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Prolegomena

1. Personal and cultural agency

Philip Bohlman noted in 2017 that in the first edition of the two volumes of *Volkslieder* (Folk Songs), which were published in 1778 and 1779, respectively, Johann Gottfried Herder:

looks beyond the historical and linguistic borders of Northern and Western Europe to establish age and oral transmission as qualities of song in cultures throughout the world. Realizing the confluence of age and oral transmission is the dynamic nature of singing—the transformation from *Lied* [song] as object to *Gesang* [singing] as subject. Critical for this transformation is the role of the singer, the human agency that is evident in each song and its many versions... Similarly, the origins of song and singing no longer depended on the theological premise of a *vox Dei* (voice of God), but rather the diversity of song spread across cultures and religions through origins as a *vox populi* (voice of the people). (Herder and Bohlman 2017, 47)

And further:

in the years leading to the preparation of the second edition in 1807, he [Herder] increasingly describes the practice and agency of the collective creativity of human speech and music making. The second edition, posthumously published by Johann von Müller with the assistance of Herder's wife, Karoline, appeared under the name *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern* (Voices of the People in Song). It was this conscious juxtaposition of song and singing that became the most common name of the folk song project for the subsequent two centuries. (ibid.)

Two centuries after Herder, ethnomusicological research largely accepts the conviction that song and music in general is created by individuals (Merriam 1964, 165–166) but is “useful and effective only when it is heard by the prepared and receptive ears of people who have shared, or can share in some way, the cultural and individual experiences of its creators” (Blacking 1973, 54). The understanding of culture as experience and music as a device for its functioning was formulated in 2013 by the ethnomusicologist and anthropologist Bernard Lortat-Jacob in his study on multipart drinking (and singing) in southern Albania as follows:

For the anthropologist, it is clear that Mediterranean societies (whether in Morocco, Sardinia, Rumania, Albania) live their culture in a somewhat frenzied way. They are clearly dependent on the culture they produce; the latter must not be seen as a set of acquired knowledge [which can be objectivised inasmuch as it is “knowledge” and “acquired”], but as a drug whose absorption is realised within interacting cells, at the level of villages, groups, friends. What defines the cell is the fact that it exists only in its interactions. Otherwise it dies. A culture is a cellular network and Music is quite an efficient device for its functioning. (Lortat-Jacob 2013, 18)

Ethnomusicology and anthropology are not alone in the perspective of the mutual dependence between agency and culture. As it is known, in the philosophy of cognitive science, interrelations between individuals are considered to enable and shape “the individual agents on which they depend” (De Jaegher and Froese 2009, 444). Studies in cultural psychology specify similarly that people are shaped by their culture, and culture is shaped by its people (e.g. Fiske et al. 1998). Cultural psychology is of interest in this framework because of its interdisciplinary approach towards culture reflecting and shaping the mind and behaviour of its members (Heine 2012). Interestingly, the tradition of cultural psychology is traced back to Herder and the Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico, who lived in Naples between 1668 and 1744 (Costelloe 2022). “In his own time Vico’s work was largely neglected and generally misunderstood”, but today he is “widely regarded as a highly original thinker who anticipated central currents in later philosophy and the human sciences” (in Costelloe 2022), “including anthropology, cultural theory, education, hermeneutics, history, literary criticism, psychology, and sociology” (ibid.). Distinct in Vico’s work is his definition of science as the “genus or mode by which a thing is made”. Therefore, human science in general is a matter of dissecting the “anatomy of nature’s works” (Vico 1988 [1710], 48). In this framework, Vico defined the *verum factum* (true fact) principle, which claims that the truth is verified through creation or invention: “The criterion and rule of the true is to have made it. Accordingly, our clear and distinct idea of the mind cannot be a criterion of the mind itself, still less of other truths. For while the mind perceives itself, it does not make itself” (Vico 1982 [1710], 55). This approach led Vico to the conclusion that “the truths of morality, natural science, and mathematics do not require ‘metaphysical justification’ as the Cartesians held, but demand an analysis of the causes—the ‘activity’—through which things are made” (after Costelloe 2022).

The impact of Vico’s work on cultural psychology can be discerned, inter alia, in models developed to explain the interaction between self and culture. They are helpful in discussions about personal and cultural agency in ethnomusicology, because they centre on the concept of “performance”. A renowned model is that by Hazel Rose Markus and Alana Conner. It is based on four elements: “I’s, interactions, institutions, and ideas” (Markus and Conner 2013, XIX). The links between these characterised in the introduction of Markus and Conner’s book correspond to the previous quoted works: “your I (or self) creates a culture to which you later adapt... your culture shapes your I so that you think, feel, and act in ways that perpetuate this culture” (Markus and

Conner 2013, XX). This view is familiar in ethnomusicology in general, all the more in studies on multipart music, which are at the centre of the explorations in this book.

Approaching the features of the links between agency and culture, cultural psychologist Carl Ratner emphasises that “agency makes and remakes culture through creating personal meanings about the significance of things and through acts” (Ratner 2000, 313). As forerunners of the cultural view on agency, he mentions studies in psychology, anthropology, political philosophy, and sociology. Their essence lies in the perspective that agency operates “within and through a social structure. Agency does not precede society and create it as a voluntary agreement of independent individuals” (Ratner 2000, 321). At this point, Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and the position of the agent become pivotal: “the agent is never completely the subject of his practices: through the dispositions and the beliefs [the habitus] which are the basis of engagement in the game, all the presuppositions constituting the practical axiomatics of the [social] field find their way into the seemingly most lucid intentions” (Bourdieu 2000, 138–139).

Finally, but importantly, it should be emphasised that agency is “the temporarily constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, 970). The temporality of agency in diachronic and synchronic perspectives is therefore not surprisingly a further object of research in the contributions to this book.

2. Topics

The authors of the present book reflect on diversified realisations of personal and cultural agency based on three main topics: performing agencies and politics of sound, the dependence between individual and group, and various ways of sound production and perception. Through the diversity of the approaches, further issues are pursued in each contribution. For example, the main focus in Anda Beitāne’s contribution lies in agencies of “ethnographic singing” as politics of sound in Latvia since the second half of the twentieth century. The coordination of the national system of ethnographic and folklore ensembles with the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) take on significant importance in these investigations. Thus, here is a connection to the third element of the Markus-Conner model, namely, institutions. These are characterised as “legal, government, economic, scientific, philosophical, and religious bodies” that allow “certain practices and products while forbidding others” (Markus and Connor 2013, XX). From an ethnomusicological viewpoint, cultural institutions, national and international legal bodies, and also institutionalized undertakings such as festivals, competitions, etc. are to be considered as well. They likewise promote certain practices and/or political agencies of the organisers, while living in oblivion or repressing other practices and agencies.

The contribution by Kim Burton examines the question of whether human understandings of landscape and their place in it can be engendered and defined by interactive modes of musical performance or lost along with the loss of access to such landscapes, and whether such understandings can withstand a coercive separation from homeland environments and the resulting economic and social changes. The landscape in this case is Posavina in northeastern Bosnia, which has long been home to communities of different ethnic belonging. In her contribution, Jasmina Talam addresses the issue of redrawing the boundaries of patriarchal culture in female multipart singing in central Bosnia. Focusing on the musical activity of two female singers and their environments in the second half of the twentieth century, she discusses features of acoustic and aesthetic experiences in rural parts of the area in question.

The first contribution dedicated explicitly to the mutual dependence between individual and cultural agency is that by Erna Ströbitzer. Her investigations are based on an analysis of the activity of a singers' quartet in Austria. That activity was grounded in rebellion and music transmission. The singers tried to break with conventions of how folk music should sound and how it should be performed. Antonis Ververis, for his part, focuses instead on three new choral ensembles specialising in traditional music in Greece, taking into consideration a tradition established already in the late 1930s. According to Ververis, the new ensembles function more as community music ensembles concentrating on the joys of collective music-making and singing rather than pursuing authenticity. In the third contribution on this topic, Guido Raschieri addresses musical experiences centred on the creation of a soundscape museum in Piedmont, Italy. This expressive context has enabled and combined a complex network of relationships between individual and cultural agency, a long experimental application process, and theatrical and musical performance. The contribution by Susanne Schedtler and Herbert Zotti (see Addendum), who deal with the relationship and the mutual impact between Alpine song and *Wienerlied*, likewise belongs in this context. Based on long-time experiences with composers, performers, and audiences, the authors outline specific features of the relationship between individual and cultural agency during the emergence and establishment of this urban tradition.

As mentioned above, part of the explanations in the contributions to this book are also processes of acquisition and transmission. These are closely connected with the skills, habits, and tacit knowledge of the performers, who affect both each other's role and the cultural and contextual features of performance(s). Thus, these explanations offer further specificities from an ethnomusicological viewpoint to the fourth element of the Markus-Conner model, "ideas that inform our institutions, interactions, and, ultimately, our Is" (Markus and Conner 2013, XX). From this viewpoint, one of the particularities in music-making processes is that in them semantic references are possible even in the absence of the word. Furthermore, the interplay between singing and music performed on instruments and/or played for dancing affects social and cultural uses and understandings of sound. A case study in this framework is the contribution by Ulrich Morgenstern about mouth music as a practical substitution, an artistic niche, and an autodidactic method in Russia. This contribution is furthermore the first in-depth inquiry into this widespread and culturally meaningful performance practice.

Another specific aspect of the production and perception of sound is emphasised by Blacking as follows: "...if the value of music in society and culture is to be assessed, it must be described in terms of the attitudes and cognitive processes involved in its creation, and the functions and effects of the musical product in the society" (Blacking 1973, 53). Here, psychoacoustic research on sound production and perception becomes substantial. Rytis Ambrazevičius offers in his contribution an insight into the local versus the universal in performance rules in singing in local practices in Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine. He refers to these rules as systematic deviations (with a statistical scatter) of an actual live performance from a mechanically precise one. Paolo Bravi, for his part, directs our attention to interaction and the temporal dimension in the extemporary poetry of Centre-North Sardinia. One of the main questions he discusses is: In the course of a duel, do poets, whether consciously or not, tend towards a convergence in the temporal dimension or independence? The temporal dimension in music is a central issue in Lauge Dideriksen's contribution as well. However, his perspective lies in non-geometrical rhythm in European traditional music as conceptualisation, transcription, and notation. In this context, the "spatialisation of time" and hybrid phonetic/phonemic transcription become central.

3. Personal and cultural agency enacted musically

Broadening Vico's perspective towards science, Hans-Georg Gadamer states in the foreword of the second edition of his groundbreaking work *Method and Truth* that his concern is "not what we do or what we ought to do, but what happens to us over and above our wanting and doing" (1989, XXV–XXVI). One of the major arguments in the analysis is that meaning is created through intersubjective communication, which he describes as a "fusion of horizons" (Gadamer 1989, 390). Gadamer writes as follows about the concept of "horizon" used by Edmund Husserl and specified further in his own work:

Undoubtedly, the concept and phenomenon of the horizon is of crucial importance for Husserl's phenomenological research. With this concept, ..., Husserl is obviously seeking to capture the way all limited intentionality of meaning merges into the fundamental continuity of the whole. A horizon is not a rigid boundary but something that moves with one and invites one to advance further. Thus the horizon intentionality, which constitutes the unity of the flow of experience, is paralleled by an equally comprehensive horizon intentionality on the objective side.

Ohne Zweifel ist der Begriff und das Phänomen des Horizonts für Husserls phänomenologische Forschung von tragender Bedeutung. Mit diesem Begriff, ..., sucht Husserl offenbar den Übergang aller ausgegrenzten Intentionalität des Meinens in die tragende Kontinuität des Ganzen einzufangen. Ein Horizont ist ja keine starre Grenze, sondern etwas, das mitwandert und zum weiteren Vordringen einlädt. So entspricht der Horizont-Intentionalität, die die Einheit des Erlebnisstromes konstituiert, eine ebenso umfassende Horizont-Intentionalität auf der gegenständlichen Seite. Denn alles als

For everything that is given as existent is given in terms of a world and hence brings the world horizon with it. (Gadamer 2004, 237–238) *seiend Gegebene ist weltlich gegeben und führt damit den Welthorizont mit sich.* (Gadamer 1990, 250)

Such diagnosis helps to widen the perspective of explorations on personal and cultural agency. The particularity that concerns multipart music traditions in this context lies in the duality each performer has to deal with: the will to assert personal intentions and the necessity to integrate them into those of the whole group. Only in this way it is possible to achieve the “fusion of horizons” that leads to a fruitful performance as the most important act of music-making.

Later in the text, Gadamer states:

The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. Applying this to the thinking mind, we speak of the narrowness of horizon, of the possible expansion of horizon, of the opening up of new horizons, and so forth. (Gadamer 2004, 301) *Horizont ist der Gesichtskreis, der all das umfaßt und umschließt, was von einem Punkt aus sichtbar ist. In der Anwendung auf das denkende Bewußtsein reden wir dann von Enge des Horizontes, von möglicher Erweiterung des Horizontes, von Erschließung neuer Horizonte usw.* (Gadamer 1990, 307)

The contributions to this book draw on this understanding to reveal features of personal and cultural agency that are enacted musically.

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