

## The Complete Historical Collections 1899–1950

In presenting a complete edition of its historical collections dating from the time before the introduction of tape recording in 1950/51, the Phonogrammarchiv is breaking new ground among the international community of related institutions. The historical material comprises ca. 4,000 recordings, ca. 3,200 on so-called *Phonogramme* (wax discs) and ca. 800 on gramophone discs. The decision in favour of a complete edition was to a large extent motivated by the increased interest in these recordings from outside the narrow circle of research institutions concerned with sound archiving. In many cases, the historical recordings are the earliest of their kind, documenting cultures (musics, languages, etc.) or styles of cultural expression which have since been subject to fundamental changes and sometimes no longer exist in the form preserved here. These collections, therefore, are also attracting the attention of a general public interested in culture and history, especially in the regions of their origin. Their universal significance is underlined by the fact that they have been inscribed on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register.

The edition of these sound documents on audio CDs is meant to enable easy access not only to the historical recordings as such. The sound documents are therefore accompanied by the original protocols (i.e. the original written documentation), published on a data disc as digital images. A commentary section discusses the historical material from a modern perspective in order to facilitate further evaluation. Of course, although these commentaries cannot anticipate or replace a more exhaustive treatment, they can provide useful information about the contexts in which the recordings were made. Text transcriptions will help in gaining access to the contents of the recordings, which, due to their historical sound quality, are often difficult to hear and understand. The arrangement of this edition – sound recordings on audio CDs, essential information (commentaries, transcriptions) and additional material (original protocols) on a data disc – will guarantee not only worldwide access to an optimal acoustic signal, but also make possible the use of the material as a whole in a most comfortable way.

Finally, it should not go unmentioned that this edition owes much to the Austrian Academy of Sciences, which provided essential infrastructural preconditions by raising additional funds for staff and technical equipment.