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Bulbul Memorial Museum as a Center of Cultural and Historical Memory

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Abstract. *The aim of the article* is to study and introduce into scientific circulation information about the current activities of the Bulbul Memorial Museum regarding the preservation of the musical heritage of the founder of the professional vocal art of Azerbaijan. The material base of the study consists of the exposition of the Bulbul Memorial Museum and archival sources. *Results.* The article examines the history of creation and the current activities of the Bulbul Memorial Museum in Shusha after the occupation. The exposition of the museum is characterised, which presents Bulbul's personal belongings, materials reflecting his creative, scientific, educational and social activities. The article provides a brief overview of the artist's creative achievements, and also examines Bulbul's documents and works. In particular, the article begins a discussion about such a peak of Bulbul's work as the opera "Keroglu". The activities of the Research Music Cabinet, which plays an indispensable role in the history of the musical culture of Azerbaijan, are highlighted. Information is provided on the unique exhibits known as phonograph records, which are well preserved at the Bulbul Memorial Museum. *Scientific novelty.* For the first time, the role of information technologies in the presentation of the Bulbul Memorial Museum is studied through the prism of preserving the musical heritage of the founder of professional vocal art of Azerbaijan. *Conclusions.* The Bulbul Memorial Museum in Shusha contains a powerful display of personal things and documents highlighting Bulbul's musical legacy as the founder of professional vocal art in Azerbaijan. The use of information technologies for the presentation of the museum's exposition meets modern requirements of museum activity. The use of a modern technological tool in the Bulbul house-museum — a monitor with a touch screen — is an important feature that arouses interest in the museum.

Keywords: museum; fund; exhibit; piece; document; Bulbul; music; phonograph record

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Introduction

In this article, the archive of Bulbul, the first vocalist in Azerbaijan, the founder of the Azerbaijani professional vocal art, the People's Artist of the USSR (the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), and a professor, is explored. Before delving into the artist's archive, it is appropriate to take a brief journey through his life and creativity.

Recent Research and Publication Analysis. The creative heritage of Azerbaijani professional vocal artist Bulbul has been studied by such scholars as Z. Safarova (2020), A. Mammadova (1964), B. Akbarov (2023), G. Shamilli and G. Akhundova (2022), F. Jabbarova (2022).

Aim of the article

The aim of the article is to study and introduce into scientific use the information about current activities of the Bulbul Memorial Museum in preserving the music heritage of the founder of the professional vocal art in Azerbaijan.

An exposition of the Bulbul Memorial Museum and archival sources form the material base of this research.

Main research material

Bulbul Mammadov — was born in 1897 in Shusha, the cradle of Azerbaijani music. During his childhood, he spent many years in this city, which was a homeland of numerous great poets, musicians, singers, and prominent personalities. After moving to Ganja, he started receiving invitations to gatherings held in Tiflis (Tbilisi), and he frequently began visiting Tiflis, where he listened to operas brought from Italy. These performances sparked in him the desire to receive education in the homeland of vocal art, Italy.

Between 1921 and 1927, Bulbul, as the first Azerbaijani student, began his vocal education at the Azerbaijan State Conservatory. After completing his studies successfully, the Azerbaijani government sent him to Milan, Italy, for four years to further improve his education. During this period, he received lessons from famous musicians such as Giuseppe Anselmi, Delli Ponti, and Raffaele Grani. Despite receiving job offers to stay and work in Italy, Bulbul decided to return to his homeland to share the knowledge and skills he had acquired with his own people.

Bulbul has scientifically proven the possibility of merging European professional vocal school with Azerbaijani vocal performance culture.

Bulbul was the initiator and organiser of the establishment of the Opera Studio, the voice-recording Cabinet, the Notes Publisher, the I Music Olympics in Azerbaijan to bring out bright talents, and a large conference of the most famous musicians of the USSR aimed at ensuring unity in music (Mammadova, 2011, p. 92).

In 1976, with the decision of the Council of Ministers, a museum was created to immortalise the rich heritage of Bulbul, who made invaluable contributions to the development of Azerbaijani music culture. The museum was established through the personal initiative of the National Leader Heydar Aliyev, and its grand opening took place on June 10, 1982.

When the museum was created, Bulbul's archive was donated to the museum by his family. The museum was located on the second floor of the building, which was allocated for culture and arts officials in 1937. The artist had been living in this house from 1937 to 1961. The museum preserves Bulbul's personal belongings, documents, and materials reflecting his creative, scientific, educational, and social activities.

The museum's exposition is preserved as it was during the artist's lifetime. The exhibition displays materials reflecting the period from Bulbul's childhood to the end of his life. (Figure 1, 2)

A museum exposition refers to a display of museum items organised and arranged on scientific concepts and modern artistic-architectural principles, through which educational and cultural objectives can be achieved. The term "exposition" originates from the Latin word "exposito", which means "to explain", "to show", or "to exhibit" (Eyvazova, 2009, p. 9).



Figure 1. Bedroom, The Bulbul Memorial Museum. Photo by the author – F. Jabbarova



Figure 2. Sitting room, The Bulbul Memorial Museum. Photo by the author – F. Jabbarova

The exposition is the part of the museum that is always in front of everyone's eyes and accessible to everyone. The rich and unseen side of the museum is its collections (the fund).

Museum Fund refers to the collection of permanent, preserved museum artifacts and collections in museums that are under state ownership, municipal ownership, and private ownership within the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan (Allahverdiyeva, 2010, p. 22).

The structure of the funds is based on the composition of the museum exhibits stored in the fund. Accordingly, the Bulbul Memorial Museum was divided into the Main Fund and the Scientific Assistant Fund. The Main Fund contains more than 9,000 items. The museum exhibits are categorised into 5 funds:

- Written documents fund;
- Photo negatives fund;
- Descriptive documents fund;

Remembrance memorabilia fund;

Audio recordings fund.

If we look at these funds separately, we will witness the rich musical treasure collected at the Bulbul Memorial Museum.

In the written documents fund documents, books, notes, presentations and articles, letters and telegrams, manuscripts, posters, newspapers, and journals are collected. These documents are evidence of Bulbul's contributions to the development of Azerbaijani music art.

Upon researching this fund, it is essential to consider Bulbul's creativity during the Italian period.

The documents related to this period are the materials that always attract attention and interest from visitors. Here, we should mention the article about Bulbul, published in the famous Italian music journal "Arte Nostra", official documents about him being sent to Italy, a tram ticket, letters from teachers, and books. (Figure 3–6).

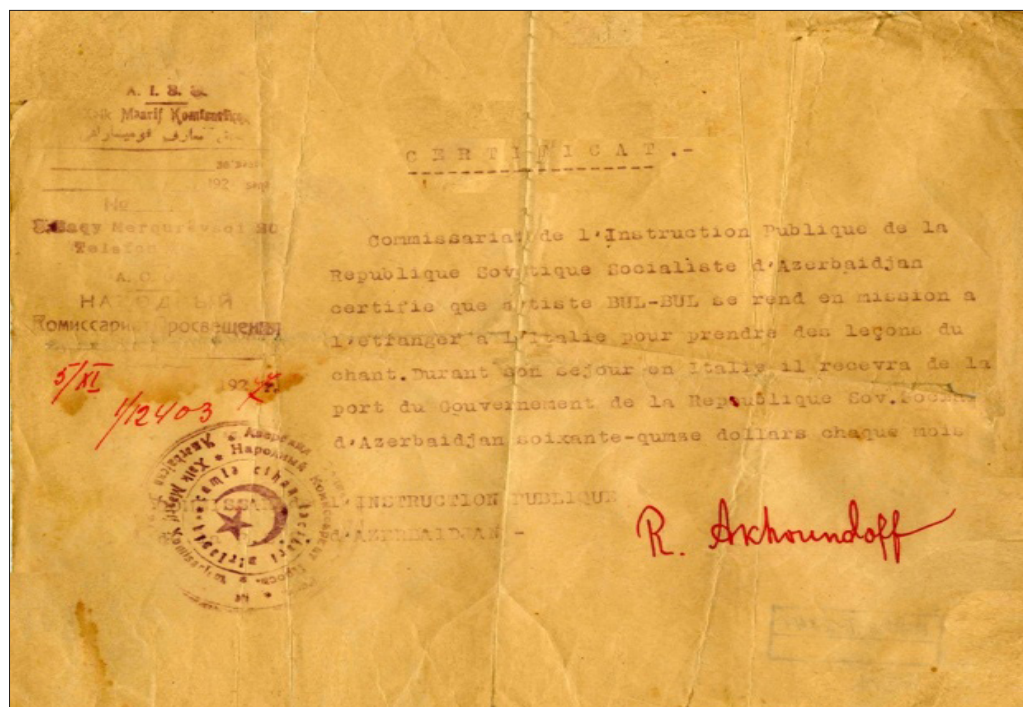


Figure 3. Document regarding the scholarship for Bulbul. Baku. 05.11.1927
(Narodni komissariat prosveshcheniya, 1927)

The document materials bearing the signature of Bulbul, who was the initiator of vocal conferences, consultations, and gatherings of troubadours, create significant opportunities for researchers exploring the legacy of Bulbul today.

In one of his articles, Bulbul noted: "The distinctive feature of Azerbaijani classical music artists lies in their profound knowledge and appreciation of the rich folk music treasury of Azerbaijan. They have embraced folk music with great affection, enriched

it with a wide array of colors and ornaments, and elevated it to new heights. They have dedicated all their skills to refine the charm, beauty, and liveliness of folk songs, working with great mastery on the profound and sophisticated musical compositions. These works, filled with profound content, are interconnected with the creativity of folk music and songs” (Bulbul, n.d.-b).

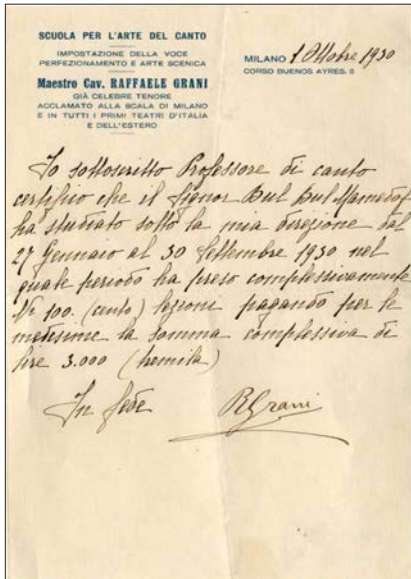


Figure 4. Letters from Raffaele Grani. Italy. Milan (Bul-Bul, 1930a)

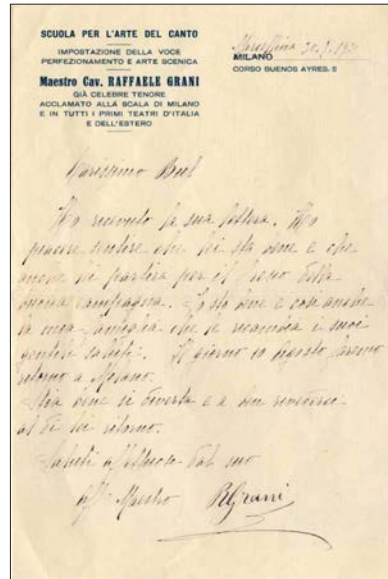


Figure 5. Letters from Raffaele Grani. Italy. Milan (Bul-Bul, 1930b)



Figure 6. Italian music journal “Arte Nostra” (“Bul-Bul dell’Azerbedgian”, 1931)

In the article, written with his own signature, Bulbul noted that the opera “Koroğlu” is considered as a milestone and a new era in the creative work of Uzeyir bey, in the history of Azerbaijani opera and in the beginning of opera art.

The character of Koroglu, as depicted by Bulbul, was not only role he loved, but the essence of his artistry. The opera “Koroglu” was created through the creative pursuit of exploring Azerbaijani mugham, ashig creativity, and folk tunes over many years, shaped by Uzeyir bey’s artistic endeavors and passing through the sieve of creativity. The opera is based on four main mugham modes: “Chahargah”, “Shur”, “Bayaty-Shiraz”, and “Rast”. The lament in the fourth act and Koroglu’s song are excellent examples of ashig creativity. Uzeyir bey grasped the dignity of the people, felt the essence of nature, and created an immortal opera through his artistry.

On the occasion of Bulbul’s 100th anniversary, the National Leader Heydar Aliyev expressed his thoughts about the opera “Koroğlu” as follows: “The pinnacle of Bulbul’s creativity lies in the character of Koroğlu in his opera “Koroğlu”. The masterpiece and pinnacle of the brilliant Azerbaijani composer Uzeyir Hajibeyov’s creativity is also the opera “Koroğlu”. Bulbul’s irreplaceable voice and performance played a significant role in the creation of this opera as much as the effort Uzeyir bey put in it. One might think that perhaps in the early 30s, had Bulbul not evolved as a professional vocal and national master, Uzeyir Hajibeyov would have faced difficulties in creating the immortal opera “Koroğlu” (Mammadova, 2011).

The personal library of Bulbul reflects his taste and deep interest in various books. Here, around 500 books are preserved. Hundreds of books are exhibited in the exposition. Among them, there are books with heartfelt words written by authors. Naturally, among the artist’s books, a significant portion belongs to the vocal art and the school of recitation. As a result of research, we see that the works of our genius poet Nizami Ganjavi also make up a considerable part. This shows that Bulbul loved Nizami Ganjavi greatly. It is no coincidence that the romances “Sensiz” (Without You) and “Sevgili janan” (Beloved Darling) composed by Uzeyir bey, with Nizami’s lyrics, have left their mark on the history of Azerbaijani music through Bulbul’s performance.

The manuscripts of these ballads, as well as the printed versions, are preserved in the museum’s written documents fund.

On April 3, 1941, Uzeyir Hajibeyli wrote his heartfelt words to Bulbul on his romance “Sensiz” in the following way: “To SSRİ People’s Artist, a skillful performer of the Koroğlu character, a musician, the extraordinary Bulbul, to remember from the composer...” (Hajibeyov, 1941).

One of the selected exhibits with its uniqueness is the symphonic mugham “Kurd Ovshari”. Our esteemed composer Fikrat Amirov’s symphonic mugham compositions “Shur” and “Kurd Ovshari”, were created thanks to the initiative and participation of Bulbul. Today, the manuscripts and printed versions of “Shur” and “Kurd Ovshari” symphonic mugham are shown in the museum.

In this fund, we can also get acquainted with the posters of the concerts of Bulbul, as well as opera posters. Some of the posters were displayed at the Bulbul House-Museum in Shusha between 1983 and 1992, but, during the occupation, all the museum’s exhibits were destroyed, including the posters.

In the photo negatives fund photos covering the period from Bulbul’s childhood to the museum creation are preserved. The oldest picture dates back to 1909, and was

taken in Shusha. This picture retains its relevance even today. It is displayed not only in the Bulbul Memorial Museum located in Baku, but also in the Bulbul's House-Museum in Shusha.

In general, childhood and family photos of famous artists always attract the interest of the audience. Although, there are few pictures covering Bulbul's childhood in the Photo negatives collection, hundreds of photos are preserved from his youth onwards.

In the descriptive documents fund, Bulbul's portraits, busts, and paintings on tea stones, as well as depictions of Bulbul and his wife lady Adila are safeguarded. The portrait painted by Odtakin Agababayev of Bulbul in 1952 while he was alive, along with the works of Aslan Rustamov, Oqtay Sadiqzade, Shahpeleng Mammadov, Toqrul Narimanbeyov and Nadir Abdulrahmanov are included in this collection.

Remembrance memorabilia fund is the richest and most unique fund. It preserves personal belongings of Bulbul, which are of interest to everyone. The exhibition showcases the handmade furniture made of chestnut wood that Bulbul ordered from Germany. These items include bedroom furniture, guest room furniture, and a bookshelf.

The household items owned by Bulbul are also included in this context. Utensils made of silver, crystal glasses, the vase that Bulbul gifted to his wife on her birthday and other vases are among these belongings.

The clothing items preserved in the Remembrance memorabilia collection include tailcoat, suit, overcoat, coat, and hats, which are regularly conserved by museum staff in accordance with the "Instruction on the Conservation and Preservation of the Cultural Heritage and Museum Collections of the Republic of Azerbaijan"

The audio recordings fund can be called a treasure. It preserves phonograph records, cylinders, magnetic tape reels, cassettes, and CDs. Phonograph records are among the most valuable items in the museum.

When speaking about phonograph records, it is essential to highlight Bulbul's creation of the first Scientific Research Music Cabinet in Transcaucasia in 1932. The main purpose of the Cabinet was to collect and transcribe musical treasures in Azerbaijan's regions. SRMC organised scientific expeditions to various regions. For the first scientific expedition, Bulbul traveled to Karabakh with Asaf Zeynalli, the author of the first Azerbaijani ballads. The materials they collected formed the basis of the Cabinet (Bulbul, n.d.-c).

The idea of creating a Scientific Research Music Cabinet was born as early as 1926. In one of his articles, Bulbul writes: "In the autumn of 1926, taking a group of skilled musicians (tar, kemenche (lyra), balaban, zurna, etc.) with me, I went to the Moscow Institute of Music Sciences and organised a presentation there. The director of the institute's ethnomusicology department, the renowned music ethnomusicologist Paskhalov, warmly welcomed us, appreciated the initiative, and wholeheartedly supported our significant endeavor. Firstly, we began learning about the establishment of the music ethnomusicology department at that institute, the rules of collecting folk tunes, and the organisation of expeditions.

In that 26th year, we first released the song "Sandıq girsem neylersen?" ("What Would You Do If I Got Into a Chest?") and also published and recorded several other melodies.

This should be the first musical publication in the history of Azerbaijani music." (Bulbul, n.d.-a).

After becoming familiar with the Moscow Institute of Music Sciences, Bulbul established the Scientific Research Music Cabinet in 1932. Using an Edison phonograph he brought from Leningrad in the same year, he would travel from region to region, recording folk songs in their native languages onto phonograph cylinders. These phonograph records were then listened to in the Cabinet and transcribed into musical notation. Many of these songs, unheard and unperformed to this day, are carefully preserved on these phonograph records with great care (Figure 7, 8).



Figure 7. An Edison phonograph,
The Bulbul Memorial Museum.
Photo by the Author — F. Jabbarova



Figure 8. A phonograph record,
The Bulbul Memorial Museum.
Photo by the Author — F. Jabbarova

Approximately 140 phonograph records are in relatively good condition, and there are also some that are sufficient. It is possible that the broken phonograph records may have become useless while Bulbul was still alive.

Today, there are applications from musicologists to the museum regarding the phonograph records. There are even proposals to take initiatives for re-listening to the phonograph records, and work is underway on this.

Exactly the songs recorded from the phonograph records are now in the museum's written archives. As it appears, the museum's funds are interconnected like a chain.

We can get acquainted with the voice of Bulbul, recorded to phonograph records, magnetic tape reels, cassettes, and discs containing operas, folk songs, romances, mugham, and composed songs.

Today, the Bulbul Memorial Museum serves as a research institution for musicologists. In recent years, there have been applications for scientific research related to Bulbul's creative work and the Music Cabinet. Researchers have written research papers and earned academic titles based on the documents and materials preserved in Bulbul's archive.

The museum, which has been operating for many years, has been transformed into a center that promotes Azerbaijani music art and the creativity of Bulbul. It is worth noting that today, the Bulbul House-Museum in Shusha, which is a branch of the Bulbul Memorial Museum, has been active for 2 years.

The museum operated from 1983 until the occupation date on May 8, 1992, when it was attacked and destroyed by Armenian occupiers. During that period, all the exhibited

items were destroyed. Among these items were Bulbul's daf, his khanende costume, tailcoat, grand piano, original posters and various documents (Salmanli, 2022).

In the last approximately 30 years, the historical territories of Azerbaijan, which were under occupation, were liberated by the Victorious Azerbaijani Army during the 44-day Patriotic War under the leadership of our Supreme Commander. On November 8, 2020, our cultural capital, Shusha, was liberated.

During his first visit to Shusha, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr. Ilham Aliyev, presented the scattered bust of Bulbul as an example of vandalism to the whole world (Azertac, 2021).

The exposition of the museum is based on the materials preserved in the Bulbul Memorial Museum and features the vandalized bust of Bulbul during the occupation, which is kept to demonstrate Armenian aggression, while a new bust of Bulbul has been erected.

The courtyard of the house has been restored, preserving its original appearance, and a 250–300 person open-air concert hall has been created. Various festivals, events, and concerts have already taken place here.

In the Bulbul House-Museum in Shusha, modern technology, including sensor monitors, is used to meet the requirements of the era. On the monitor, information about Bulbul's life, creativity, from his childhood to the end of his life, written works, and quotes are presented in the Azerbaijani, Russian, English, Chinese and Arabic languages (Jabbarova, 2022, p. 244) (Figure 9–10).



Figure 9. The Bulbul house-museum in Shusha. Photo by the Author — F. Jabbarova



Figure 10. The Bulbul house-museum in Shusha. Photo by the Author – F. Jabbarova

For many years, the Bulbul Memorial Museum, which has been active, has been transformed into a centre that promotes Azerbaijani music art and the creativity of Bulbul.

Museums, an integral part of Azerbaijani culture, play a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage. When mentioning museums, it is important to highlight home museums as well. The museum discussed in the article is the Memorial Museum of Bulbul, a place that safeguards his legacy and extensively reflects his activities. The museum plays an invaluable role in preserving and passing on Bulbul's legacy to future generations.

The museum's exhibition captivates visitors with its detailed arrangement. The establishment, with its unique architecture, attracts attention with its distinctiveness. The museum's exhibition is organised in a memorial style while also preserving the essence of a home.

When talking about the museum, it is impossible to forget its fund. The fund is quite rich, even contributing a significant archive of valuable materials. The structure of the fund is determined mainly by the composition of the museum exhibits preserved in the archive. This richness is a result of Bulbul's creativity.

From its inception to the present day, the museum has managed to retain its relevance. The museum, which attracts numerous visitors, is not just a place that reflects pleasant and lovely memories. It is also a valuable place for conducting independent

research. The museum's fund, which has been preserved for years, supports this. There are numerous students, researchers, and musicians who apply to the museum. The main collection contains over 9000 items. The attention-grabbing phonograph records in the fund are still precious artifacts awaited by researchers today.

When we consider the creative activity of Bulbul, we can emphasise the significance of different cities and periods here. Each period in the cities where he performed is also a research object that requires further investigation. The period of his activity in Italy, followed by his subsequent work, attracts more attention from tourists visiting the museum. A young singer from the Muslim world, who has brilliantly synthesized national and secular music, creating a masterpiece of art.

Bulbul's creativity has been highly valued not only in his time but also in the subsequent periods by the ruling leaders. The great leader Heydar Aliyev highly appreciated Bulbul's creativity and took steps to immortalise his memory by initiating the opening of the museum in his honor in 1976. As a result of his efforts, the Bulbul Memorial Museum was opened in Baku in 1982, and Bulbul House-Museums were opened in Shusha in 1983. The great leader, who followed all of the artist's creations, particularly admired the character of Koroglu in the opera "Koroglu". Having known all the pieces of the opera, Heydar Aliyev as a person who valued music highly emphasised this in his public speeches.

When we look at the field of culture, in recent years, the use of information technologies has led to a series of innovations and changes. The creation of official websites for cultural institutions such as museums, theaters, libraries, cinemas, concert and exhibition halls, and the provision of electronic activities play a significant role in their promotion.

Bulbul Memorial Museum is a museum that effectively utilises the latest ICT (Information and Communication Technology) capabilities, much like other museums. The museum is active on all social networks. The official website of Bulbul Memorial Museum was launched in May 2014. On the official website of the museum, you can find academic and children-oriented information about the genius Bulbul, extensive information about the museum, videos, dedicated presentations to the artist, archives, online tours, photographs, and more. The museum also has pages on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, which are actively managed by designated staff. Information about the museum's exhibits, events, and innovations is shared with the users.

At the Bulbul Memorial Museum, despite the absence of AIS (Automated Information System) and CAMIS (Computer-Aided Museum Information System), tasks are carried out within the available facilities. Entry books and scientific description sheets are processed in electronic format, and electronic passports are prepared.

The preserved archival documents, photographs, and newspapers in the museum's fund are scanned and stored on information carriers. This research work provides an opportunity for researchers investigating the subject of Bulbul, directors preparing any production related to him, and journalists wishing to write articles to obtain quick and operative responses.

One of the other technologies used in the museum is audio-visual equipment. During events, short documentary films and videos related to the subject are showcased. Visitors to the museum also have the opportunity to listen to Bulbul's performances during guided tours.

In the branch of the museum, the Bulbul House-Museum in Shusha, a touch screen monitor has been installed. On the monitor, various materials related to Bulbul's life and creativity are presented in electronic format. The availability of these materials in multiple languages makes them highly beneficial for tourism.

Conclusions

The preservation of the musical heritage of the founder of professional vocal art in Azerbaijan at the Bulbul Memorial Museum is based on the valuable exposition of memorial items and the powerful use of information technology for their presentation.

The museum's exhibits confirm the depth of Bulbul's artistic heritage and the significance of its role in the country's culture.

The museum that preserves Bulbul's heritage is a research institution. As a result of research, it was found that some folk songs recorded on phonographic records stored in the museum were not recorded in our time. Songs recorded on phonograph records from the regions of Azerbaijan at Bulbul's initiative in the 1930s are planned to be re-written and performed by modern artists in the near future.

Scientific novelty. For the first time, the role of information technologies in the presentation of the Bulbul Memorial Museum is highlighted through the prism of preserving the musical heritage of the founder of professional vocal art of Azerbaijan.

In future, the Bulbul Memorial Museum plans to adapt its exhibits to create a unique space for young people to learn about Bulbul's heritage. Which will become the *topic of future research*.

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Conflict of interests

The author declares that have no conflicts of interests.

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Меморіальний музей Бюльбюля як центр культурно-історичної пам'яті

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Анотація. *Мета статті* — вивчити та ввести в науковий обіг інформацію про діяльність Меморіального музею Бюльбюля щодо збереження музичної спадщини основоположника професійного вокального мистецтва Азербайджану. Джерельну базу дослідження формувала експозиція Меморіального музею Бюльбюля та архівні джерела. *Результати дослідження.* У статті розглянуто історію створення та діяльність Меморіального музею Бюльбюля в Шуші після окупації. Схарактеризовано експозицію музею, в якій представлено особисті речі Бюльбюля, матеріали, що відображають його творчу, наукову, просвітницьку та громадську діяльність. У статті подано короткий огляд творчих здобутків митця, а також розглянуто документи та роботи Бюльбюля, зокрема його оперу «Кероглу». Висвітлено діяльність науково-дослідного музичного кабінету, який відіграє важливу роль в історії музичної культури Азербайджану. Надано інформацію про унікальні експонати, такі як фонографічні платівки, що добре збереглися в Меморіальному музеї Бюльбюля. *Наукова новизна.* Вперше роль інформаційних технологій у презентації Меморіального музею Бюльбюля досліджено крізь призму збереження музичної спадщини засновника професійного вокального мистецтва Азербайджану. *Висновки.* Меморіальний музей Бюльбюля в Шуші містить експозицію особистих речей і документів, що становлять музичну спадщину Бюльбюля — засновника професійного вокального мистецтва в Азербайджані. Використання інформаційних технологій для представлення експозиції музею відповідає сучасним вимогам музейної діяльності. Важливою особливістю, що викликає інтерес до музею, є використання в будинку-музеї Бюльбюля сучасного технологічного засобу — монітора з сенсорним екраном.

Ключові слова: музей; фонд; експонат; твір; документ; Бюльбюль; музика; фонографічний запис

