TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE INTERPRETATION OF MUSIC FOLKLORE: FROM THE PROTECTION OF EVERYDAY CULTURE TO THE EMERGENCE OF A MUSIC GENRE (USING THE CZECH REPUBLIC AS A CASE STUDY)

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We can examine the issues regarding new approaches related to music tradition through various perspectives. In the case of ethnological or ethnomusicological specialization, the focus is on folk music culture, which began to attract researchers in the Czech context beginning in about the start of the 19th century. The contemporary contexts of this interest, including its development in both the interest and the subject of study, have been discussed in numerous scholarly works, and the material itself has been presented – albeit quite selectively – in diverse editions of folk songs and instrumental music. When, in the 1960s, efforts in Czech ethnology expanded to gradually encompass folkloric expressions in their "second existence," – i.e., "folklorism",[1] researchers' interest also extended to an area that sometimes overlapped with folk tradition, sometimes built upon it, and sometimes to various degrees drew inspiration from it. However, it must be honestly noted that explicit differentiation into the aforementioned (or other) categories is not only challenging, but is often blurred. Hand in hand with the rapid development of Czech society in recent decades, sensitivity to this

1. The term "folklorism" refers to a movement or direction aimed at transferring folk culture, or some of its parts, from its original life into another context, at the deliberate and conscious cultivation of traditions, often for the needs of stage performance. However, the distinction between the categories of folklore and folklorism gradually loses its meaning in the Czech context with the radical transformation of society in the 20th century, and the term ethnocultural tradition is more likely to appear in the professional discourse. This refers to the area of culture that grows out of the folk tradition, is shaped by it, is inspired by it, and consciously espouses it, even though in terms of content and sometimes even form, it goes beyond it, or shifts it to current cultural trends and the needs of both the individual and the collective.

distinction has also diminished within the general public. Today, we are faced with a musical genre that perhaps may be easier to characterise via its functions than to precisely define its content.

It is essential to recall that the regional cultural specificness, often deeply rooted due to the special historical and social contexts, began to erode with the modernisation of society, accelerating in the second half of the 19th century. In contrast to cities, the influence of mass culture began to affect the countryside somewhat later. A natural reaction to the disappearing elements of traditional folk culture was the effort to preserve them – both by documenting them, leading to the creation of collections of folk songs and the beginnings of song archives, and also by disseminating through the above-mentioned printed collections, as well as through school songbooks, teaching, and gradually through performances by various groups focused on interpreting folk material (from "table societies" through folklore groups, clubs, and circles, but also via the activities of patriotic organizations such as Sokol and Orel, as well as choirs presenting folk songs in artistic renditions). Much has been written about the fact that efforts to rescue selected elements of often romantically viewed traditional rural culture mainly originated from the intellectual strata of society, more often associated with urban environments than the actual culture bearers themselves. In reality, these activities were aimed at preserving cultural elements that had survived, had lost their function, no longer met the aesthetic or other requirements of their bearers, and had been displaced by elements new, fashionable, or simply those better fitting the needs of rural inhabitants.[2] Whether these efforts were motivated culturally or politically, their consequences conserved a cultural layer that was heading towards a demise or significant transformation associated with the onset of modernism and mass culture. Up until the emergence of radio broadcasting in the 1920s, we can thus speak in the Czech lands of more than half a century of societal interest in folklore elements, which, with varying

2. See e.g. Václavek 1963: 59.

intensity but essentially continuously, reinforced the importance of understanding folk traditions in society and simultaneously opened up possibilities for their interpretation beyond their original context.

Starting in the 1930s, music folklore became an integral part of the radio broadcasting programming schedule, to which various cultural-political connotations[3] have been attached; nevertheless from the musical perspective, there gradually emerged a need for it to be connected with quality performers. It was at this point, particularly in connection with the new mass communication technology, that the gap between "authentic" music and songs from the folk tradition began to visibly widen from the interpretation of this culture for the general public.

Although emphasis on aesthetic function can be found in the interpretation of folk songs or in their artistic renditions already in the 19th century,[4] in the case of presenting folklore on mass media, it becomes crucial.[5] Folk songs and music were being presented to the public not in their authentic form, but in progressively more refined technical performances, surpassing the original functional ties of folk material to specific occasions, and these performances were delivered by interpreters who approached music folklore in the most diverse ways. Controversies accompanying this approach can be illustrated, for example, by the critical words of the author of an article entitled "Pro záchranu národopisu Slovácka. Co je nutno udělat" ("For the Rescue of Slovácko Ethnography. What Must Be Done"), published in 1939:

"*Our institutions lament that the Czech nation will cease to sing its beautiful folk songs, that it is forgetting its folk customs and the originality of its life altogether. In doing so, however, they forget that by their own improper conceptions and awkward productions,*

3. Cf. the chapter "Folklor v rozhlase" (Folklore on the Radio) in Stavělová et al. 2021: 271–275.
4. See e.g. Pavlicová, Martina – Uhlíková, Lucie. 2015. Mimo svůj čas, prostor i význam – lidové tradice na jevišti ("Outside their time, space, and meaning – folk traditions on stage"). In: Přibylová, Irena – Uhlíková, Lucie (eds.): *Od folkloru k world music: Na scéně a mimo scénu*. Náměšť nad Oslavou: Městské kulturní středisko. 9–24.
5. Cf. Pavlicová 2015: 271–275.

entrusted to people who do not even know the Slovácko region, they are contributing to the extinction of folk culture in general. There are a number of examples in Czech film, dance, and radio. Just as no one else can imitate the brushstroke of Uprka's paintings or the postures of boys and girls, nor can even a gifted dance master dance the energetic 'verbuňk' from the Podluží region, 'odzemek' or 'sedlácká' from Velká nad Veličkou. Therefore, it is necessary, first and foremost, to call for a new orientation of the leading figures in public life in ethnography, to truly save folk culture, which is on the brink of extinction. For example, we know that various artistic bodies interpret Slovácko songs and music on the radio, but they do it no service. The radio should employ folk artists from our communities for programmes in the folk style. [...] *All schools should teach national songs to a greater extent. Dance masters should be recommended to practice national and folk dances more extensively, in addition to modern dance. We are more than aware that three-quarters of Moravians do not know their 'beseda'*[6]*. Various folk music and dance circles in Prague and larger cities should not be a substitute for traditional folklore, but rather represent a kind of model fair, a sample of folk culture goods that can only be authentic in their place of origin. Only under these circumstances can one speak of genuine ethnography and its assistance, and only in this sense can one work towards its revival*." (Jkp 1939)

Moravia, and particularly its prominent southeastern regions (Slovácko and Wallachia), were truly distinctive in this regard (the romantic ideals of intellectuals, the emphasis on revitalisation of traditions, etc.). The criticised tendency to present folk music and dance by performers from different backgrounds was not a rule. Many had a direct connection to the local or regional folk music traditions, and their interpretative scope often gradually expanded.

6. 'Moravská beseda' is a set of eleven folk dances adapted for salon dancing by the dance master Richard Kaska in 1892. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-s4YQVbeom8>.

From the 1930s onward, through the radio and gramophone records (and later, of course, other audio media), society created a widely shared notion of what music folklore is, how each song was to be sung, what cimbalom music (or other folk songs' interpretations) should sound like, and how folk songs should look in their rendition. Folk songs and music presented in this way then retroactively influenced the musical production of bands operating in various regions, especially in Moravia. Alongside the development of the folklore movement after the advent of communism in 1948 (including competitions, festivals, and last but not least, through the involvement of numerous creative artistic personalities), a new genre gradually emerged with specific formal characteristics, the essence of which laid in presenting music and dance folklore on the "concert stage". Particularly in the musical component, there was increasingly precise performance (largely related to the development of music education) in larger ensemble formations and, above all, in ever more sophisticated musical arrangements. These facts, of course, cannot be detached from the contemporary political context in which support for "folk art" served additional functions that interpreters of folk music and dance often did not clearly realise. However, this context was more essential to the genre's content than its form.

Returning to earlier periods of interest in music folklore, the literature offers numerous pieces of evidence speaking of vanishing traditions and the loss of cultural values. Fixation on the past is an aspect of modernity. According to the French historian Pierre Nora, true memory is tied to lived experience, exists without mediation, is essentially collective, and is most often based on rural custom. Nora states that this true memory died with the advent of modernity; and in its place, new institutions emerge that focus on restoring what was lost, creating new forms of memory (more performative and mediated than lived), which at various distances replicate what was once vital (Schwarz 2010: 52–53).

Indeed, we can apply this premise both to the observed earlier periods and to the present day. The end of the 19th century, particularly the events surrounding the *Czechoslavic Ethnographic Exhibition* (1895) with the preparation of live programmes and the utilisation

of folk culture elements (folk dance, folk music, folk costumes, folk customs and rituals) in theatrical settings, marked a significant development of these new institutions focused on reviving the lost or rapidly disappearing collective memory of the Czech nation.[7] At the same time, they brought a new dimension – the formation of scenic folklorism. Although performance of folk traditions was also carried out in earlier periods, it was not until the turn of the 1880s when dramaturgical and directorial issues began to be raised (cf. Pavlicová 2021). Simultaneously, especially in the Moravian ethnographic regions, where interest in folk culture in those years helped distinguish them more clearly, a specific image of folk tradition began to take shape in these contexts, which for several decades became decisive in considerations of how to continue presenting music folklore, which was increasingly being lost in everyday rural culture. The basis of this image was the aforementioned conserved archaic layer of "folk culture" (folk songs, instrumental music, including often extinct or vanishing types of instrument ensembles, folk dances, folk costumes); and in many cases their revitalisation, or even reconstruction. Actual contemporary rural music culture, specifically represented at that time mainly by *štrajch*[8] bands and, especially from the interwar years, brass bands in Moravia, was overlooked or outright rejected as an alien element and one of the causes of the demise of "real" folk songs and music. From countless statements of this type, let us quote at least one:

"*They had been musicians from time immemorial, leading creators and propagators of songs, chosen above others and professionally qualified. On their instruments, bagpipes, and especially on the violin, they did not play so much as 'sing' their songs, with undoubtedly no less understanding, but even more*

7. The majority of these institutions were created as the result of the national movement and the creation of a new, national collective memory, including places of memory (monuments, museums, archives, but also associations as Sokol, etc.)
8. *Štrajch*: a label for a musical grouping combining instruments such as violin, viola, clarinet, flute, double bass, trumpet, flugelhorn, and drums. Most often they were five- to ten-piece bands. They spread throughout the Czech and Moravian countryside from the 1860s until gradually disappearing in the 1950s, replaced by brass bands (Kurfürst 2002: 765).

successfully than the singing peasants themselves [...]. *It seems as if in our song, two kindred souls were united as one: human song and violin song. The rough and heavy brass instruments from military bands came; the former song stifled and the latter song died out of its own accord. But where those fiddles were preserved, there our beautiful song lives and thrives today, sung and composed, as it once was."* (Vorel 1912: I)

The boom of the folklore revival movement in the second half of the 20th century and efforts to return to the "authentic" tradition, based on information from witnesses of the period, for the most part, proved to be complicated. Development of the countryside accelerated intensively after World War II; the peasant class, as one of the pillars of the existence of traditional folk culture, almost ceased to exist. Even though the Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia regions differed in the vitality of their folk traditions, their preservation in archaic forms, especially in connection with everyday life, became irreversible. To comprehend the temporal phases of the development of not only the folk tradition but especially the emerging music genre we speak of today, it is crucial to understand how personalities perceived in subsequent decades in relation to folk culture in selected regions as exemplary bearers of the folk tradition responded to this situation and how they are still referred to in this sense today.

One such example is the trained ethnologist Vítězslav Volavý (1922–1983), the leader of the Strážnice cimbalom band which bore his name for many years. He was a prominent figure in the Danaj folk ensemble, the founder of the Orchestr lidových nástrojů kraje Gottwaldov (Orchestra of Folk Instruments of the Gottwaldov Region, 1954–1959), and also a long-time guest lead violonist of BROLN (the Brno Radio Orchestra of Folk Instruments). In an interview summarizing his work as an interpreter of music folklore, he emphasized that his main initial motivation for engaging in this area was the attempt to bring folk music to the concert stage, not just leaving it as an exotic concern.[9] Volavý's rootedness in the

9. The Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Brno branch, documents collection, sound, sign. PI 38, recorded interview with Vítězslav Volavý, 25 Jan 1972.

Strážnice region (even though he did not originate from there), whose everyday culture was still influenced in the mid-20th century by the collective memory of a part of the local population strongly connected to the fading traditional peasant culture, significantly determined the artistic ambitions of this creative personality. He related to it in a fundamental way, becoming its representative and a role model for generations of followers, while consciously moving it further. In the aforementioned interview, he recalled a discussion he had when a student of musicology in Brno with Prof Gracian Černušák, who criticised him for playing in a way that folk musicians did not:

"*I certainly agreed with him on that point, that probably folk musicians did not play like that. However, I wanted to play like folk musicians would play if they could play the violin as well as I.*"[10]

Volavý's approach represents one of the important pillars in the development of Moravian music folklorism, and in the second half of the 20th century, it was one of the characteristic features of the work of many music bands in ethnographically-defined regions. On one hand, these were the artistic ambitions of a creative personality with a relatively broad cultural overview and education, a desire to gain visibility and succeed via the media beyond the local environment; on the other hand, there was an effort to preserve a specific selected part of the culture of previous generations, to which specific aesthetic values were assigned due to the cultural-political development since the end of the 19th century. However, conscious development of a regional folk musical style for those who attempted it was by no means easy. In many places, there was nothing to build upon; elsewhere, the age of the earlier bearers of folk music traditions did not allow for recognition of the original form of their musical production. Regardless of local or regional specifics, many musicians were inspired by only a few remaining folk musicians from the regions of Horňácko, Kopanice, Moravian Wallachia, Těšín Silesia, etc. One of the most famous was the Horňácko lead violonist Jožka Kubík (1907–1978), in whose footsteps members

10. Ibid.

of newly-formed cimbalom bands from throughout the Dolňácko part of the Slovácko region followed. Volavý, in an interview with ethnomusicologist Dušan Holý, expressed his attitude toward the role of the famed Romani lead violonist as follows:

"*I will go to the sources of living water, to the sound of Jožka Kubík from Hrubá Vrbka, who really meant a lot in my musical life. I've talked about this many times. He had a fundamental influence on my playing style as a lead violinist. I didn't copy him, but I didn't hesitate to use his approach to melody and its ornamentation*." (Holý 1981: 69)

Dušan Holý conducted interviews in the 1980s in the journal *Národopisné aktuality* (*Ethnographic News*) with selected musicians, asking them questions about their activities in the field of music folklorism. One of the respondents was Jura Petrů (1922–1984), a contemporary of Volavý's and a cimbalom lead violonist from Kyjov:

"*I was actually led to it by my friends from Kyjov and Nětčice. It was a combination of many circumstances. It took a while before I got to Kyjov and the Kyjov district. My family background was musical, but not from Kyjov. My father was from the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands near Pelhřimov and he taught me Czech songs, and my mother, who was extraordinarily fond of singing, came from Staré Město. She brought me to Moravian songs. Similarly, during my childhood and youth, my eyes were opened to other directions. But I fondly remember the experiences from Brodské – the music of the lead violonist Arpád Fanto and the local singers, as well as my singing-loving classmates from Lanžhot, Tvrdonice, Kostice, and Stará Břeclav. And then came the time of the Slovácko circle in Uherské Hradiště, where I became acquainted with their Dolňácko and also Horňácko repertoire. That's when I first learned the harmonic-rhythmic accompaniment of the 'sedlácká' dance. The visits to Jožka Kubík came a little later. It was only there, however, that I discovered the immediacy of the strange rhythmization and the power of these songs.*" (Holý 1982: 245)

Jura Petrů's path to becoming a prominent bearer of music folklore in Kyjov was similar, but even more complex than that of

Vítězslav Volavý. However, the same moment was at work there – knowledgeability which for many personalities was derived from the preceding stage of folklorism development, and for Moravian performers, this influence often stemmed from the same source: the Brno folklore ensembles, as we can see from other recollections of Jura Petrů:

"*The Úlehlas' ensemble, and later Frolka's ensemble*[11] *started playing arrangements from sheet music. In the Úlehlas' ensemble, consisting of sixteen musicians, I played as lead violinist for a while on the Kyjov 'skočná,' Veliká 'sedlácká,' and Strážnice 'danaj' dances. What was different in the working method – compared to what we were used to in the Slovácko circle? Not only that an unbreakable sequence of songs was established, but the entire structure was fixed into a stable and rigid form. There was a strict discipline at work there*." (Holý 1982: 245–246)

"*At that time, however, I only knew a few 'skočná's from the Úlehlas' ensemble; and I had only known the Kyjov 'skočná' as a dance until then. There's no secret that the Úlehlas took some credit for its rediscovery and performance. Later, Antoš Frolka made a nice arrangement of the 'skočná' for his ensemble; I participated in their first recording session as a singer. But it wasn't until Kyjov that the range of songs for 'skočná's expanded for me, and that's when the great search began: How actually should we play the 'skočná'? In Kyjov, the folk music tradition was already disrupted and drowned out by the expansion of brass bands. And I am not aware that the Slovácko circle, which was already in Kyjov before the war, played 'skočná's in their music band. During the search, we relied primarily on comparing dances – the differences between the 'skočná' and 'sedlácká' or 'danaj', for which there were models of musical accompaniment. And that first jump in the 'skočná'*

11. The folklore ensemble of Maryna Úlehlová and Vladimír Úlehla started in Brno in 1946. See the entry on "Moravský taneční a pěvecký sbor" ("Moravian Dance and Singing Choir") in Pavlicová – Uhlíková 1997: 168–169. Frolka's folklore ensemble started in 1947, in connection with the Brno radio station. Cf. the entry "Frolka, Antoš ml." in Pavlicová – Uhlíková 1997: 29–30.

somehow led us to change the rhythmic accompaniment of 'kontry'[12] *and double bass, and based on that, I started developing the lead violinist grace notes somewhat differently – different from those of the Horňácko or Strážnice regions. Today, perhaps everyone can recognise ours played by various Slovácko cimbalom bands*." (Holý 1982: 246)

As previously mentioned, the post-war generation of folk tradition enthusiasts did not want to continue the instrumental ensembles combining string and brass instruments (*štrajchy*). Although there were collecting activities focused on rescuing the vanishing folk songs and dances in the field, and witnesses were sought out, the archaic music and song tradition had to be reconstructed in most cases – with the help of literature, parallels from other places, or their own ideas and inventions (cf. Uhlíková 2020: 77–82). However, it was still done within the vision of the given ethnographic regionalism that firmly rooted itself in the classification of traditional folk culture after the *Czechoslavic Ethnographic Exhibition*. The concept of ethnographic regions was, on one hand, the backbone of contemporary specialised studies; but on the other hand, it also reinforced the regional and local awareness of local inhabitants, often undefined in their natural environment. The development of the folklore movement strengthened the compactness of ethnographic regions and thus the perception of mutual cultural differences. From the professional point of view, we can consider this as a new moment that could have emerged due to the aforementioned "memory loss". The disappearance of folk music traditions in many regions allowed for a rapid and fundamental transformation of the interpretation of music folklore and the creation of a new tradition: to some extent, a specific regional style manifested in the sound of individual bands (their 'colour' and 'roughness'; or conversely, cultivated musical production, the way of embellishing the melody with violins, clarinets, and other instruments, harmonisation, rhythmic peculiarities in accompanying instruments). Fundamentally, this development was associated

12. *Kontry* (contra or contras) – violin or viola playing harmonic-rhythmic accompaniment.

with the above-mentioned development of music education and the influence of music teachers who emphasised the quality of musical production. If the establishment of folklorism as a subject of ethnological research helped bridge the dividing line of studying the vanished traditional folk culture and its continuation within its "second existence", this fact should also be reflected in further research on the musical genre into which part of the folklore movement evolved.

The examples of the above-mentioned personalities such as Vítězslav Volavý or Jura Petrů (as well as many others), always emphasised their connections to folk traditions; they themselves were perceived as those who emerged from them and reinforced regional musical styles. The current broad interest in folklore, presented in the categories of regional distinctiveness, may be initially perceived as a continuation of the path established by the above-mentioned generation of members of the folklore ensemble movement after World War II. However, development in this area has not stopped, and we are faced with the question of which tradition younger musicians, who have not yet entered the field of ethnological research, are actually continuing. What are their "new ways to old music" when they can no longer connect that past with everyday life as it is lived, even in the latent form of the oldest witnesses? And what is the essence of the genre we are discussing?

From field surveys conducted with selected musicians of the younger generation, many facts emerge that we have already outlined in general, but which can only lead with an empirical foundation, not to presumed hypotheses, but to given facts with which we can further work.

The contribution of the personalities leading music bands (in this case, cimbalom bands in southeastern Moravia) is indisputable. They are still perceived as representing an ethnographic region:

"*There is probably some anchor here to Hradiště, to these surroundings, undoubtedly.* [...] *Certainly, I wouldn't want to act like a person who doesn't acknowledge their origin or region*."[13]

13. Respondent from the Uherské Hradiště district (b. 1981), interview conducted 7 July 2023.

"*Basically, I'm trying now to really stick only to our little piece of territory here and I don't like to go much further abroad. Not that I don't like, for example, Horňácko, but the Uherské Hradiště cimbalom band will never play 'Horňácko' like the people from Horňácko*."[14]

At the same time, the effort to anchor oneself regionally is not a fundamental goal, and with many musicians operating outside defined ethnographic areas, we do not encounter it at all. Nevertheless, even personalities presenting a specific region in the eyes of the public openly reflect on the regional musical style and its development, as evidenced by the statement of lead violinist Petr Mička, whose band primarily presents the folk music of Horňácko:

"*Tradition should be preserved, its transmission developed*. [...] *On the other hand, we live in the 21st century. It is not possible to stagnate, and turn Horňácko and other regions into cans of hermetically sealed folklore*. [...] *We draw from the rendition of the musical tradition in our region and play it not by reconstructing the music but loosely connecting to it, we don't want to violate or stylise it in any way. I myself play as it comes to me, more or less improvisationally, as I feel it in the moment. It's a specific mix of our own and the tradition, the other influences that somehow have affected me. So, we play in some contexts of the Horňácko tradition, but completely freely, almost spontaneously, what we have absorbed and how we have adapted it ourselves, our own style*."[15]

Musicians uniformly today express themselves not only regarding the supra-regional concept, which they consider natural, but also regarding the conscious shaping of their musical expressions, which do not stem solely from traditional folk music (where they often do not find what appeals to them), but also from free creative work. This is driven by both personal ambitions and specific thematic projects, as well as collaboration with dance ensembles and the creation of full-length thematic programmes:

"*I had a significant collaboration with a colleague* [...], *who followed more along the thematic line, which I enjoyed more,*

14. Respondent from the Uherské Hradiště district (b. 1987), interview conducted 29 June 2023.
15. Petr Mička (b. 1979), interview conducted 12 July 2023.

and there was a bit more room for freer creativity in that when she lacked something, there was nothing left to do but invent and write it.... And I somehow enjoyed that more because it meant more creative activity and the possibility to somehow make it...."[16]

Generally, it is no longer negatively received by the wider public if the interweaving of folk music tradition and authorial interventions is acknowledged, which was often not possible in ensemble practice in the past, even though it happened quite frequently. An even greater shift has occurred in the acceptance of genre overlaps, which are increasingly perceived as something normal.

"*We have a motto that the journey is also the goal. So, when we discover some possibilities, we try to fulfil them differently in terms of presentation.... On one hand, I say it's great, you learn something from it; on the other hand, it limits you a bit, you have to adjust it from a completely different genre, from a different set of instruments, which takes away my own creativity a bit because it's already given, you have to adapt to it.... So now I'm running through the repertoire of pop star Václav Neckář, which occurred to me a year ago*."[17]

This is also the way, how with a touch of exaggeration, the spectrum of approaches, inspirations, and presentations that we see in the field of the genre closely connected with music folklore today can be outlined. At the same time, the link to folk tradition, or the imaginary folk tradition, is the determining component here:

"*We enjoy working with something, but not fusing it together at all costs. We don't have the boundaries completely set. As for the foundations of folklore, we grew up here in Uherské Hradiště* [...], *we started from that, I think we do that region very well, and no one's gonna take that foundation away from us. We don't consider ourselves a jazz or pop band; we try to make music here in a way that something has inspired us, something has influenced us, and it simply has some constant development*."[18]

16. Respondent from the Uherské Hradiště district (b. 1981), interview conducted 7 July 2023.
17. Respondent from the Uherské Hradiště district (b. 1981), interview conducted 7 July 2023.
18. Respondent from the Uherské Hradiště district (b. 1987), interview conducted 30 June 2023.

The studied field of folk traditions, especially music, has transformed more noticeably into the area of "scenic folklorism" than we are sometimes willing to admit. To some extent, this is due to the intertwining of functions that we see here – many of them related to ethno-cultural traditions in locations where many folk ensembles present themselves outside stage or "concert" environments. However, the general form of their presentation is already genre-specific – identical formal elements (mainly acquired through music education), mutual transfer and inspiration among individual bands, and to a large extent, mass media dissemination of their production:

"*There can be many genres; a person probably perceives it as* [music] *folklore, rock, jazz. I definitely perceive* [music] *folklore as a genre. On the other hand, I understand that today it is presented completely differently than it was fifty years ago*."[19]

To delineate the arc from the rescue of disappearing traditions to the emergence of a music genre that has been evolving for more than eight decades is not simple. This can be attributed to various factors, among which the ambiguity of the boundaries of the above-mentioned genre and its current breadth clearly stand out. Stage presentation itself is only one moment that, in many cases, transforms into other opportunities with different functions. And the above-mentioned breadth in terms of the number of active performers is indeed significant in the Czech environment. This is evidenced, among other things, by the results of the most extensive research into the folklore movement, partially published in the monograph *Tíha a beztíže folkloru. Folklorní hnutí druhé poloviny 20. století v českých zemích* (*The Weight and Weightlessness of Folklore. The Folklore Revival Movement in the Second Half of the 20th Century in the Czech Lands*, Stavělová et al., 2021). It is evident that the decisive moments in directing the development of a genre not easy to name, closely linked to music folklore, are the contributions of prominent individuals, along with the often very impressive music education of the vast majority of today's "bearers", all in the context of the rules of contemporary mass

19. Respondent from the Uherské Hradiště district (b. 1981), interview conducted 7 July 2023.

culture. This opens up space for discussions that we can conduct in the field of ethnology or folkloristics, but also transfer to other disciplines. And at the same time, seek answers to questions about whether and how the genre in question, rooted as it is in music folklore, formally differs from other music genre categories.

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Summary

From the 1960s onwards, efforts began to develop in Czech ethnology, which gradually began to include folklore manifestations in their second existence in professional research. The field of folklorism sometimes overlapped with the existence of folk traditions, sometimes built on them, and sometimes was only inspired by them to varying degrees. The distinction in such defined categories was not easy even in the past, and with the increasingly rapid development of society, it became blurred in the general consciousness. Within this scope, a contemporary broad music genre, music folklore, has emerged that is not easy to define in terms of content. In this paper, the authors outline its historical formation, show model moments of its development, and deal with its polyfunctionality: many collectives present themselves not only on stage (together with dancers) and in concert settings (independently), but also participate in local ethno-cultural traditions, dance parties, family celebrations (weddings, birthdays), and commercially focused events. To illustrate this, the paper uses archival source material, and field research based on interviews with selected musicians.

Key words: Music folklore; transformations of folk tradition; music genre; folk revivalism in the Czech Republic