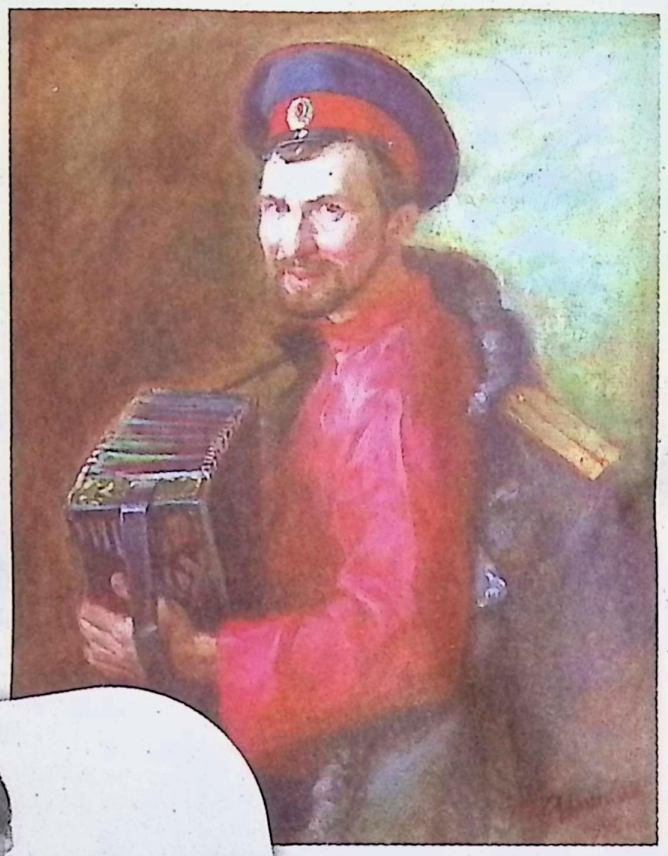
Bayan-the Russian accordion

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THE thing that attracts me about Russian culture is their Folk music. This oldest genre of music tells their timeless tales. The symbol of a new folk instrument and an indispensable part of all folk festivities and merry-makings is the Bayan (accordion), one of the most perfect chromatic accordions existing nowadays. It is widely known as "button accordion", while buttons are not the only difference. As compared to the western accordion, bayan has a different tone colour and fuller sound and is great for dance melodies.

The instrument was named after the legendary Russian bard, narrator and musician Boyan.

It comes from the Asian instrument known as "shen". Shen arrived in Russia long ago, in the 10-13th centuries during the Tatar yoke. Some researches assume that shen made its way from Asia to Russia and then to Europe where it was developed and became the popular instrument of accordion.

Saratov accordions that followed Tula accordions had an original timbre thanks to bells added to their construction. They became very popular.

The accordion masters from Vyatka expanded the sound range of the instrument by adding buttons for the left and right hands.

Livensk accordions had extremely long bellows some of them reaching two meters; a performer could even wrap the instrument around him.

Two-row accordions the construction of which was adopted from Europe were the next stage of the instrument's development.



Bayan owes its existence to the gifted Russian master Pyotr Sterligov. Chromatic bayans developed by Sterligov were perfected so fast from 1905 to 1915 that the latest models of that period are still used for factory production of the instruments. The instrument became especially famous thanks to the accordion virtuoso Yakov Orlansky-Titarenko.

Recently it has become popular among advanced performers: it is peculiar for the fact that the left-hand button board has no pre-set chords. Considerably expanding the music performing scope of the instrument, it makes the playing technique much more complicated.

Today bayan with its broad sound range and purity of tone remains a popular instrument for playing folk music and is often the instrument of choice for accordion virtuosi who perform classical music.

Sources: Internet