

**Music and Imagined Communities.
Articulations of the Self and the other in
the Musical Realm**

Veranstalter: Research project „Europe and Beyond. Transfers, Networks and Markets for Musical Theatre in Modern Europe“, European University Institute Florence

Datum, Ort: 28.10.2011–29.10.2011, Florenz

Bericht von: Magdalena Waligórska, Freie Universität Berlin

The objective of this conference was to address music as a cultural practice, enabling the creation of collective identities. Revisiting Benedict Anderson's famous concept of „imagined communities“, the conference participants offered different methodological perspectives on how music functions not only as a medium through which communities can be imagined and boundaries between them drawn, but also as a genre offering a very particular experience of belonging¹. The conference, which gathered, next to musicologists, also historians, sociologists, anthropologists and literary scholars, allowed an intensive cross-disciplinary debate, concentrating on the potential of music for generating collective identities both on the national level, and in the transnational context of gender, class, ethnicity, etc. The particular contribution of the conference to the discussion of the „musically imagined communities“ was, however, that it conceptualized the relation of music and identity-formation not only in terms of generating belonging and allowing collectivities to imagine themselves as communities, but also in terms of creating boundaries, alienation, stigmatization and exclusion.

The conference, realised within the research project „Europe and Beyond. Transfers, Networks and Markets for Musical Theatre in Modern Europe“, was organised by Heinz-Gerhard Haupt (European University Institute, Florence) and Magdalena Waligórska (Freie Universität Berlin).

PHILIP BOHLMAN (Chicago) opened the conference with the keynote speech which offered a musical journey across the Mediterranean region, revisiting musical and mythical motifs common to the area, and investi-

gating into the possibilities of a transnational Mediterranean musical imagery. PAUL ANDERSON's (Michigan) talk, in turn, took the consideration on music and identity-building to another dimension, dealing with the question of how music generates both personal and collective emotions. Engaging in a critical dialogue with the rhetoric of formalism, Anderson pleaded for a new language of exploring the public dimension of the „supposedly private and subjective“ activity of listening to music.

How the process of performing the self might feed on appropriating the forms of expression of the other was the leitmotif of the first part of the conference. PHILIPPE GUMPLOWICZ (Paris) took as his point of departure the „Hatikva“, the Israeli national anthem, the Spanish anarchist song „A Las Barricadas“, and the Nazi hymn „Horst Wessel Lied“ as prominent examples illustrating the case in point. Conceptualizing the three pieces as „performative songs“ („le chant identitaire“), he argued that the adoption of the music of the other into the genre mobilizing a collective in the face of an enemy functions as „symbolic spoils of war“. The appropriated music not only serves a particular ingroup purpose, but also stands for an act of domination over the other. In a similar vein, OKSANA SARKISOVA (Budapest) took the case of Soviet, Czech, and Hungarian musical films produced during the Cold War to analyse the dynamics of resistance to, and appropriation of, „Western“ models of consumer culture and popular entertainment. The partly paradoxical and self-contradictory attempts of the „Eastern Block“ to compete with the hugely popular Western musicals, adopting the medium for its propagandistic goals, constituted a particularly fascinating case of both domestication of the musical styles of the „Western“ other, and the ultimate failure to resist them. PATRICK WOOD's (Boston) analysis of Alberto Ginastera's Violin Rhapsody „Pampeana No. 1“, which served as a model for Ravel's „Tzigane“, made it clear that it is not only the music of the dominant, but also that of the marginalised other that is readily appropriated into pieces per-

¹ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, New York 1983.

forming a collective spirit. Concentrating on the intricate mechanisms of mirroring, parody, and musical translation, Wood demonstrated how Ravel's play with Gypsy folk idioms is re-appropriated in a genre that becomes a musical representation of 'Argentine-ness' ('argentinidad'), that is, an imagined national, collective Self.

The dichotomy of centre vs. periphery remained also in the focus of the second session, devoted to how the music of the marginal other makes its way into the cultural mainstream and becomes a medium of expression for the dominant group. KATHARINE LEISKA's (Nuremberg) case concerned here the concept of the „North“ in German classical music of the turn of the 20th century. Her presentation dealt with the ambiguous position of Scandinavian symphonies as a representation of a mythical pan-Germanic past, on the one hand, and the superfluous and marginal other „Northern“ genre, competing with the hegemonic „German“ tradition of composition, on the other. Germany and its „other“ was also the subject of MAGDALENA WALIGÓRSKA's (Berlin) analysis of the contemporary revival of klezmer music. Comparing the klezmer boom in Germany and in Poland, she argued that the fascination with the music of the other can also directly impact the self-identification of music-makers. Investigating this particular music scene, where mostly non-Jewish musicians sustain a revival of Jewish music, Waligórska concluded that the klezmer phenomenon is a space breeding hybrid identities and allowing unconventional patterns of belonging. The appeal of ethnic music of the others and minority/immigrant identities were, likewise, the research theme of ANA SOBRAL (Constance). Speaking about the representations of what she called the „cosmopolitan hero“, she examined, among others, autobiographical elements in the lyrics of „Gogol Bordello“, pointing to the role of marginality in the global counterculture.

The political implications of music employed in the process of community-building were discussed in the third panel. ROBERT ADLINGTON (Nottingham) opened the discussion with his paper on the Amsterdam-based Instant Composers Pool, and their

struggle to realize the idea of a free musical community, aspiring towards anarchy, and based on the principle of free improvisation. GESA ZUR NIEDEN (Mainz) dealt with the communities of „critical composing“, inquiring into the tension between political commitment and social isolation, pictured in the music of Hans Werner Henze and Helmut Lachenmann. SVEN OLIVER MÜLLER (Berlin) considered patterns of political domination and resistance via music, on the example of the ensemble of the Berlin Philharmonic Hall, touring the Nazi-occupied Western Europe between 1940 and 1942. A likewise historical perspective was offered by LINDA BRAUN (Baltimore) in her study of the cultural transfer of ragtime music from the United States to Imperial Germany in the period directly preceding the First World War.

The relation of music and nationalism belonged to one of the key subjects of the conference. The panel dedicated to it brought together case studies both from the European context and beyond. RYAN WEBER (Storrs) took up the Norwegian case, analysing the work of composer Edvard Grieg. His music became a starting point to the discussion about negotiating the Norwegian musical language within the dichotomy of particularistic „regional spirit“ and more universalist and inclusive definitions of Norwegian-ness. AURELIE BARBUSCIA (Florence) considered the definition of the „French musical tradition“, which was taking shape vis-à-vis the Italian model, and within the influence of the towering figure of Gioachino Rossini. ADAM MESTYAN (Berlin) gave us an insight into the rise of musical theatre in Egypt (1872-85), and the struggle to invent a model of the vernacular Arab theatre, both in opposition to, and in dialogue with, the European forerunners. Finally, MARKIAN PROKOPOVYCH (Budapest) pictured the changing role of the Budapest Opera House as one of the local music stages of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

An equally interesting discussion emerged, however, around the topic of music and the modes of transnational identification. AYHAN EROL (Izmir) presented a captivating study of the glocalization of Islamic pop music, a genre which both addresses a transnational Muslim audience, and adapts itself

to the particular local aesthetics. MARIO DUNKEL (Dortmund), in turn, concentrating on the work of Duke Ellington and Charles Mingus, traced the different modes of evoking a pan-African identity, ranging from patriotism and confrontation to parody and humour. Connecting to this discussion, TAL SOKER (Tel-Aviv) addressed the idea of pan-Semitism, and the tension between the inclusive category of the „Mediterranean Style“ and the Zionist ideology in Israel. AILBHE KENNY (Limerick) took the debate to another dimension altogether, bringing in the cyberspace as a site of new transnational music communities. Talking about the online platforms, offering virtual courses of traditional Irish music, she addressed both the transnational phenomenon of Irish music boom and the new possibilities of creating „musically imagined communities“ through the medium of the Internet.

The panel devoted to diaspora and displacement drew on the two preceding sessions, concentrating on the role of music in sustaining a national or regional identity in the context of (forced) migration. DAVIDE CERIANI (New York) presented a case study of the Italian community in New York, for whom the medium of opera both served to articulate nostalgia for the home country and provided space for performing national pride vis-à-vis the American host society. ULRIKE PRÄGER's (Boston) presentation, devoted to the German expellees from Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, focused on the use of folk music as a means of asserting a distinct group identity in the aftermath of forced migration. Looking at the ways Sudeten Germans related to their music, Präger commented not only on the way music encoded nostalgia and the loss of a home, but also on the modes of sociability that collective music-making offered them. That music, however, can articulate not only the will to return, but also the wish to escape was well illustrated by the paper of HEIDRUN FRIESE (Frankfurt/Oder). Examining the genres of *harga*, *raï*, and *rap*, which accompany and narrate the experience of young, male migrants from the Maghreb crossing the Mediterranean, Frieze analysed them as representations of gendered identity, expressions of ethnic dignity, and sonic

documents of exclusion. JOSEPHINE HOEGAERTS (Leuven) revisited the relation of music to masculinity in quite a different context. Investigating the 19th century practice of performing patriotic songs on school trips, she argued that collective children's singing in Belgium contributed not only to the formation of national consciousness but also gender roles.

The conference „Music and Imagined Communities“ revisited some of the most fundamental social functions of music, challenging the essentialist assumptions of music as an expression of pre-existing, stable and clearly defined group identities. The papers presented during the conference illustrated it clearly that music helps define collectivities just as often as it alienates groups or individuals from the society around them. Music performs and re-states boundaries, and becomes an indispensable vehicle for nationalist ideologies or state propaganda. On the other hand, however, it also offers modes of identification that are transitory, ambivalent and inevitably bound to consumption, which Born and Hesmondhalgh also termed „psychic tourism“ through music². The preliminary conclusions of this conference seem to, indeed, confirm the thesis that the performative nature of music, the sensations it offers to the body and the modes of sociability it enables allow consumers of music locating themselves in „imaginary cultural narratives“³. On the other hand, however, it also demonstrated that the potential of music as a medium of imagining communities is twofold. It can both induce submersion into the mainstream, dominant collectivity, and construct spaces of alterity, difference and dissent⁴. In other words, music provides not only the means to construct the collective „self“, but it also constitutes what Philip

² G. Born and D. Hesmondhalgh, „Introduction“, in: G. Born and D. Hesmondhalgh, eds., *Western Music and Its Others*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 2000, pp. 35-6.

³ S. Frith, „Music and Identity“ in: S. Hall and P. du Gay, eds., *Questions of Cultural Identity*, London 1996, p. 124.

⁴ G. Born, „Afterword: Music Policy, Aesthetic and Social Difference“, in: Tony Bennett et al., eds., *Rock and Popular Music. Politics, Policies, Institutions*, London 1993.

Bohlman termed a „symbolic system to convey the exotic and the other⁵“. Inclusion and exclusion via music appear therefore as two sides of the same coin. In other words, musically imagined communities can only function if they define their own margins.

Conference overview:

Keynote speeches

Philip Bohlman (University of Chicago): Multisong Moments – Genesis, Genre, and the Musical Imagination of Mediterranean Nationalism.

Paul Anderson (University of Michigan): Poignancy and Belonging: Modern Jazz and the Public Life of Private Feeling.

Performing the self. Performing the other
Chaired by Sven Oliver Müller (Max Planck Institute Berlin)

Philippe Gumpłowicz (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris): The Performative Song and the Question of the Other.

Oksana Sarkisova (Central European University Budapest): Sing With Us, Sing Like Us! The Soft Power of Musical Films during the Cold War.

Patrick Wood (Boston University): From Gypsies to Gauchos: Identity and Imagined Others in Ginastera's „Pampeana No.1“ and Ravel's „Zigane“.

Music, the hegemonic and the marginal
Chaired by Paul Anderson

Katharine Leiska (Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg): The North as the Self and the Other. Scandinavian Composers' Symphonies in German Concert Halls around 1900.

Magdalena Waligórska (Freie Universität Berlin): The Klezmer Revival and Marginal Jewish Identities. The case of Kraków and Berlin.

Ana Sobral (Constance University): Performing Cosmopolitanism: Gogol Bordello and the Global Underdogs.

Music, political agency and the subversive
Chaired by Stephen Smith (European Univer-

sity Institute Florence)

Robert Adlington (University of Nottingham): Imagining Anarchy: Community and Self in the Instant Composers Pool.

Gesa zur Nieden (University of Mainz): Communities of 'Critical Composing': Henze's and Lachenmann's Contemporary Music between Political Commitment and Social Isolation.

Oliver Müller (Max Planck Institute Berlin): Old Pleasures without New Emotions? Performances of the Berlin Philharmonic in the Second World War.

Linda Braun (Johns Hopkins University): 'The World Goes 'Round to the Sound of the International Rag!' Ragtime in Imperial Germany and the Formation of Imagined Communities.

Music and nationalism

Chaired by Philip Bohlman (University of Chicago)

Ryan Weber (University of Connecticut): „All and All Kinds“ The Discourse of Identity in Edvard Grieg's Last Vocal Works.

Aurelie Barbuscia (European University Institute Florence): The Awakening of the National Concern in French Music. Inventing a 'French Musical Tradition' with or without Rossini.

Adam Mestyan (Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin): Building the State via the Taste: Imaging the Audience in Egypt, 1872-1885.

Markian Prokopovych (Central European University, Budapest): The Budapest Opera House, the Audience and the Press 1884-1918.

Music and the creation of transnational identities

Chaired by Heinz-Gerhard Haupt (European University Institute Florence)

Ayhan Erol (Dokuz Eylül University, Izmir): The Globalization of Islamic Popular Music: The Case of Turkish Islamic Pop.

Mario Dunkel (Technische Universität Dort-

⁵ P. V. Bohlman, *The Music of European Nationalism. Cultural Identity and Modern History*, Santa Barbara 2004, p. 189.

mund): Duke Ellington, Charles Mingus, and the Aesthetics of Pan-Africanism.

Tal Soker (University of Tel-Aviv): The Mediterranean Style: From Pan-Semitism to Israeli Jewish Nationality.

Ailbhe Kenny (University of Limerick): 'Between the Jigs and the Reels (in Cyberspace)' – Investigating an Irish Traditional Music Online Community.

Music, diaspora and displacement

Chaired by Philipp Ther (University of Vienna)

Davide Ceriani (Columbia University): Opera as Social Agent: The Metropolitan Opera House and New York City's Italian Community during the Early Twentieth Century.

Ulrike Praeger (Boston University): 'Blüh nur, blüh mein Sommerkorn': the Creation of Lived Communities through Musical Recollections.

Heidrun Friese (Europa Universität Viadrina): 'Ya l'babour, ya mon amour' – Raï, Rap and the Desire to Escape.

Music and gendered identities

Chaired by: Ute Frevert (Max Planck Institute Berlin)

Josephine Hoegaerts (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven): „As it echoes South and North“ Belgian Children Singing the Nation into the Landscape at the End of the Nineteenth Century.

Janet Youngdahl (University of Lethbridge, Alberta): Ordering Virtue and Learning from Antiphons and Responsories: Hildegard's Music and Text as a Builder of Collective Identity.

Tagungsbericht *Music and Imagined Communities. Articulations of the Self and the other in the Musical Realm*. 28.10.2011–29.10.2011, Florenz, in: H-Soz-Kult 13.02.2012.