation for Scientific Research NWO. This project was based on the collection of Jewish folklore by Sofia Davydovna Magid and her dissertation

"The Ballad in Jewish Folklore". The manuscript of this book miraculously survived in the Phonogram Archive, where it drew our attention. The further study of the document led to our new project "Voices from the Shtetl". This resulted in the safeguarding of the unique recordings of Jewish folk ballads and to a long-term study of the life and work of the outstanding Russian folklorist Sofia Magid. Because of the important role that this remarkable woman played in the history of the Phonogram Archive and our projects, we shall provide some biographic details [Swetosarova 2004], which we found in Russian sources.

Sofia Magid (Maggid) was born in 1892 in St. Petersburg. Her father David Maggid was a writer and musicologist, a well-known researcher of the history of the Jewish people, the Jewish language, literature, art and music. In the 1920s he worked in the Public Library, where he headed the Jewish Manuscript Department, and at the Institute of Art History in St. Petersburg. In 1912, Sophia Magid entered the St. Petersburg Conservatory. After graduating in 1917 in the piano class, she was engaged in music-pedagogical work and performances, and in 1922 she entered the Higher Courses of Art Studies at the State Institute of Art History. After completing the courses in 1926, she was enrolled as a freelance researcher of the Folklore Section of the Institute of Art History. In 1927, she began working there in the music library. In 1928 and 1930, Sofia Magid conducted folklore expeditions to record Jewish folk songs and instrumental music in Volhynia.

In 1931, the Folklore Section of the Institute of Art History was closed, and Sofia Magid began working in the Phonogram Archive of the Folklore Section of the USSR Academy of Sciences as a researcher and acting curator. From 1931 to 1941, she was engaged in collecting and studying the musical folklore of the peoples of the USSR. She conducted more than 10 expeditions to Ukraine, Belarus, Azerbaijan and Karelia, and recorded about 2,000 tunes and many texts. In 1931, at the invitation of the Institute for the Study of Peoples, she took part in a Belaru-

sian expedition (Mogilev region), recording Belarusian and Jewish folk songs and instrumental music there.

In 1931, Sofia Magid prepared the volume “Folk songs and instrumental music of the Jews of Ukraine”, containing 300 songs with lyrics and notes. Magid’s collecting activity is illustrated by her participation in 1932 in an Azerbaijani folklore expedition at the invitation of the People’s Commissariat of the ASSR (regions of Nagorno-Karabakh and Kurdistan), during which recordings were made of Turkic, Armenian and Kurdish peasant songs and professional music.

In 1933–1934, she was invited to work under a contract to describe and inventory the wax cylinders of the Phonogram Archive of the Institute of Anthropology and Ethnography, which at that time initiated a scientific description of its collections. As a preliminary work, it was necessary to certify 3,175 phonograms with approximately 10,000 recordings. In accordance with the production plan, 1,175 cylinders had to be processed by the staff of the Folklore Section, while for processing the remaining 2,000 it was supposed to invite a special employee under contract.

The following year, being already a senior researcher of the Folklore Section, Magid was engaged in research on the topic “Folk songs of the Jews of Belarus and Volhynia and their social stratification”. She prepared for publication the volume “Collection of Russian Revolutionary Songs of 1890–1905”, containing 200 songs recorded by the author in 1935 from members of the Society of Old Bolsheviks and the Society of Political Prisoners. In 1936, her article “Jewish Revolutionary Folklore” was published in the journal “Soviet Ethnography” (No. 2-3). In the same year, she compiled and published the “List of the collection of Phonograms of the Folklore Section of the Institute of Anthropology and Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences. This list contains an appendix alphabetical lists of nationalities and collectors” (“Soviet Folklore”, 1937, No. 4-5).

In 1938, Sofia Magid completed her PhD thesis “The Ballad in Jewish Folklore”, which was based on recordings of Jewish

ballads she made in Ukraine and Belarus. The text of her dissertation, 428 typewritten pages, was not published but was preserved in the Phonogram Archive of the Pushkinsky Dom as well as in the Public Library. Sofia Magid was also engaged in organizational and editorial work, preparing for publication several collections for the series “800 Songs of the peoples of the USSR”. In 1941, she prepared for this series a collection of “Songs of Karelians and Veps”, which included melodies, texts and their equirhythmic translations, and a collection of “Songs of Belarusian Jews”, containing 200 musical transcripts with texts, comments and an introductory article.

In 1941, the size of the Phonogram Archive of the Folklore Section of the Academy of Sciences had to be reduced, and in September 1941, Sofia Magid was dismissed due to staff cuts. She spent the first 18 months of the blockade in the besieged city, participating in the defense of Leningrad and working in the musicology section of the Union of Leningrad Composers.

From 1943 to 1944, having been evacuated from Leningrad, Sofia Magid worked in the Kazakh SSR, collecting and studying Kazakh song folklore. In 1944, she returned to Leningrad and continued the study of folklore, writing a number of articles and completing bibliographic work on Soviet songs. At the end of 1946, due to the reorganization of the Phonogram Archive, Sofia Magid was reinstated in her former position as a senior researcher in the Folklore Sector. On November 1, 1946, she joined the five-year plan of musical publications in the section of Russian Folk Songs. In 1948, she was awarded the academic title of senior researcher in the specialty of “Russian folklore”. In the same year, Sofia Magid prepared and published a collection of songs from the Pskov region, containing 120 Russian folk songs with notes, texts, a detailed commentary and an introductory article. This publication, “The modern folk song tradition of the Pskov region” was part of the five-year plan of musical publications of the Folklore Sector of the Institute of Russian Literature.

The above manuscripts are the last ones in the list of Sofia Magid’s publications. They indicate the active scientific work

of an elderly and not very healthy researcher. Despite her many achievements, in April 1950, she was expelled from the staff of the Institute “as she did not fulfill the plan of 1949 and presented the work performed in 1949 at a low theoretical level” (according to a letter from the director). The true reason for the dismissal was most likely the dissatisfaction of the Institute’s management with the direction of Magid’s research, particularly her studies of Jewish folklore.

It can be assumed that the dismissal was prepared in advance, and that Sofia Magid’s colleagues made attempts to prevent this. It is in this period, apparently, that the large review of her scientific activity was written by M. Azadovsky and preserved in the archive. This review gives an extremely positive assessment of Sofia Magid as a unique specialist. M. K. Azadovsky writes the following: “Sofia Magid’s accumulated 20 years of work offers the richest auditory experience in songs and instrumental music of various peoples. The use of modern scientific research methods made her one of the best specialists in the scientific processing of phonograms. She had great experience in the art of precisely hearing, visually presenting in musical notation the finest intonation specifics of the musical phenomena”. Azadovsky also speaks about the great role played by the researcher in the formation of the collections of the Phonogram Archive: “S. D. Magid has been associated with the phonogram archive since its start in 1927 as a small facility in the former library of the State Institute of Art History. Since the transition of the phonogram archive to the USSR Academy of Sciences, she has continued to work there as a researcher and acting curator, contributing a lot to the transformation of the phonogram archive into one of the largest repositories in the world. The Phonogram Archive owes much of the replenishment of its collections to the energy and collecting talent of S. D. Magid. She has made about 2000 sound recordings of folk songs: Russian, Belarusian, Kurdish, Turkic, Armenian, Georgian, Jewish, Karelian, Vepsian and of various Peoples of the North”. Unfortunately, even collecting and publishing songs about Lenin and Stalin did not save Sofia Magid

from dismissal. She died in 1954, three years after her dismissal from the Institute where she had worked and to which she had devoted most of her life.

The study of the life and work of Sofia Magid and the Jewish folklore collection she collected on expeditions to Volhynia and Belarus was part of our international project “Voices from the Shtetl: The Past and Present of the Yiddish Language in Russia” (NWO Russian-Dutch Research Cooperation. Project nr. 047-007-012, 1999–2002). During this time, Natalia D. Svetozarova and staff members of the Pushkinsky Dom compiled a complete description of the preserved 141 phonograms, on which more than 500 samples were recorded of ballads and song folklore, instrumental music and Purim spiel. The dissertation “The Ballad in Jewish Folklore” was used for our project. This was the first study on this topic, which bears the imprint of its time and reflects the level of folklore studies of the 1930s, but it still remains of great scientific, historical and cultural interest for today’s scholars. Recordings of 25 ballads have been restored and are presented in an audio database, together with related descriptions from Magid’s dissertation and its musical transcripts.

In 2000, Tjeerd de Graaf and Natalia Svetozarova presented the work of Sophia Magid and her collection of Jewish folklore in Jerusalem, at the invitation of Professor Edwin Serussi, ethnomusicologist at the University of Jerusalem. Their information aroused the keen interest of Israeli musicologists. In the same year, at the initiative of Professor Karl Grözinger, an agreement was concluded between the Pushkinsky Dom, the Russian Institute of Art History and the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Potsdam, Germany. Their purpose was to copy the materials of the Jewish collection put together by Sofia Magid. Thanks to this, the study of this unique collection has been conducted not only in St. Petersburg but also in Germany [Grözinger&Hudak-Lazić 2008].



#### **4. Voices from the Tundra and Taiga. The minority peoples of the North: sound and text**

In 2003, our international research group launched a new project, “Voices from the Tundra and Taiga”. One of the directions of this project was to study audio and handwritten materials of the Phonogram Archive about the languages and folklore of the peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of Russia. Within the framework of this project, employees of the Phonogram Archive and a leading researcher at the Institute of Linguistic Research have modernized a significant part of the Archive’s catalogue of phonograms and described the related handwritten materials. This resulted in a book containing information about the collections stored in the Phonogram Archive [Бурыкин и др. 2005]. These were collected throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century by famous researchers of ethnography, language and folklore from the peoples of Russia, Central Asia, the Far East and North America (V. I. Iokhelson, M. Shirokogorov, L. Y. Sternberg, V. K. Steinitz and others) or recorded by employees of the Phonogram Archive in the 1920s-1930s from students of the Leningrad Institute of Living Oriental Languages and the Institute of the Peoples of the North. Among the latter are the names of famous poets, writers and public figures of the peoples of the North of the Russian Federation. The publication is provided with a list of ethnic groups and a list of collectors. A CD-ROM attached to the book contains an electronic catalogue of Northern collections, a description of related handwritten materials and samples of audio recordings. After Magid’s “Inventory” of 1936, this is the most significant publication on part of the catalogue of the Phonogram Archive in the Russian Institute of Literature. The work aims to attract the attention of a wide range of researchers – historians, ethnographers, linguists, musicologists – to these unique materials. The importance of such a publication for the study of folklore and history can be demonstrated by the following example.

Among the numerous collections of the folklore of the minority peoples of the Russian North, the Phonogram Archive of the Pushkinsky Dom contains 30 phonographic cylinders recorded by the famous Finno-Ugric scholar, Germanist, Slavist and folklorist Wolfgang Steinitz (1905-1967). According to the catalogue in the Phonogram Archive, this collection is described as the Collection Steinitz, which in 1935 was made on wax cylinders from the Khanty people in the Ostyak-Vogul National Region (Berezovsky district) [Winkler 2000]. In total, there are 44 recordings on 30 wax cylinders with instrumental music (folk instruments, songs, “bear songs”, shamanic rituals, fairy tales) [Swetosarowa 2006]. The quality of the recordings made it possible to conduct research on both the musical and the linguistic aspects of the folklore. Apparently, such a study had not yet been undertaken, either by domestic or by foreign scholars of Khanty (Vogul).

From the contents of the aforementioned book on the collections of the Peoples of the North, it was concluded that these were the very wax cylinders that had been considered lost. The author of a book about the expedition by Wolfgang Steinitz [23] writes that Steinitz did not have the opportunity to take the phonograms made during his expedition to Siberia with him when he was forced to leave the Soviet Union in 1937. Wolfgang Steinitz himself and his students were convinced that the recordings were lost during the siege of Leningrad. Luckily, however, recordings were found from this lost collection, as well as a facsimile of the inventory made by Steinitz.

During our project, we compared this inventory and the catalogue data in the Phonogram Archive. The complete match of time and place of the phonographic recordings clearly indicates that 30 phonograms are stored in the Phonogram Archive. Steinitz mentions this in his “Report on an expedition trip to Siberia” for the Institute of the Peoples of the North [Steinitz 1980]. We found additional confirmation in the diary that Wolfgang Steinitz kept during his Siberian expedition to the Ostyaks (Khanty) [Steinitz 1980]. In this remarkable historical document, the author recorded, among other things, the dates,

contents and conditions of his own recordings on the phonograph. The diary not only convinced us of the full identity of the records mentioned by Steinitz and the St. Petersburg phonograms, but also allowed us to clarify aspects of his stay in Siberia. On July 31, 1935, Steinitz started recording on the phonograph the day after his arrival in Lochtotkurt. He recorded the last songs there on October 22 of the same year, the day of his forced departure. Seen in this light, the recordings on the phonograph illustrate the history of the stay of a remarkable researcher of the Khanty language in Siberia.

## **5. New Audio Collections for the Pushkinsky Dom**

During our work in the phonogram archive of the Pushkinsky Dom, we realized that there were many important private collections which are even more endangered than the materials in the official archives – and that these, too, should be saved. Therefore, we started project EAP089, “Reconstruction of Sound Materials of Endangered Languages in the Russian Federation for Sound Archives in St. Petersburg” (2006–2008), which was the first project supported by the Endangered Archives Programme [10] [de Graaf 2002] and carried out by the authors of this paper and their Udmurt colleague Victor Denisov. It was also the first project in the Russian Federation that considered the recommendations of the International Association of Sound Archives as laid down in the reports IASA-TC 03 and IASA-TC 04 [Schüller 2005]. The new digital copies from private collections enriched the phonogram archive of the Pushkinsky Dom; other copies were also provided to the British Library, to the Institute for Linguistic Studies, to the Austrian Phonogram Archive and to scholars who produced or are interested in the original recordings and who will now be able to conduct further research with digital techniques.

Project EAP089 was completed in 2008 and resulted in several digital devices containing the digitized material of seven private audio collections. After making an inventory of the existing private archives, we selected seven collections which

were presented by scholars to the Pushkinsky Dom in the form of analogue cassettes and open reel tapes. The recordings containing the most endangered languages were digitized. Metadata have been prepared for these collections based on the available field notes, archive data and information from the contributors (in total 3.5 Gb of written material). The following survey of these new collections is based on the metadata and lists the names of the collectors, the studied languages, a short description and (in brackets) the numbers in the catalogue of the Pushkinsky Dom and the size of the collection [Denisov et al. 2009].

EAP089-1 (collection № 555)

Albina K. Girfanova's collection of Udeghe language and folklore (23.7 Gb).

This collection, entitled "The last of the Udeghe", was compiled in the years 1983-84 when 18 speakers of Udeghe, a severely endangered Siberian language, were recorded. These recordings consist of fairy tales, folktales, legends, life stories, songs (improvisations, "personal" songs, imitations of "personal" songs of the other individuals), shamanistic incantations and finally phonetic and syntax questionnaires.

EAP089-2 (collection № 559a)

Marina D. Lyublinskaya's collection of Samoyed language and folklore (28.6 Gb).

The Samoyed languages Nenets, Enets and Nganasan are all endangered, and recordings of these languages were made by Kazimir Labanauskas, Vitaly Palchin, Darya Bolina and Marina Lyublinskaya. The latter researcher collected the resulting analogue cassettes and made them available to the EAP project together with the existing metadata. These recordings were made between 1985 and 2000, most of them in Northern Russia.

EAP089-3 (collection № 562)

Krasnoyarsk State Pedagogical University collection of Siberian Russian (12.3 Gb).

This collection, “The folklore of the Siberians”, is the result of research work completed in the 1970s and 1980s by students of linguistics and ethnology at Krasnoyarsk State Pedagogical University. It contains unique sound recordings from 35 Russian villagers of East Siberia, who lived in these areas together with the native peoples. This collection contains stories, personal memories and songs in local Russian dialects, where codeswitching and interference with other languages takes place.

EAP089-4 (collection № 563)

Yevsei I. Peisakh’s collection of Krymchak folklore (10.6 Gb)

The author of this collection is Yevsej Isaakovich Peisakh (1903–1977), who devoted his life to the study of the history, ethnography, culture and language of his native Krymchak people, an endangered ethnic minority in Crimea. In the middle of the 1970s, Peisakh presented his collection of sound recordings to the Pushkinsky Dom. The fifteen informants were recorded in Crimea and Abkhazia between 1963 and 1974, and in lyrical songs, wedding performances, comic songs and folk tunes they provide samples of their language (belonging to the Turkic language family) and culture (based on Judaism).

EAP089-5 (collection № 564)

Peter Y. Skorik’s collection of Kerek folklore (875 Mb)

This collection, entitled “Fairy tale of the Kereks”, contains unique sound recordings from the Kerek people. Kereks live in the Bering region of the Chukotka Autonomous District of the Russian Federation. The endangered Kerek language is spoken by fewer than 100 individuals. The collection includes the full sound recording of a traditional fairy tale, recorded in 1960.

EAP089-6 (collection № 565)

Ivan M. Steblin-Kamensky’s collection of the Tajik and Wakhi language (14.7 Gb).

The author of this collection participated in various archeological and ethnolinguistic expeditions in Tajikistan, the Pamir

Mountains and the south of the Ural Mountains. There, he collected material on the folklore of the local people in Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshansky Autonomous district. The 25 recordings on open reel tapes contain stories and songs in Tajik and Vakhan (Wakhi), recorded between 1966 and 1970.

EAP089-7 (collection № 566)

Alexander L. Grünberg's collection from Afghanistan (127 Gb).

Dr. Grünberg formed this collection of audio recordings in the period 1966–1992. During his work in Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, Dr. Grünberg made tape recordings of various languages and dialects in the territory of Afghanistan: Dari, Pashto, Wakhi, Balochi, Mendzon, Shughni, Tajik, Parachi, Vaygali, Pashtai, Kati, Colonial German and Russian. The collection also includes sound recordings of traditional Afghani and Indian music as well as fragments of meetings of scientific seminars and conferences. The materials in this collection were used by the collector in scholarly publications, and the resulting sound files have been published on the internet by the Endangered Language Archive (ELAR) [ELAR 2025].

As one can see in this survey and in UNESCO's Atlas of the Languages in Danger [Atlas 2025], many of the recorded languages are at present endangered. These new materials in the Pushkinsky Dom are highly valuable contributions to the work of specialists who study earlier stages of these languages.

## 6. Final remarks

The support of the Endangered Archives Programme and other resources has been of significant importance for our work with the sound archives in St. Petersburg and for the documentation and revitalization of endangered languages in the Russian Federation. We hope that this work will continue and that it will remain possible to study the rich cultural heritage of Russia. In the future, new recordings will enrich the collection of the Phonogram Archive and other sound archives.

The result of this work can be used for teaching methods and open up further opportunities to safeguard the languages and other expressions of Russian culture.

At present, the main problems for many Russian sound archives are related to the lack of financial support and technical specialists for the preservation and description of the collections. Moreover, there are no effective and uniform local standards for this work, and there is insufficient exchange between the archives and insufficient support from outside Russia. Access to the collections for interested persons should therefore be improved, and further international programmes for the support of these archives should be developed. In the future, we hope to convince the authorities in Russian institutions housing important sound archives and working in this field that they should agree with the IASA requirements and the recommendations formulated by UNESCO. Finally, we hope that sufficient financial support for this purpose becomes available.

## References

Atlas 2025 — Atlas of the Languages in Danger. URL: <https://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/> (Accessed in April 2025).

Bertleff et al. 2018 — Bertleff I., Eckhard J., Svetozarova N. *Russlanddeutsche Lieder. Geschichte – Sammlung – Lebenswelten*. Veröffentlichungen zur Kultur und Geschichte im östlichen Europa, 52. Bd. 1 und 2. Essen, 2018.

Denisov et al. — Denisov V., Graaf T. de, Svetozarova N. *New sound collections in the Phonogram Archive of the Institute of Russian Literature (Pushkinsky Dom) in St. Petersburg* [A Catalogue resulting from the European Project EAP089]. St. Petersburg, 2009.

ELAR 2025 — Endangered Language Archive (ELAR). URL: <https://www.elararchive.org/dk0656> (Accessed in April 2025).

de Graaf 2002 — Graaf T. de The Use of Sound Archives in the Study of Endangered Languages. *Music Archiving in the World:*

*Papers Presented at the Conference on the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Berlin Phonogramm Archiv.* Berlin, 2002, 101–107.

Grözinger&Hudak-Lazić 2008 — Grözinger E., Hudak-Lazić S. *Unser Rebbe, unser Stalin. Jiddische Lieder aus den St. Petersburgers Sammlungen von Moishe Beregowski (1892–1961) und Sofia Magid (1892–1954).* Wiesbaden, 2008.

John&Swetozarowa 2001 — John E., Swetozarowa N. D. *Kolonistische Lieder. Bestandskatalog einer Liedgattung aus dem Deutschen Volksliedarchiv Leningrad (Sammlung Victor Schirmunski).* Deutsches Volksliedarchiv, Freiburg i. Br., 2001.

Korguzalov&Troitskaya 1993 — Korguzalov V. V., Troitskaya A. D. The Phonogram Archive of the Institute for Russian Literature (Pushkinsky Dom) of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg. *The World of Music*, 1993, 35 (1): 115–120.

Najdič 1997 — Najdič L. *Deutsche Bauern bei St. Petersburg-Leningrad. Dialekte – Brauchtum – Folklore.* Stuttgart, Zeitschrift für Dialektologie und Linguistik – Beihefte, 94. Stuttgart, 1997.

Schüller 2005 — Schüller D. *The Safeguarding of the Audio Heritage: Ethics, Principles and Preservation Strategy.* IASA Technical Committee, IASA-TC 03, December 2005 [Russian translation by Victor Denisov and Natalia Svetozarova].

Steinitz 1980 — Steinitz W. Bericht an das Institut für Nordvölker (INS) über eine Studienreise in den Kreis der Ostjaken und Wogulen im Jahre 1935. W. Steinitz. *Ostjakologische Arbeiten.* Band 4: Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft und Ethnographie, Den Haag, 1980, 433–435.

Svetozarova 1996 — Svetozarova N. D. *Zhirmunsky's Collection of German Folk Songs in the Sound Archives of the Pushkin-sky Dom. Archives of the Languages of Russia.* St. Petersburg; Groningen, 1996, 33–38.

Swetosarova 2004 — Swetosarova N. D. Sofia Magid und ihre Sammlung jiddischer Folklore. *Klezmer, Klassik, jiddisches Lied. Jüdische Musikkultur in Osteuropa.* K. E. Grözinger (Hg.). Wiesbaden, 2004, 7

Swetozarowa 2006 — Swetozarowa N. D. Verschollen geglaubte Feldforschungsaufnahmen. Zur Sammlung Wolfgang Steinitz im Phonogrammarchiv St. Petersburg. *Die Entdeckung*



*des Sozialkritischen Liedes. Zum 100. Geburtstag von Wolfgang Steinitz.* Hrsg. von Eckhard John. Münster; Berlin; New York, 2006, 49–60.

Winkler 2000 — Winkler R.-L. Wolfgang Steinitz' Expedition im Ob-Gebiet im Jahre 1935. Eine wissenschaftshistorische Betrachtung. *Wolfgang Steinitz und die westsibirischen Völker der Chanti und Mansi*. DAMU, Heft 2000, 2: 9–23.

Гиппиус 1936 — Гиппиус Е. В. Фонограммархив Фольклорной секции Института антропологии, этнографии и археологии Академии Наук СССР. Советский фольклор, 1936, 4–5: 405–413. [Gippius E. V. Fonogramm-arkhiv Fol'klornoi seksii Instituta antropologii, etnografii i arkheologii Akademii Nauk SSSR (Phonogram Archive of the Folklore Section of the Institute of Anthropology, Ethnography and Archaeology of the USSR Academy of Sciences). *Sovetskii fol'klor*, 1936, 4–5: 405–413]. (In Russ.)

Бурькин и др. — Бурькин А. А., Гирфанова А. Х., Кастров А. Ю., Марченко Ю. И., Светозарова Н. Д. Коллекции народов Севера в Фонограммархиве Пушкинского Дома: Материалы по языкам и фольклору народов Крайнего Севера и Дальнего Востока России, хранящиеся в Фонограммархиве Института русской литературы (Пушкинский Дом) РАН. Санкт-Петербург: Филологический ф-т СПбГУ, 2005. [Burykin A. A. et al. Kolleksiisii narodov Severa v Fonogrammarkhivе Pushkinskogo Doma: Materialy po yazykam i fol'kloru narodov Krainego Severa i Dal'nego Vostoka Rossii, khranyashchie-sya v Fonogrammarkhive Instituta russkoi literatury (Pushkinskii Dom) RAN (Collections on the Peoples of the North in the Phonogram Archive of the Pushkinsky Dom). Sankt-Peterburg: Filologicheskii f-t SPbGU, 2005.] (In Russ.)

Магид 1936 — Магид С. Д. Список собраний Фонограммархива Фольклорной секции ИАЭА Академии Наук СССР. Советский фольклор, 1936, 4–5, 1936: 415–428. [Magid S. D. Spisok sobranii Fonogramm-arkhiva Fol'klornoi seksii IAEA Akademii Nauk SSSR (List of the collection of Phonograms-archives of the Folklore Section of the Yakutsk Eurasian Academy of Sciences of the USSR). *Sovetskii fol'klor*, 1936, 4–5, 1936: 415–428.] (In Russ.)