

From Folklore to World Music: New Ways to Old Music

Introduction

For the twentieth time, representatives of the academic and journalistic community, together with others interested in traditional and modern folk music, as well as popular, ethnic and world music, gathered in Náměšť nad Oslavou (Czech Republic) to present the results of their work and to discuss current issues related to the theme of the *From Folklore to World Music* colloquium. The jubilee meeting in 2023 with the subtitle *New Ways to Old Music* focused on contemporary approaches to music that has been heard in the past, has its roots, and history, but experienced fame and rejection, been forgotten and rediscovered. The participants discussed how this music was or is perceived by its creators and performers, or how it was or is perceived by listeners, how things might be influenced by the context of the time, the development of media and advertising, but also by personal relationships or the search for identity. Thus, in terms of research, the chosen theme of the meeting opened up a space that traced “new ways to old music” in the broadest context and led to illuminating the essence of these creative musical endeavours.

As in the past two years, the colloquium was held in a combined way: most of the speakers attended the event in person, while some took the opportunity to present their papers online. The opening of the meeting was mainly devoted to traditional music and its changes in the contemporary world. There were talks on music folklore, folklorism, and wind music in the Czech lands, as well as on traditional music from Estonia, Ireland, India, and Tunisia. The individual speakers showed how different are the motivations of those inspired by traditional music. These may depend on their own musical production in the field of folk revival and the development of tradition within the discourse of authenticity (often in conjunction with various political and ideological concepts), or they may develop in the field of modern popular production or even contemporary classical music.

The colloquium program continued with the presentations on contemporary music with traditional roots, focusing on world music, country, blues, bluegrass, Americana. The authors of each paper explored the role of forgotten and rediscovered performers, the message of old songs in a new context, and ideological manipulation in the presentation of songs. Several speakers drew attention to the importance of music archives, contemporary independent record labels, or non-profit organizations. One paper also recalled the unappreciated or invisible work of the initiators of musical thoughts and ideas.

In a discussion seminar after the main programme of the colloquium, the Irish-Czech duo Liam Ó Maonlaí and Kateřina Garcia presented their audio-video project, the path to it, and its further journey. The end of the colloquium was awaited with anticipation: after twenty years of editorial work on the colloquium proceedings, the current editorial team decided to “retire”. So the final discussion developed around the decision in what form – and whether – the colloquium and the proceedings would continue, or what changes would be made to the philosophy and structure of the colloquium. In the end, the opinion prevailed that an interdisciplinary meeting of those interested in traditional and contemporary music is still needed. It is not yet clear what the next colloquium will look like. But it will surely be as beneficial and inspiring as it has been so far.

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