

## OBITUARY

Samuel Baud-Bovy

27 Nov. 1906 – 2 Nov. 1986

We mourn the death of our colleague Samuel Baud-Bovy, who died in his native Geneva a few weeks before his eightieth birthday. A member of the IFMC/ICTM from 1948, (he read a paper at the first Conference, held in Basel in that year), he later served on the Executive Board of the Council, from 1977 to 1981.

Professor Baud-Bovy was a man of many gifts, so wide-ranging that he excelled in three, even four quite different fields: as a prominent orchestral and choral conductor, and as teacher, associate director and director of the Geneva Conservatory; as professor of the Greek language and literature for 27 years at the University of Geneva; as the man who founded modern scholarly research in Greek folk music, in all its breadth in time and space.

The reference books inform us of his special studies of conducting and musicology in Geneva, Vienna and Paris. We will mention his advanced study of Greek in Paris with Professor Hubert Pernot, who made the first recordings of Greek folk music on the island of Chio in 1899. After Paris, in 1929, Baud-Bovy, 23 years old, arrived in Athens for further study of Greek and Greek traditional music, and met immediately with Mme Melpo Merlier. Thus began a collaboration which continued until her death in 1979. A tribute to her intelligence and support appears in his preface to his book, *Essai sur la chanson populaire grecque* (1983).<sup>1</sup>

Baud-Bovy's folk song collecting in the Dodecanese islands in 1930, 1931, 1933, where he was seeking to record by ear the entire basic repertory of songs and instrumental tunes, resulted in his published collection of music and texts: *Chansons du Dodécanèse* (2 vols., Athens 1935-38). An equally fundamental work, devoted to Greek folk poetry, appeared in French in 1936: *La chanson populaire grecque du Dodécanèse*. Tome I. *Les textes*. Paris. 407 pp. The latter, with its analysis of verse forms, refers to the entire range of Greek, from ancient to modern. Its discussion of the narrative texts, their themes and probable geographic origin, is a tour de force which won the admiration of the finest world specialists in Greek.

The major works on Greek folk music by Baud-Bovy after the war are his song collection from Western Crete: *Chansons populaires de Crète occidentale*. Geneva 1972 (310 pp. with a disc); his book on the Greek cleftic (outlaw) songs: *Etudes sur la chanson cleftique*. Athens 1958; and his brief work of synthesis, the aforementioned *Essai sur la chanson populaire grecque*. Nauplia 1983 (with two cassettes and a booklet containing their transcriptions). Of his many scholarly articles, we will refer particularly to those in the *Revue de Musicologie* (Paris), 1967-1986, in *Studia Musicologica* (Budapest), 1965, 1977, 1979, and not least in the

Journal of the IFMC, vols. 1, 17, 20, in the Yearbook, vol. 3, and in *Studia instrumentorum musicae popularis*, vol. 5.

His *Essai* of 1983 is, despite its brevity, of great value primarily for its facts on the songs, instruments and dances of various regions. It also addresses verse forms, the earliest elements, and the urban songs of Constantinople, Iannina and Smyrna. But it is also important for comparative studies: suggestions constantly appear (supported by evidence) that point to possible relations in form and content with the music of the Balkans, the Near East and the Mediterranean as a whole.

The Swiss ethnomusicologist Laurent Aubert has written that Baud-Bovy's attention to detail is the salient feature of his scientific work. He loved to say "in our *métier*, only the details are important." This was the guaranty of his absolute intellectual honesty.<sup>2</sup>

Baud-Bovy began his tribute to Constantin Brailoiu (JIFMC 1958) by speaking of his personality. So we permit ourselves to add, now, that Baud-Bovy himself was not only a fine scholar, but also a charming, remarkably modest, unfailingly courteous, helpful, tactful and wise human being.

BARBARA KRADER

#### Notes

1. See her article to him in her preface to his book on the cleftic song.
2. Taken from his contribution to "Hommages à Baud-Bovy", *Revue musicale de Suisse romande*, March 1987 (pp. 13-35), p. 16. I am grateful to the Embassy of Switzerland, Washington D.C., for finding this for me.