

From Folklore to World Music: In the beginning there was...

Introduction

In 2016, the *Folkové prázdniny* folk music festival in Náměšť nad Oslavou, Czech Republic, included for the thirteenth time (26–27 June, 2016) a specialized colloquy focused on folk music traditional and modern, ethnic music and the broad genre of world music, as well as classical music, provided it was somehow linked with traditional music. For two days, the attendees of the colloquy observed the presentations of musicologists, ethnologists, ethnomusicologists, music publicists, radio broadcasters, and last but not least musicians themselves. Since its establishment, the Náměšť colloquy has provided a platform for the meeting of scholars and academics with music journalists and musicians.

According to philosopher Jan Sokol, it is the departure of a person from life which turns life into a story, and the story needs a frame. The personal story has a beginning and an end, but an activity which filled the life does not have to end. There are all kinds of beginnings: sometimes they are purely personal, sometimes they are tied to tradition, to popular waves of the period, or to distinctive role models. Pondering about the origin of music manifestations, their development, ending, or continuation, we decided to make it the key theme of the international colloquy *From Folklore to Folklorism: In the beginning, there was...* Beginnings vary: they can be famous as well infamous, some of them were intended, some of them just happened by chance. Sometimes there were great expectations at the beginning, followed by disappointment, or, in better cases, by success. Some moments connected to the development of music culture have disappeared in history, some contributed to the formation of distinctive streams or genres. Sometimes we can trace the personal or social causes of their emergence, sometimes we have to speculate. Asking “Why did this happen, why it does or does not exist”, and looking for answers is one of the most interesting moments within the study of culture and music especially.

Traditionally, the first day of the colloquy was devoted to research into traditional culture, especially musical folklore, as presented by scholars and researchers. The programme included presentations by ethnologists

and ethnomusicologists exploring the context of the beginning of some important milestones in the recording of traditional Czech folk music, which commented on the role of tradition and its transformations in modern society, and the necessity to safeguard it as cultural heritage. The focus of the presenters was also aimed at the use of non-traditional musical instruments (such as the recorder) in the interpretation of Czech musical folklore, and the second existence of Moravian folk songs in the hands of New York city musical avant-garde.

The second day of the colloquy provided space for publicists, radio broadcasters and researchers in the music of the world and modern genres of music. There was a broad scope of presentations: the searching for the earliest printed American blues songs or Czech cowboy songs or the juvenile compositions of the teenage singer-songwriters; jazz in the 1940s and 50s communities in the harbours of North Africa and Italy; klezmer music outside of its diaspora; the Tuareg tribes of Africa travelling around the globe with their rock music; and minimalist music in connection with the traditional spiritual music of Lithuania. Various forms of the sound of music were discussed in papers on the vanishing languages of the world; unique glass DIY musical instruments; and on music vibrations which contribute to human harmony.

A much sought-after part of the colloquy is an afternoon discussion with an invited artist. In 2016, it was Julia Ulehla, speaking about her New York/Vancouver-based project, Dálava. Ulehla is the grand-daughter of Czech biologist and folklorist Dr. Vladimír Úlehla who collected and recorded Moravian folk songs of Slovácko in the early 20th century. Julia is a North American singer with a professional background in opera singing and musicology and in Dálava she attempts to revive the old songs in a personal, experimental way. With her husband – guitarist Aram Bajakian and musicians of New York City avant-garde, they presented Dálava both in America and in Europe. In the colloquy discussion, Julia shared her experience of presenting songs in the Czech Republic, and the frequent emotional response of her Czech listeners.

The present volume of *From folklore to world music: In the beginning there was...* brings printed versions of most of the colloquy presentations (and offers some of them in English). It reflects not only the present-day interests of scholars, but it shows a broad range of interests of publicists as well, showing a multitude of topics from our fast-developing society. We believe that the volume will not only educate and entertain its readers, but it will provide inspiration and broadening of horizons as well.