

From Folklore to World Music: Music and Words

Introduction

The fact that the living word—spoken and sung—is the basis for the literary and artificial word was already expressed by the Czech literary scholar Bedřich Václavěk (1897–1943), who devoted himself to the study of folk and popular songs, especially through their verbal components. The relationship between music and words can be traced back to various genres across historical periods, social classes, and artistic styles, reflecting religious or secular content including oratorio, opera, operetta, couplet, schlager, musical, lullaby, or children’s song. Similarly, the relationship between word and music includes the musical inspiration of a certain idea, story, or poetry, as well as various texts about music. The word can affect music with a message that is sometimes unexpected: it can caress the soul, make us laugh, make us cry; it can also be a social indictment or a slap in the face. Music enhances the word, but there can also be music without words, which nevertheless tells a story.

The inspiring theme “music and words” headed the nineteenth international colloquium *From Folklore to World Music*, in Náměšť nad Oslavou, Czech Republic, in July 26–27, 2022. The event takes place alongside the multi-genre music festival Folk Holidays. It is intended not only for representatives of the academic and journalistic community, but also for others interested in traditional folk, popular, modern folk, ethnic, and world music. For health and safety reasons, this year’s colloquium was held in a combined manner, as in the past: most of the speakers attended the forum in person, while some took the opportunity to present their papers online.

The program of the two-day colloquium is regularly divided into a part devoted to folklore—either in its original existence or in folk revival—and a part devoted to ethnic, popular, and world music, as well as other related minority genres. Often, however, the topics overlap, as was the case in 2022, when most of the speakers focused on song lyrics. The opening paper dealt with the current issue of political correctness of musical folklore as seen through the eyes

of today's society. In other papers, the authors discussed outstanding performers who combine their musical talents with storytelling and playing the bagpipes; musical terminology and musician's jargon (using the example of Moravian brass band music), the Estonian epic *Kalevipoeg* as a source of inspiration for music and dance, and other word and music related areas.

Several speakers focused on the rural music of the USA—highlighting the importance of talking blues, the surprisingly rich language of bluegrass lyrics, and the timeless spiritual message of black spirituals. Several speakers pointed out the possibilities and drawbacks of transferring song lyrics (traditional and modern, spiritual and secular) from continent to continent, emphasizing the link between the U.S. and Czech Republic. Only a few of the many papers presented at the colloquium have made their way into print, and some are available in two language versions.

The two-day colloquium is interesting not only because of the presentations, but also for the subsequent discussions, which enrich and inspire both the speakers and audience. The final meeting of the colloquium is always highly anticipated, because participants meet the selected foreign guests of the Folk Holidays Festival. In 2022 in Náměšť nad Oslavou, top young performers from the USA and Britain spoke about their relationship to music and word: banjo player and singer Nora Brown and the multi-instrumental singer sisters Rowan and Anna Rheingans. Pictures documenting the session are included in these pages. The volume, now in its 19th year, has maintained its original idea: to discuss one topic from several possible points of view, and to reflect on the current development of non-art music in the area “from folklore to world music.” We hope that the readers will enjoy the volume, as they have in the past.