

# From Folklore to World Music: Music and Spirituality

## Introduction

The world today is fast and pragmatic, and has been increasingly interconnected and globalized in the past decades. The media rule our lifestyle in many ways, and virtual reality often seems more intensive than reality itself. Only occasionally is there a focus on those issues that have determined all societies throughout history: the spiritual world connected with various types of faith and religion. That which would extend into the everyday life of humans, at the same time, was a journey of their spiritual learning. This very dimension has been a determining impulse of many manifestations of music in their most diverse forms and genres. Their scope is as broad as the various attempts to understand them. Music and Spirituality, the theme of the 2019 international colloquy *From Folklore to World Music*, has provided space for understanding these issues, approaching them from religious contexts, as well as from the mutual relationship between society and the spiritual world.

A two-day meeting on folk and ethnic music, modern folk music and world music of academics, journalists, musicians, and the public has already become tradition. The colloquy took place in Náměšť nad Oslavou, Czech Republic, during its multi-genre music festival *Folkové prázdniny*, on July 30 – 31, 2019. The festival had extended its original scope during its 34-year-long existence, and the 16th colloquy likewise has reached behind its original intentions. In 2019, the topic of music and spirituality has allowed for some presenters to comment on classical music, and some on pop music. The papers in this volume frequently deal with religion – ideology relations; provided these two are juxtaposed, the meaning of sacred songs could change, diminish, or even vanish. Such relations are discussed in papers on Czech sacred folk songs, on a German edition on funeral songs, and on an almost forgotten composer of Czech liturgical songs that are well

known to this day. There is another paper on the ironic existence of religious allusions in Czech pop music lyrics under the totalitarian regime, and a paper on the search for spiritual meaning in a music work labelled spiritual, whose content shows an explosive, elemental force. Several papers deal with the specific relation of Czech society to American spirituals. Here too the authors have manifested how the ideology of selected periods influenced the appropriation and performance of spirituals on Czech stages and in churches, and how their Czech texts differed from the American originals, reflecting their new functions. A unique view of an American scholar on the transformation of American spiritual music in the Czech Republic is presented in the volume as well. Despite various ideologies, the Bible's Song of Songs and Psalms have provided inspiration for Czech song lyricists, as is evident in another paper. Several of the topics go beyond the influence of Catholicism or Protestantism on music: there is an essay on the possible interpretation of folk songs according to the philosopher Martin Buber, who was influenced by the ideas of Hasidism, and another one on the abundant religious symbolism of a Sephardic Mediterranean wedding song. Finally, there is a paper on music styles and the transformation of religion as a consequence of migration: its author asks the question of whether spirituality in music is an endangered species.

Both colloquy days were concluded with a plenary discussion which involved the authors and the public too. Day two also hosted the members of Talisk, young Scottish guests of the festival, who shared their experience with making local music in a globalized world.

Not all the papers that were presented at the colloquy are included in this volume; nevertheless, the result is comprehensive and unique. The texts of various authors complement each other, and they inform us about what have so far been neglected or unexplored elements of sacred life and music. We are confident that the 2019 Náměšť colloquy volume will enrich and inspire its readers.