

Video Librarian

VOL. 27 ■

THE VIDEO REVIEW MAGAZINE FOR LIBRARIES

■ NO. 4

Songs Along a Stony Road ★★★

(2011) 70 min. DVD: \$24.95; individuals: \$99; institutions. Zala Films. PPR. ISBN: 978-0-972-45887-0.

For this lovingly shot documentary, co-directors George Csicsery and Chris Teerink spent eight years following the efforts of one man to preserve the folk music of Transylvania and Romanian Moldavia. Born in 1926, musicologist Zoltán Kallós has collected over 15,000 songs while also teaching and working for the forest service. Kallós assembled most of his recordings and songbooks before the reign of communist leader Nicolae Ceaușescu, who he says “dumbed down” the people. Between 1980-1989, Kallós couldn’t even go into Moldavia, but prior to that, more social and cultural intermingling took place between Romanian, Hungarian, Szekler, Csángó, and Roma peoples. The filmmakers roam rural areas such as Magyarszovát and Somesul to record and interview singers Kallós befriended along the way, including János Zerkula, Zoltan Antal, and Erzsébet Papp (the latter met Kallós in 1941 when she was a teenager, although they wouldn’t reconnect until 1962). The female performers, who all wear headscarves, sing a capella, while the men often perform to violin accompaniment, although other instruments also include mouth harp, flute, church bells, tilinka, and gárdon. Most of the subjects appear to be around Kallós’s age, if not necessarily as hail or hearty (Zerkula passed away in 2008), and their environments look like throwbacks from another era, what with the wood-burning stoves, horse-drawn carts, and other ancient artifacts (the film also takes the time to document the hay cutting and harvesting of grapes and potatoes by which they earn their keep). An interesting musical travelogue boasting an abundance of heartfelt singing, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)