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Encyclopedia of Romantic Nationalism in Europe

Práč, Ivan (Ján Bogumir)

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Prach, Ivan

Jan Bohumir Prač (the Russian name-form often changes his given name to Ivan, Иван Прач), of Bohemian extraction, was born in Silesia in the mid-18th century and arrived in St. Petersburg in the 1770s to work as a clavichord master and music teacher. Very little is known about his life in Russia, except that he was offered a position as a teacher in the recently founded school of the Academic theatre in St. Petersburg in 1783.

Possibly he was employed at a time in the household of Nikolaj Aleksandrovič L'vov (1753-1803), a renowned architect, Academy member, amateur ethnographer and collector of folk music. Inspired by Herder's *Volkslieder*, L'vov, who was also an associate of a musical salon attracting famous poets like Deržavin and Kapnist, had collected folks songs during hunting expeditions and visits to relatives in rural Russia. He invited Prač in 1790 to write the musical notation for these songs. *The Collection of Russian Folk Songs with Their Tunes* contained an unsigned introduction on the genre by L'vov and was published under Prač's name only. The song collection was not the first in Russia, Mihail Čulkov had published four volumes under the title *Collection of Various Songs* in 1770 and Vasilij Fedorovič Trutovskij had followed suit with a 4-volume *Collection of simple Russian songs with notes* (1776-1790). The Prač-L'vov collection, however, proved to be more influential in Russia's musical development. It saw six re-editions with more songs added. Some of the motifs set by Prač were taken up by 19th-century Russian composers like Musorgskij and Rimskij-Korsakov.

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