

From Folklore to World Music: Paths of Music in Generations

Introduction

This year the international colloquium From Folklore to World Music took place in Náměšť nad Oslavou for the twenty-first time. Just as in years past, members of the academic and music publicist community involved with folk, popular, ethnic, and world music met to mutually exchange the results of their research and discuss current topics connected to the theme of the colloquium, which this time was dedicated to the topic of music passed on to the next generation(s). The lifetime of any expression is conditioned by constant repetition, anchored in tradition. We can think about tradition itself in different ways. It is not just an imaginary line going ever forward, but one which rather grows or weakens over time. What is more, it is material that serves to inspire, even beyond the area of its own development. A question arises as to whether and how musical inspiration can enrich the tradition, and which inspiration will be at birth of another tradition? And who are the holders of this musical inspiration, with what motivations do they approach their efforts, and what do they communicate through their works so inspired? Many of them have been, or currently are, a part of the generational inheritance; others have been inspired by tradition from the outside. Is there a difference between them, and, if so, what is the difference? It is not a trivial thing to reinterpret the familiar in your own way, but time shows that tradition is a living organism that adopts what is necessary and, on the other hand, rejects what is not.

This year's colloquium was dedicated to all musical inspiration that comes from or has entered the musical tradition, and also to those who pass it on. The first section of contributions, as always, focused on traditional European music. Participants discussed the transmission of folk music, its types, and its transformations from the past to the present, particularly the example of Slovak folk instrumental music, which is perceived by its interpreters as important intangible cultural heritage. They also spoke on innovations in the area of traditional Irish music, and the role of singing in the family and community, using the example of amateur musicians in the Czech Republic. A contribution on the possibilities of using artificial intelligence for generating music

of various genres – including traditional folk music –evoked strong reactions. In addition to a summary of the history of attempts to do this in the Czech Republic (dating back to the 1960s), problematic instances of generating music were also pointed out, especially uncontrolled source data and the ethical problems connected to copyright and royalties.

In another part of the colloquium program, there were a number of contributions dealing with American and African traditional music, Czech bluegrass, world music, and Czech tramping music. The legacies of Mike and Peggy Seeger (siblings of the legendary Pete Seeger), and the important role of the Egyptian musicologist and music manager Zakarie Ibrahim in promoting music connected with the magical rango xylophone were fondly described. Also explored were the Facebook meme contributions shared in the Czech bluegrass musicians' circle, and how sea shanties have sailed across the generations. There was a contribution focusing on the influence of musician-fathers on the careers of contemporary interpreters of world music, and one on the growing interest in re-editions of archival recordings, especially as regards world music. There was an analysis of influences on the Czech group Hoboes and how they created “modern” Czech tramping music. An inspiring and poetic close to the colloquium was an essay devoted to the Czech music dramaturge, director, screenwriter, lyricist, publicist, and long-term member of the Czech vocal rock group C&K Vocal, Ladislav Kantor (1945–2015). This text also closes our publication.

The colloquium included a discussion with American singer-songwriter Kelly Hunt, who was invited to speak to the colloquium participants on the folk tradition and making new music. She brought with her Andrew Morris and Julie Bates, the husband-and-wife duo from the bluegrass group The Matchsellers. They spoke, among other things, about their current residence – Kansas City, USA – as a fascinating crossroads of different folk music traditions with a vibrant scene of musicians learning from each other when playing together. The annual Naměšť colloquium has a similar nature. This publication reflects not only the current research area of its participants, but also diverse reactions to the theme in question. The breadth and scope of the ways in which the contributions are elaborated should thus satisfy not only experts in the field, but also the broader community of music lovers of multiple genres.