Guest Editor's Column

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The wide span of themes, methods and perspectives in this issue of *Puls* testifies to the expansion of the epistemological expectations in ethnomusicology, or, the increasing number of fields in which ethnomusicology can claim a position and make substantial contributions. The articles in this issue address themes such as:

- The affordance to make music that an audience offers musicians.
- The technical possibilities and restraints of different media and the conventions on how to handle them.
- The changing of meanings and performance practices when music is moved across time, space and social networks.
- Music being comprehensible by establishing patterns – and patterns of deviating from patterns.
- Music representing audiences and musicians, musicians and audiences representing music, musicians and audiences representing or challenging each other by the means of music.
- Music and society constructing and reconstructing each other.

This wide span can be said to reflect a general tendency where music is present everywhere, ubiquitous, and expected, and linked to all sides of life and society. This presence is also taking place within academia. Sectors and disciplines where music used to be of marginal interest, or of none at all, are now claiming space and authority in music research and education. Today, music is a field of specialisation and professionalisation within technology, economy, and pedagogy – with the consequential effect of music being reduced to a technical, economic, or pedagogic problem to be solved with general technical, economic, or pedagogic methods and perspectives.

The (ethno)musicological response to this expansion of the research field would be to stress the opinion that music has intrinsic values that cannot be reduced to the technical, economic, and pedagogic problems of reproducing music's functions in contemporary society. All the ever-changing ways in which music is made meaningful – as a way of feeling, thinking, moving, sensing, expressing and being in the world, as individuals, as collectives, as individuals-in-collectives and collectives-of-individuals – are the primary sites of creativity and meaningfulness that makes the waves of sound start moving.

But this in turn leads us back to the question of individual and collective intentions, uses and evaluations of music and the roles of music in people's everyday (as well as holiday and ritual) lives. This means to study music as part of a more general acoustemology, as sound structures with specific signification, leading to the study of sounds-in-humanity, the acoustic relations of humans to other species and environment (Feld 1982, Seeger 1987, Allen & Dawe 2016).

The collapse of the modernistic evolutionary development narrative of history has cleared the way for a stronger contemporary presence of "intangible cultural heritage". This concept celebrates and commodifies, nationalises, localises and internationalises, includes and excludes. Some music is made visible besides the dominant high art and commercial musics while at the same time having qualities which can be aesthetisized and commercialised ascribed to them. Ethnomusicology is central here as a site of scientific competence, which clearly underlines the need of continuous reflexive discussions of the uses and effects of culture research (Broclain et al. 2019, Cooley 2019, Norton & Matsumoto 2018).

The everyday (every night, all the time) presence of music in contemporary society is paralleled by and dependent on a corresponding ordinariness of the musician's profession. Still, the magic ascribed to music-making (denominated as genius, gift, inspiration etc) dominate how the musician's competence is understood. The feature article for this volume is written by Simon Frith, who sums up the insights of a project in which he has been engaged on live music in Great Britain. He points to how musicians' career successes often rely on on making the "right" choices in relation to the affordances (opportunities and constraints) offered by society on an everyday basis: "What makes musicians extraordinary is not who they are but what they do and how they use their music-making opportunities." The blurring of the amateur-professional binary as well as of genre distinctions and affiliations are noted as characteristic traits of the musician's ordinary life. Frith also challenges the idea of "the ideal work and its live materialisation" as the way of understanding the concept of "musical performance"; instead he proposes that in live events musicians perform musical motivation, that is, convince the audience that there are intentions behind their playing – be it to entertain, to express themselves, or to focus other central values.

Frith stresses the visual impression of the musician – with gestures, movements, and facial expressions as means of conveying motivation. The relation of intention to perception in evaluating performance, and the role of the performing body, are addressed in quite another way in Mats Johansson's study of rhythmic patterns in the *springar* fiddle tradition. Here, the opinions of four expert performers on the relations between groove, timing, and sound are discussed as an insiders' discourse in relation to the external perspectives of scientific time

measurement. The embodied character of music-making is emphasised; foot tapping is seen as not just an added support but an integral part of the music, and the importance of variation in making a good groove ("god takt") is not just a matter of occasional intensifying deviations but rather as a fundamental surge. "The groove concept and its sound image are so tightly integrated with their associated physical efforts that they merge into one coherent whole."

The changes in the music landscape, with mass media offering access to music from other times and places, had a strong impact on the generations of the 1960s and 1970s. Karin Eriksson points at new sentiments fusing the old with the future, and the geographically close with the distant in her study where two cases, a female duo taking up Swedish folk fiddling and an ensemble modelled upon Russian balalaika orchestras, reflect how new affiliations were sensed. By emphasising the pleasures of playing together on an inclusionary basis, preserving and performing traditions as well as claiming their contemporary relevance, both contributed to the counterculture.

A complex intersection of tradition, media, community, and heritage making is revealed in Sofia Joons Gylling's study of the handling of the Swedish-Estonian manor labourer and local song-writer Mats Ekman (1865–1934). His songs in dialect were initially spread locally, later printed as specimen of dialect literature, and after World War II they were used as a uniting bond between refugees in Sweden. Since the 1990s, the publishing of his songs has become an endeavour for transmitting them to new generations with no personal memories of the places evoked in the songs. Joons Gylling here coins the concept of *publicative cultural heritageing* for the deliberate publishing projects aimed at safeguarding a tradition by securing its availability in print for coming generations.

Bo Nilsson and Kerstin Edin illustrate another approach towards music which also is heavily dependent on mediatisation and technologisation: the position of the audiophile. In their study of technical discourses in two hi-fi magazines, they find varying contemporary attitudes. The ideals of "authentic reproduction" of sound, embedded in a development narrative of increased perfection, are now found beside slightly nostalgic conceptions of "old school" technology, with gender as well as nationality superimposed on both stances. The seemingly contradictory situation is, however, never pronounced as a question of division; rather, the technical discourse unites and "ensures that individuals can adopt different identity positions". As with many technology discourses, a masculine hegemony is installed and reinforced.

A gendered hierarchy is also addressed in Wictor Johansson's survey of Swedish female accordionists. Identifying a male-biased perspective in the music culture as well as a corresponding lack of documentation in tradition archives, the article focuses on professional women

accordionists during the 1930–1970 period and discusses musical role models, repertoire, and media representation. Besides the strong neglect on behalf of the record companies, and a resulting lack of sound documentation, a significant difference is noted in how women accordionists going professional would be expected to take up a more elaborate entertainer position with singing and dancing, and have their appearance judged. The double predicament of a gender bias and a genre bias is convincingly demonstrated with this case.

Former head editor of *Puls*, Ingrid Åkesson, also uses a gender perspective in order to gain new insights into a well-known genre, indeed re-directing our view. Her take on Scandinavian (and Anglo-Scot) traditional ballads analyses the occurrence of violence (murder, rape, assault) and its co-variance with gender roles and hierarchies across the established sub-genres as a general trait in the ballad universe where masculine violence tends to be normative. She interprets the motif "sexual violence as revenge" as an expression of exercise of power and male entitlement, a structural rather than personal violence aimed at the woman's family, or as an expression of male competition. Women can also act violently, in self-defence or protection of kin; however, female brutality stemming from jealousy is punished. Åkesson ends by pointing at the contemporary relevance of many ballads addressing these themes.

As can be deduced from this presentation, contemporary ethnomusicology addresses contemporary issues and expressions while at the same time scrutinising its functions and effects in society, a process in which axioms and concepts have to be questioned, re-defined or replaced, and stances and positions evaluated. The relevance of the discipline, as well as of its inherent creativity, is felt stronger more now than ever. ■

References

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