

From Folklore to World Music: Music and Capital

Introduction

In 2021, the 35th multi-genre annual music festival Folk Holidays in Náměšť nad Oslavou (Czechia) welcomed participants of the 18th colloquy entitled From Folklore to World Music. The event brings together people of the academic and journalistic community and others interested in traditional music, popular, folk, ethnic and world music. Due to the Covid pandemic, mainly the foreign speakers presented their papers online. Nevertheless, most of the other participants attended the forum in person on 27 and 28 July 2021 to discuss the very topical and resonant topic of Music and Capital.

Since the 1970s, social sciences have often discussed the position of the actor in the social environment, and under what conditions people could transform such a space. The answer is associated with the study of different types of capital, which was elaborated by the French sociologist Pierre Félix Bourdier (1930-2002). However, the general concept of capital, which distinguishes between economic, social, and cultural capital, only takes on a concrete form when it is linked to a specific social and historical context. The Náměšť colloquy attendees were encouraged to contemplate a wide range of research problems. These included questions concerning the meaning of capital for the music and arts sectors, the possible determination of tangible and intangible capital (that is, social and cultural) in the field of music or other arts areas, or the way cultural capital (in the form of acquired knowledge and skill) might determine the life of individuals and/or transform it. Concerning music and capital, there were other possible suggestions for discussion, such as an analysis of the manifestations of folk culture, or the repeated use and misuse of folk culture in politics. Finally, another discussion question asked whether it is even possible to squeeze the fine grain of cultural statements into the constructions of the social sciences.

The program of the two-day forum is regularly divided into two parts: one is devoted to traditional folk music, its functions, and changes in the contemporary world; the other to world music and other so-called minority genres. Often, the themes overlap, which was also the case in 2021.

The attendees discussed the ways of paying for music and dance productions in traditional rural areas, the various evaluations of folk songs by their bearers and by outsiders (collectors, artists, researchers), and the revitalization of folk songs in different local contexts and their function in terms of social capital. The changes in musical performance and musical taste were discussed in an example of brass band music development and popular music inspired by musical folklore. Attention was also paid to the care of cultural heritage, which represents important cultural and social capital; the Estonian song festivals and the inspirational approach of South Korea were discussed.

The position of the artist in relation to economic, cultural, or social capital was touched on in several presentations. Speakers talked about the practical and ephemeral value that performers gain from winning music awards and polls, and the role of the musician offstage, or in public life. Another paper dealt with a controversial current topic, namely the question of the colour of the artist's skin in a racially divided society. Surprising topics were opened by two North American participants: they showed how the same musical or textual phenomena could be understood quite differently in the USA and Czechia. Another interesting paper was also delivered by a scholar who is an avid reader, who commented on the hidden value of reflecting on the musical scene in a literary work. A paper on a family of musicians, instrument makers and promoters provided an interesting probe into the concept of two-generation capital. There were other papers delivered at the colloquy, but not all of them found their way into this volume for technical and other reasons.

A traditional and welcome part of the forum has been the discussion with foreign artists who perform at the Folk Holidays festival. In 2021, the Swedish duo Väsen introduced the colloquy participants to an interesting Swedish folk instrument, the Nyckelharpa, for which they compose new melodies and create novel possibilities of performance.

As in previous years, the colloquy proceedings are published in two forms. Whether you read it on the website of the Folk Holidays festival or flip through the paper pages of the printed volume, we hope you will enjoy them, gaining not only education, but also inspiration.