LISTENING TO THE MUSIC OF A CITY[1]

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Abstract: *The article consists of two parts. The first is focused on different theoretical approaches used/usable when researching music of a city. The second part offers five topics (which merged on the basis of several criteria): 1) music and the stratified and specialized society; 2) music and rebellion; 3) commodification and music; 4) electronic dance music; 5) music and spirituality. In their frameworks, different musical events and their contexts ("soundscapes") are discussed.*

Two important features are recognized when studying Prague soundscapes. The first of them is the blurring of various musical borders (in the concept of music, in style/genre, in the concept of musical sound…). The other feature is the functioning of music in strengthening group identities by fostering internal values and separating them from their surroundings.

Keywords: *urban ethnomusicology; Prague; soundscape*

It seems easily understandable that today's cities, especially the large ones, attract the attention of anthropologists, including those specializing in music. This is undoubtedly because cities, as a consequence of urbanization, become an essential phenomenon of the contemporary world and thus also a subject of reflection (Augé 1999). For ethnomusicologists, however, there is one more challenge, which was already present at the very beginnings of the discipline: a possibility of meeting with a variety of sounds and their meanings, thus with different musical worlds. They take advantage of this occasion;[2] this often rather unsurprisingly results in teamwork.

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2   Besides the works mentioned in relevant places in the text, let us mention, e.g., Livingston – Russell – Ward – Nettl 1993.

The following text is a certain sort of report on such research in Prague. It was and is teamwork during which we – my students at the Faculty of Humanities of Charles University in Prague and I – opened and used rather broad space for theoretical considerations. They arose from two starting points. The first was the ethnomusicological perspective,[3] unusual in the Czech context; a great deal has been written about music in Prague, but these are mostly historical musicological texts.[4] The second starting point was the emphasis on "urbanity," the understanding of Prague music as "of the city" (not just "in the city"), where *the city is both a complex environment and an active agent* (Reyes, in Hemetek – Reyes 2007: 17).

In this text, we present the contemporary state of our theoretical considerations and some research topics; in both realms it is just a "work in progress."

Our theme seems simply arranged along three axes: people (who listen) – music (which they listen to) – and place (where they listen). It seemed that we wanted to describe a three-dimensional reality – a task certainly not simple, but at least understandable and transparent. Besides, for it concepts exist that may help us, at least a bit.

The key concept, in the English-language literature (and also in a few Czech texts), is called **soundscape.** In it, the word *sound* is joined with the morpheme *-scape,* which refers most directly to the word *landscape.* In connotations, however, rather than some sort of solidity which we connect with mountains and meadows that form a landscape, there echoes a process of creation or formation. For that matter Kay Kaufman Shelemay, speaking about her – close to our – idea of *soundscape* (about which we will speak a little later), refers to seascape, *which provides a more flexible analogy to music's ability both to stay in place and to move in the world today, to absorb changes in its content and performance styles, and to continue to accrue new layers of meanings* (Shelemay 2006: XXXIV*).*

The word *soundscape* was first popularized in the '70s in a work of the Canadian composer and sound ecologist Raymond Murray Schafer and his colleagues. In their concept, it is a sound characteristic of a concrete environment, some sort of sound parallel to a landscape, including the sounds of cars, bells, footsteps and the song of birds... Schafer and his team considered this sound landscape, the sound environment, both a subject of research (what is interesting for them is mainly how people perceive it) and also a special sort of artistic work.

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3   From many characteristics, we consider fitting the one in Reyes 2009 that a combination of musical and ethnographical data is essential for the discipline.

4   From many publications let us mention, e.g., Dlabola – Kopecká 1988, and Musil 2005.

In 2000, the word *soundscape* was used by Harvard ethnomusicologist Kay Kaufman Shelemay in the title of her book. While the form of the term itself was inspired by cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai,[5] in the content Shelemay followed up on the well-known three-part analytical model of the ethnomusicological classic Alan Merriam (1964). In it, Merriam, a trained anthropologist (and passionate musician) suggested how to research music from the anthropological perspective: as a product of human activity. What we are accustomed to calling "music itself" (and Merriam calls "sound phenomenon") is a product of human behavior: the movement of fingers on strings, the vibration of vocal chords, and also of the interaction of the audience when it spontaneously joins the performing group and/or, e.g., claps in rhythm. Verbal behavior also belongs in this category, whether in the form of the written review of an operatic performance or oral disagreement with the playing of a local cimbalom band at a wedding. All of this influences the sound of music now or in the future.

The above-mentioned types of human behavior, however, are not accidental; on the contrary, they are deeply rooted in human ideas, values and concepts – be they about music or, more broadly, about the world in general. The ancient Indians, convinced about the spiritual effects of sound, tried with all their strength to avoid any mistake during the performance of ritual chanting. Therefore, they created the first known musical notations and established one social layer especially for the performance of these sacred texts. And thus it is still possible to listen to their ancient (sometimes very complicated) melodies today. Musicians in a punk band, convinced of the rottenness of the majority society, express their revulsion, their rebellion, their negation in various ways: against the cultivated and complicated classics by simple crudeness, against specialization (including musical) by amateurism available to everyone, against refined, fancy clothing by wearing rumpled and even torn pants, socks and jackets with unfriendly and prickly-looking decorations...

As far as people are concerned, Merriam's model counted – like the cultural and social anthropology of those days – on a relatively simple world of more or less isolated, homogeneous, and, moreover, static groups.[6] It is exactly because of this unrealistic view that Shelemay emphasizes that dynamic similarity to *seascape*, which makes it possible to grasp changes in the sound world and in the world of people. For such an idea of music in the most various contexts

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5   His concept of –scapes appears in the book *Modernity at Large*, 1996.
6   Regarding terminology, the English-language literature most often uses the term "community."

we use the Czech expression "musical world" (hudební svět) as a synonym for soundscape.[7]

Both concepts clearly differentiate in ties; while Schafer's concept binds sounds to a place, Shelemay connects them primarily to people – to those who produce music as well as those who listen to and appreciate it. To us as musical anthropologists, the latter concept was understandably closer. Besides, we also agreed with Merriam's and/or Shelemay's understanding of music: following the ethnomusicological tradition (and perhaps somewhat limited by a tradition of historical musicology) we understand music as an intentional human creation. Concretely: we would not unequivocally agree with the classical musicological assertion that music is (only) such a sound structure which bears some esthetic information. We know that phenomena that we would designate as music have in various cultures (and, as is apparent in musics of Prague, not only in rather exotic cultures) various meanings and in many cases it would not occur to their "users" to ask if it is "lovely." Nevertheless, we constantly oscillated between Blacking's thesis that music is "humanly organized sound" (which we understood as "humanly *intentionally* organized sound"), and a newer concept, highly popularized by Christopher Small, that music is human activity (1998: 2), which actually is not too far from Merriam's understanding.

Thus, decisive for us was intentionality, which connected sound to people. The idea of Schafer and his followers that the sound of passing trams, random footsteps and slamming doors could be perceived as art/music was alien to us not only because of our limited traditionality, but also because it is closer to the anthropological point of view of understanding music as a human creation than as a product of place.

But what to do if the concept of music, its most crucial intention, becomes unintentionality, thus the unintentionality of the resulting sound shape, and, on the contrary, the intentional connection to the random sounds of place? That was exactly the case of a special type of concert – a "sound-specific performance" (as the organizers called it) – in the Bubeneč sewage treatment plant, which we will discuss later, and other Prague musical events. One dimension of our three-dimensional research reality – the dimension of music – gradually became foggy.

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7   It is beyond the possibilities of this text to deal with different meanings and variants of the term "musical world" in the texts of other authors; we have just tried to find a meaningful equivalent to "soundscape." Let us just mention Becker's (1982) *Art Worlds,* or "musical worlds" (or "musical pathways" used in the same sense) by Ruth Finnegan (1989).

Inside the unclearly limited phenomenon called music, there are, moreover, as we knew from our own research and that of other ethnomusicologists, very permeable borders of categories called genre or style. And, thus, what is called a *mantra* in one place sounds completely different elsewhere. Or the music sounds similar, but it means something different to those who play and listen to it. Jazz could be an example: so full of meaning for the Czech youth at the very beginning of World War II (as Škvorecký writes about it), meaning so far from the Afro-American fathers of jazz a half century earlier. This is exactly the accruing of new layers mentioned by Shelemay.

The fogginess, related at first to the concept of music and its categories, also reached the second axis of our interest: people. Like Merriam, thinking about the rather simple reality of isolated homogeneous societies, the world was viewed in the same way by sociologists and later on by cultural anthropologists of the second half of the 20th century. When they became interested in groups of people who (usually in an urban environment) differed from others, groups which they started to call *subcultures*, they realized that their common element was often musical style. Sometimes musical style directly generates such groups,[8] sometimes strikingly indicates them,[9] and sometimes the musical style is involved in the process in one direction or the other.[10] Punk subculture is usually mentioned as an especially famous example.[11] Our experience – be it from the musical style itself, thus, from the sound of music, or from the people we met – shows the world less "homogenized" and less clearly segmented. The majority of today's teenagers would most likely say that they belong MORE OR LESS (and this is meant literally: sometimes more and sometimes less, sometimes only fleetingly) to one or another subculture.[12]

Some of today's philosophers and sociologists agree. While in traditional societies people had, according to Anthony Giddens, a relatively fixed majority

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[8]   Turino (2008: 187) mentions the example of the American contra-dance movement, when a community is created around the musical activity itself. In her extensive article about community (2011), Shelemay convinces us that music plays a basic role in forming communities of different types. (pp. 367–370).

[9]   For example, various features of hip-hop specifically belonged at the time of its origin to certain age groups of Afro-American urban ghettos.

[10]   Wherever music is instrumental to the rise of a group, it can gradually move from a central position; in other cases, music can become the central symbol of a group. This symbol should be treated with great care. Such care brings the community closer together.

[11]   Viz, e.g., Hebdige 1979.

[12]   And some would, on the contrary, emphasize that they are not connected to one or another style and subculture which is actually the sign of another distinctive group.

of social roles and ways of their fulfillment (and thus possibilities for their own self-formation were limited), for our "late modernity" an overwhelming offer of possibilities is significant, and everybody can always chose an answer to the question, "Who am I and how shall I behave?" (Giddens 1991: 70) The picture of homogeneous subcultures crumbles. Consistently regarded, the remark of Mark Slobin (1993: IX) that everyone is a unique musical culture is exact. Most ethnomusicologists would rather, however, identify themselves with Kay Shelemay, who says that *We do not study a disembodied concept called "culture" or a place called "field," but rather a stream of individuals* (Shelemay 1997: 201). We thus perceive a human world metaphorically as a mass of individuals carried by the same stream. Some of them are closer to the center of the stream; some are more on the side; some get out and climb on the bank. Sometimes the stream splits or, on the contrary, merges with another one. We can apply the thesis of Zygmund Bauman about fluid modernity, including that of musical worlds. Or we can use the idea of the universe with galaxies, orbits, and individual planets. The closer we look, the more detailed the worlds are opened to our eyes until we reach the world of each human individual.

For the understanding of such **individual worlds**, Timothy Rice offers a model, similarly three-dimensional, like the one we thought about at the beginning. Its axes are, however, different: time, place and metaphor (Rice 2003). On the axis of time, the chronological and historical one (how a musical composition flows, in which "objective" time its performance is set) is interwoven with the phenomenological, experiential one (how I perceive it – most likely in a different way from the first time, etc.). On the axis of place, Rice leaves an idea of a concrete, "natural," physical place (*we and our subjects increasingly dwell not in a single place but in many places along a locational dimension of some sort… /Rice 2003: 160/*) and accepts the idea that place is a social construct in which a social event is set into the most varied coordinates (where, in my personal history, did that happen?). By the way, here Rice comes close to the socio-geographic method of mental maps by which some researchers aim to understand how people perceive their environment.[13] How would Prague look on the mental map of a techno fan and how on that of a singer of Gregorian chant?

The third dimension is *metaphor.* By this term Rice understands *…the fundamental nature of music expressed in metaphors in the form "A is B" that is, "music is x."*(Rice 2003: 163) Here is meant not a rhetoric figure, but a way

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13   For example, Shobe, H and Banis, D, 2010.

of thinking: metaphors as special forms of images emphasize some details while they suppress others and, by this, express the structure of our thinking. When we say that good news is "music to my ears" we reveal substantial values which we attribute to music. (The clever reader certainly realized that this axis of Rice's is almost identical with the deepest layer of Merriam's model.)

Although Rice discusses music as a personal experience and the musical world of an individual, as an ethnomusicologist he does not ignore the indisputably collective nature of music. He suggests closer understanding of individual musical worlds because of our better understanding of the character of musical collectivity – and also human collectivity: how close are the listeners of the same operatic performance in their experiencing of music and how close are those of a rock concert or participants in a Hara Krishna procession? Equally? Unequally? Why?

We still haven't come thoroughly to the third axis: **place**. It is possible to think about local anchoring of music in several principal directions. The most striking and loudest one comes from the idea of massive territorialization[14], the phenomenon torn off from one concrete physical place, as an accompanying feature of modernity. All of us are daily witnesses: not only the omnipresence of Coca Cola and Shell gas stations, but also souvenirs from Greece made in Indonesia... Arjun Appadurai adds further consequences of modernity to it, especially the influence of imagination in our lives (and possibilities of realizing this imagination to a large degree)[15], and tension between the global and the local. The cocktail mixed from these ingredients makes every place specific.

For investigation of this specifity, Appadurai offers five dimensions of "global cultural flows." They are not meant as different types of influences which form today's reality. Appadurai speaks about *deeply perspectival constructs* (1996: 33). They are building stones of what he calls "imagined worlds," thus worlds which are established by historically constituted ideas of people and groups around the whole world.

The five dimensions are (a) *ethnoscapes, (...persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers...);* (b) *technoscapes (...the global configuration... of technology and the fact that technology... now moves at high speeds across various kinds of previously*

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14   Concept elaborated by Appadurai 1996, also discussed by Rice 2003.

15   In that, he follows Anderson (1983) and his concept of "imagined communities," thus communities created on the basis of imagination, not physical closeness.

*impervious boundaries…); (*c) *financescapes (… the disposition of global capital* that *is now a more mysterious, rapid, and difficult landscape to follow than ever before…)* (Appadurai 1996: 33) These three dimensions are connected in an unforeseeable way or – regarding many other influences – even separated.

Both of the other – *scapes* are closely connected to the world of the imagination: (d) *mediascapes (… the distribution of electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, and film-production studios… and the images of the world created by these media… while… they provide… large and complex repertoires of images, narratives, and ethnoscapes to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed); (*e) *Ideoscapes* are related to *the ideologies of states and the counterideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power or a piece of it… These ideoscopes are composed of elements of the Enlightenment worldview, which consists of a chain of ideas, terms, and images, including freedom, welfare, rights, sovereignty, representation, and the master term **democracy***… (Appadurai 1996: 35–36)

Appadurai's conception suited us for two reasons. The first was a certain convergence of points of view: partially intuitively we saw Prague musical life formed similarly (which means we agreed partly with Appadurai in those perspectival constructs). This convergence is apparent in the formulation of themes discussed below: for example, "perspectival construct," understanding music primarily as goods is more substantial anchoring than the fact of where the music is performed.

Besides, the conception of Appadurai also suits freer application because it corresponds to the "metaphoric" nature of music, as it is called by Rice (2003). In other words, it is possible to look at music and also at phenomena that influence it from different perspectives. We used it by the introduction of different theoretical views, different schools.

We do not, however, want to give up the idea of local anchoring of music. (Here Appadurai's idea of tension between the local and the global, which characterizes different places, suits us well. For us it means the possibility of looking for the specific character of Prague musical worlds.) Our starting decision to understand music not only as sound, but also as a social phenomenon, thus sounds and people who produce and accept them, is substantial. In this case, we are primarily interested in how the people from our Prague soundscapes are connected to concrete places. At the same time, we are convinced of the non-randomness of the location of a musical event: the shape of the space where music sounds is

not random – musicians and listeners have chosen it and, moreover, physical boundaries co-form the event; the environment of the event is not random and, finally, the broad stage of Prague is surely not random. This non-randomness, however, is formed by influences of different dimensions (historical, social, economic…) – and also our perspectives. We certainly do not present the Prague musical world in its constantly changing plasticity: we actually did not intend to do so. Hopefully we have grasped some of its moments and some perspectives.

Writing about the music of Prague

As is apparent from the above text, Prague and its soundscapes do not yet appear in clear contours, as a clearly profiled model. And so our writing is also more a looking around the topic. That is why our writing is more an examination of the topic; it is similar to the groping of blind men trying to know and describe an elephant (Nettl 2010: XIV). The topics by which we are trying to introduce Prague – an elephant – definitely do not represent systematic categories (because we are unable to provide such profound systematization). Some of them belong in the sphere "music as an object": music is an object (and thus a result/indicator) of what is happening in the society. In the others, music is, on the contrary, a subject: it stimulates a "human" response. In both cases, however, it is true that they are "a two-way street," and so we can constantly observe the interaction between the music itself and the nurturing community.

On the other hand, it is not a random ("aleatoric") choice of topics (although even such a choice would show something substantial). We set a few criteria. As mentioned above, our intention is to show music in Prague through the eyes and ears of a musical anthropologist/ethnomusicologist. That is why we tried to describe the events which are sufficiently at home and, at the same time, such events in which, at least from our perspective, musical language and musical events are very explicable by cultural values of the community. The third criterion was a certain diversity regarding presented styles as well as discussed topics (in order to show Prague as multidimensional as possible). However, it is clear from the following pages that none of the topics is isolated, just as no music – whether we think about its language or a musical event – is untouched in today's Prague by what is happening around.

This is exactly that interlocking that ascertained that we, groping blind men, are touching the same elephant. And that, with enough patience, contours will appear more and more clearly.

Besides certain representativeness, appropriateness (homogeneity of musical style and its cultural context) and diversity, we targeted one more goal. Together with events in Prague themselves, we also intend to introduce ethnomusicology/ musical anthropology – a discipline which aims to understand people through music and music through people. Individual topics provided the occasion to introduce various theoretical concepts which are, in the history of (musical) anthropology, of different degrees of importance, in our opinion, but relevant for a given soundscape.

Topic 1: Music and the stratified and specialized society

If Prague tries to (re)present[16] itself by means of music (and mainly at the beginning of our research we were surprised at how little takes place in comparison to other metropolises)[17], then it is through art music. The simplest explanation seems to be the emphasis of the presentation of Prague as primarily a historic city. The ideal intersection of this representativeness of art music and the emphasis on nationhood, which is always so present in the Prague space, can be, for example, a performance of the opera *Rusalka* by Antonín Dvořák (that Dvořák who – at least in the Czech imagination – conquered the New World, and a recording of his symphony even reached the moon, as the Czech media enjoys repeating) in the National Theater on National Avenue in the very center of the city at the most prestigious address (Fig. 1).

Here one can view the musical style of the opera genre through Lomax's[18] *cantometrics* method: it almost perfectly corresponds to its characteristics of a stratified and specialized society. The starting point of Lomax's research, which he encapsulated in his book *Folk Song Style and Culture* (1968), was the hypothesis that folk song style[19] is a pattern of learned behavior, which is

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[16]   By this formulation I mean partly to point out the titles of events in Prague (Prague Spring, Prague Autumn, Music of the Prague Castle...) and also official events such as anniversary celebrations, etc., where art music is not exclusive, but it does dominate. Thirdly, there are events designated for not particularly interested tourists, that is, some sort of musical souvenirs of Prague. We will, however, discuss these under the topic of commodification.

[17]   In the past years we have practically not come across the use of musical symbols as positive metaphors for non-musical reality, which is very common, for example, in Vienna. Only recently there appeared, e.g., this ad for Czech Airlines: "The Czech Republic, a Symphony of the Senses."

[18]   Alan Lomax (1915–2002), known as a collector of mainly Anglo-American folk ballads in the Appalachian Mountains in southeast of the USA. The most important of his ethnomusicological publications is *Folk Song Style and Culture*.

[19]   *Folk song style:* this term comprises both the way of interpretation and also the interpreted form, including textual components.

Fig. 1: The National Theater with the New Scene. Source: Photograph by author.

common to people in a given culture[20]. Singing, like speech, is a special way of communication, but more formally organized and redundant. Whether singing is choral or solo, its main function is, according to Lomax, the expression of common feelings. Therefore, singing style is communal rather than individual, normative rather than special. And therefore, also, it reflects some features of social organization, mainly stratification and complexity.

Although today *cantometrics* is considered mainly as some kind of historical curiosity, it would be a pity to disregard it, especially in connection to a topic that refers so much to history. An operatic performance in the National Theater with many ethnographic details – from the gradated, that is "stratified," entrance fee to the arrangement of space, the behavior of the singers on stage (e.g., during the curtain calls) and the musicians in the orchestra (the ostentatious arrival of the conductor accompanied by a beam of light, the hierarchic seating of the players)

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[20]   Lomax used around 3,500 musical examples and ethnographic data from 233 communities, so that was (exceptionally in the history of ethnomusicology) a sort of quantitative research in which the concordance of musical and social features can be expressed in percents.

to the appearance of the participants (on stage, in the orchestra pit, the ushers, and also the audience) – confirms Lomax's conclusions.

An accompanying feature of social stratification is usually **specialization**. While, until the beginning of the 20th century, in art music[21] this specialization was manifested mainly in the sphere of interpretation, starting at the beginning quarter of the 20th century the specialization also turns, if not primarily, to the area of reception of art. "Modern" or "contemporary" art music becomes – because of its still unaccepted concepts – a preserve of specialists. While in the '20s Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951) shocked his listeners with the emancipation of all twelve tones in an octave, and, by this, with the destruction of the usual relations of tones and chords, a generation later "emancipation" moves even further, that is, to the incorporation of any sounds to musical flow, whether they be "concrete" or newly – electronically – generated. The use of new technologies is, besides, so basic for music that we discuss it independently in connection with electronic dance music.

Even more substantial than new sounds, however, is the change of the concept of music itself: thinking about what exactly music is. Until the middle of the 20th century, that is, including the compositions of Schoenberg, *music*, in the Euro-American tradition, was understood to be sound structure bearing esthetic information. A turn from that concept of music as a "thing" is signalized by compositions by Schoenberg's pupil John Cage (1912–2002) in the '50s, mainly his *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* (1957–8). In them there appears for the first time the concept which he speaks about in the interview at the end of his life:

I have the feeling that sound is acting, and I love the activity of sound…. I'm completely satisfied with that. I don't need sound to talk to me…. People who understand that finally say, "You mean it's just sounds?" (They) think that for something to just be a sound is to be useless, whereas I love sounds, just as they are. I don't want them to be psychological. I don't want a sound to pretend that it's a bucket… or that it's a president… or that it's in love with another sound…. I just want it to be a sound. And I'm not so stupid either. There was a German philosopher who's very well known, Immanuel Kant, and he said there are two things that don't have to mean anything. One is music and the other is laughter… Don't have to mean anything, that is, in order to give us deep pleasure.[22]

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[21]   We are referring to the main concert and operatic repertoire corpus, composed mainly of Classical and Romantic works and less, then, of Baroque compositions.

[22]   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcHnL7aS64Y (8.8.2010)

Fig. 2: Former sewage treatment plant in Bubeneč. Source: Photograph Jiří Müller.

This understanding of Cage's crystallized under the influence of non-European musicians and thinkers in general:

I determined (at the end of the '30s, note by ZJ) *to give up composition unless I could find a better reason for doing it than communication. I found this answer from Gira Sarabhai, an Indian singer and tabla player: The purpose of music is to sober and quiet the mind, thus making it susceptible to divine influences. I also found in the writings of Ananda K. Coomaraswammy that the responsibility of the artist is to imitate nature in her manner of operation.* (viz. Cage's "Autobiographical Statement")

The basic task of the artist/composer is thus to find the operational modes of nature and recast them into musical language. The basic consequence of the change of the concept of music – from a "thing" to a "process"[23] is the need

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23   Often the term "conceptual music" is used; its basic characteristic is that the idea/concept of music is already music itself or that the idea is already the performance itself. I use the word "process" for better understandability.

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to change listeners' habits: they no longer follow a more or less known thing, some places of which used to give me pleasure or excite me and so I again look forward to them. Now I am with a composer on a road, the form of which is not guaranteed. We know only the azimuth.

An example of the connection of that "new" approach to music[24], new sounds (to which, besides, they belong for the most part) and the emphasis on the specificity of place can be the "site-specific performance" of the *Lucid Dreams of Mr. William Heerlein Lindley* in the Ecotechnical Museum[25] (former sewage treatment plant) in Bubeneč. The old industrial building on the outskirts of Prague has, thanks to its large, arched, brick space, extraordinary acoustic qualities (Fig. 2); a mixture of pre-recorded sounds, acquired in the area of Prague in the framework of the project "The Favorite Sounds of Prague"[26] (and thus close to Schafer's concept of soundscapes) with actual sounds that the participants intentionally and unintentionally produce, make the event unpredictable. A few dozen attendees confirm its specialized character.

Topic 2: Music and rebellion

The second topic is closely connected to the first one through Turner's theory (2004) of *communitas* as a mode of social existence, complementary to the common stratified society; *communitas* as a separate society of the pure, distinguished by aspiration for the sacred, homogeneity, egalitarianism and social humility (Turner 2004: 97). The theory of *communitas* can very easily be applied to the most famous phenomenon in the history of Czech musical rebellion, the group *The Plastic People of the Universe*.[27]

In the texts of the speaker of the group, Ivan "Magor" Jirous, can be found the concept of the **underground** as its *own special world existing apart from*

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[24]   Non-domestication in general musical life is also confirmed by the fact that Cage's half century and more old compositions are still usually on the programs of various types of societies for "new music"; viz., e.g., the inclusion of his opera Europera 5 in the NODO festival of new opera in Ostrava in June 2012.

[25]   I refer concretely to an event that took place on 10/10/2009.

[26]   Viz http://panto-graph.net/favouritesounds

[27]   Their previous activity and its context are well documented musically, textually and photographically. This topic is more broadly studied by, e.g., Vaněk 2010, Pospíšil – Blažek 2010, Stárek – Kostúr 2010, Machovec 2006, more concretely Riedel 2003, Chytilová 2000, Jirous 2008, Kalenská 2010. In addition, the speaker for and manager of the group, Ivan "Magor" Jirous accompanied the activity of the group with numerous commentaries so that it is not necessary to deduce their objectives only from the multivocal and difficult-to-decipher musical and, more often, social events.

established society with a different internal charge, a different esthetic and consequently also a different ethic (2008: 7) and the position of the artist in it. In this conception, Jirous follows up on the French painter Marcel Duchamps (with whom, by the way, John Cage collaborated closely in the '60s)[28] and his assertion that *the great artist of tomorrow will come into the underground*. As Jirous explains*: By this formulation, he thought of the underground as the new spiritual approach of an honest artist reacting to dehumanization and the fucking up of values in the world of a consumerist society... The underground is the spiritual position of intellectuals and artists who consciously define themselves critically toward the world in which they live. It is a declaration of a battle with the establishment, the entrenched system...* (2008: 11)

The basic idea of the underground as a separate and special world of pure people was strengthened by spirituality, at first inspired by the Jewish cabala and Celtic mythology and later markedly by Christianity – spirituality very different from flat, profane Marxist materialism which, at that time, penetrated every sphere of life in official society.[29] To this separateness – "ecstasy" – corresponds a different esthetic, as mentioned above by Jirous: a musical language in which the group combined impulses of contemporary rock with their own elements. The language is dominated by the Dionysianism present in rebel manifestations as an expression of hedonism experienced despite the planning hierarchical "structure." Another substantial musical characteristic is psychedelia, a sound realization of that separateness.[30]

Social humility, so natural in the time of totalitarianism, was manifested, in the case of *The Plastics*, in certain local exclusion[31] of their performances: at first, in the outskirts of Prague (Počernice), later in localities outside of Prague where there was a better chance to escape the omnipresent police surveillance.

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28   After Duchamps' death, Cage created, in 1969, the well-known conceptual work *Not Wanting to Say Anything about Marcel*: glass tablets with letters that can be lined up in any order (like in Cage's musical compositions) so that the result is always different.

29   Spirituality is expressed both in the texts of songs (V. Jirousová – e.g., *The Song of the Fafejta Bird about Two Unearthly Worlds*, M. Jernek – *The Sun,* V. Brabenec – *Pašijové hry velikonoční [Easter Passion Plays]*) and in the ideas around them.

30   Jirous (2008:9) characterizes psychedelia in the music of the *Plastics*: *they attempt to induce in their listeners a special state of mind which, at least for a while, liberates one from everything and strips one of the basis of one's being. Apart from music for this, a series of other means serve for it...* By "other means" he thinks, on one hand, about the use of elements, especially fire and water, borrowed from conceptual art and, on the other hand, understandably, alcohol and drugs, an organic part of most Dionysian celebrations.

31   Especially after the first period when they were still allowed to play, e.g., in Prague Ořechovka. Later on, they were moved farther and farther from the center.

This combines *The Plastics* with today's rebelling Punkers performing in the Vysočany Modrá Vopice Club or on the Parukářka hill...

The Plastics are, on one hand, a unique, exclusively Czech phenomenon, well understandable against the background of a totalitarian state. On the other hand, they belong in the broad "rebellious" stream of history in which musical style not only indicates belonging to a rebellious group, but the music itself – its performing and the listening to it – is often even a fundament of group identity.[32] This is also obviously reflected in the musical language of a rebellious style. First of all: its original shape rejects this specialization, against which it protests. (Almost) everyone can play and sing or, at least, is allowed to try. Criteria are also understandably changing: a punk group is "successful" when the greatest number of people dance wildly to their playing. Technical sophistication or cultivated sound is not expected by anyone; besides, it would be inadequate for the expression of resistance and anger, which are the most frequent rebel topics.

With this non-specialization is connected the Do it yourself (D.I.Y.) philosophy, the philosophy ruling taking care of one's own recordings, not only from the musical, but also from the technical, advertising and distribution points of view; it brings the group even closer together.

One everlasting question is related to musical rebellion: Is music still rebellious if it keeps features of rebellious musical style, but fills stadiums with listeners – members of that very system against which the music protests (and here and there even with its representatives)? If (thanks to the functioning system) it fills the bank accounts of its performers?

Quietly and from a very official and non-rebellious place – the New Scene of the National Theater – Tom Stoppard answers this question with his straight play *Rock'n'Roll*. The play is, among other things, about *The Plastic People of the Universe*, a play in which, not only in Prague performances, but also in premieres abroad, *The Plastics* play "live" (Fig. 3). At the end, when the famous *Rolling Stones* concert in 1990 in Prague's Strahov stadium is recalled, a concert which was considered by the characters in the play real proof of freedom, seemingly without context a quotation from Plutarch is heard: "...A*nnounce that the great god Pan is dead ...and a loud lament was heard, not from one person's lips, but*

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[32]   That is why rebellious musicians are often the center of attention of anthropologists investigating "subversive" or "deviant" groups. The Chicago School and its followers use the term "subculture"; in other cases, these groups are called "counterculture." In ethnomusicology, these terms are not very often used in the rebellious sense.

Fig. 3: *The Plastic People* **at the New Scene in Stoppard´s play** *Rock'n'Roll*: **The great god Pan is dead.** Source: Photograph by author.

*from many.***"**[33] Pan refers to Syd Barrett,[34] a mythical character of what was still at that time rebellious British psychedelic rock. At the concert for dozens of thousands of listeners (including those from the highest state administration), rebel Pan was dead.

Topic 3: Commodification and music

The third topic corresponds directly to the previous two: it was exactly the stratified, specialized and technically developed Western civilization of the beginning of the 20th century which gave rise to commodification,[35] including the musical one. Protests against this process were directed, from the '30s (Adorno, especially 1941), toward the idea that music, whose primary goal is to be goods for which the

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[33] The text is quoted from the *Rock'n'Roll* program, Prague: National Theater, 2007, p. 169.

[34] 1946–2006, co-founder of *Pink Floyd*.

[35] Commodification is what I call the process by which subjects become goods whose value is determined not only by the use value but above all by the exchange value.

most people spend the most money, loses substantial qualities[36] of music which we have known for many centuries. Moreover, people are formed by such music into a shapeless, manipulative mass. This is strengthened by the massive influence of advertisements, which, from their very nature, weaken the decision-making ability of an individual.

When today's theoreticians of the music business formulate a model of its functioning, they segment its participants into three groups: creators, consumers and commerce (Hull – Hutchison – Strasser 2011: 52). Adorno, in the late '30s, focused mostly on the devastating influence of the process of commodification on "music itself," thus, music as a "thing" and the consequent effects of this spoiled music on listeners. When a half century later Cauty and Drummond (1988) described how *without money, talent and experience to have a number one hit the easy way,*[37] they already consider advertisement the main factor of commodificational success and the fact that their music is *total shit,*[38] they mention as an amusing and rather obvious fact.

Commodification was exemplarily manifested in the events around the music on Radiožurnál, the most popular state station of Czech Radio. Because of long-lasting criticism of the music direction, one member of the Czech Radio Council[39] organized, on December 1, 2011, a public seminar.[40] Taking part in the seminar were representatives of both the "specialized public" (unequivocally dissatisfied with the music programming) and Radio employees, who defended the programming. All were surprised at the interest of the "uninvited public" who demanded the right to express their (usually very critical) opinions both by telephone and e-mail and with their personal presence at the public event. Criticism basically headed in two directions. The first was the limited[41] and antiquated repertoire; the other was the inappropriate use of songs that lacked any relation to previous or following spoken words, etc.

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[36] Adorno, as a musicologist, primarily discussed esthetic qualities: in the discourse of commodification, esthetic criteria have no meaning. Secondly, functional qualities are also important: music will be just for fun.

[37] From the introduction to the Czech translation, 2010: 5.

[38] *What you have produced until now sounds like total shit. No, it is not only your opinion that says it is shit. It simply is shit* (Cauty – Drummond 2010: 105).

[39] An organ whose task is the surveillance of the compliance of the public status of this institution.

[40] A video of the seminar: www.rozhlas.cz/rada/seminare/-zprava/videozaznam-seminare-rady-cro-k-hudbe-na-stanicich-radiozurnal-a-dvojka-984175 (12. 12. 2011).

[41] At the time the seminar was to take place, after long insistence, one of the program directors shared 890 songs, which is many times fewer than similar stations have.

The several-hours-long debate seemingly ended in a stalemate: the people from the Radio defended the programming in that, according to polls of listeners' preferences, they play what the listeners want, and mainly that music – although its time share for broadcasting is 50%-60% – is not primary. Most important is the spoken word and the meaning of music here is to keep the listener at the radio. "Specialists" (supported by the public), on the other hand, advocated the autonomy of music, including the competence of its use. In this context they mentioned the fact that the main music program director is an extern whose profession has nothing to do with music.[42]

A few days later, however, something unexpected happened: the important international musical company Universal took sides with the music program director.[43] The discussion allegedly degenerated into a public lynching and Universal recommended that too much attention should not be paid to the opinion of specialists because they cast a negative light on the station and can begin to influence the satisfied listener. The ferment in the virtual world increased. Listeners demanded that the so-called playlists, that is a compendium of the songs played, be made public. Radio refused, saying that protected know-how was involved. Various unofficial listings came into being which show that Universal's share in the Radiožurnál program is undoubtedly larger than its representation on the Czech market.[44] By June 1, 2012, the main music program director had been fired and competition had been opened for his position.

The commodification scheme seems clear: it is in Universal's interest (as it would be in any other company that wants to make a profit) as many compositions as possible from their catalogue would be played. For them, Universal is paid, on one hand, primarily on the basis of copyright ownership. Secondly, the famous rule applies that the more often a song is played, the better known it is and therefore there is more demand for it: apart from radio, also in other media, in concerts, etc. –and so, on the basis of the same copyrights, it is paid again. Appadurai's characteristic of financescape as the *ability of global capital* (Universal is an international company) *which is now more mysterious, more quickly and*

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[42]   It will later be shown that he is a subway (metro) driver.

[43]   http://www.mediar.cz/gramofirma-universal-vycita-sefovi-ceskeho-rozhlasu-absolutni-absenci-zadani-hudby-na-radiozurnalu/ (12. 12. 2011).

[44]   Data about the number of times a song is played can be found at www.ifpicr.cz, about songs played on the Radiožurnál station and about their attribution to the representing companies were collected both by listeners who made them public on the Internet and by my students Veronika Svobodová and Jaromír Mára.

more difficult to follow than ever before (1996: 33) fits here perfectly. A byproduct is the listener – in the terminology of the music business, the "consumer" – who, according to Adorno, is not interested in anything new and is deprived of the spontaneity of surprising experiences.

A copyright, the cornerstone concept of commodification, is unique in the world, both as a concept[45] and in its complexity[46]. Such complexity becomes itself the source of the problems. These, however, multiply in the environment of digital technology. And so, despite the fact that one of the original intentions of copyrights was to support artistic creations for the benefit of the public (Hull – Hutchison – Strasser 2011: 52), it developed into something quite the opposite. By its essence – by which the law can protect only what is fixed – the copyright necessarily petrifies music and thus it obstructs a creative approach to existing material. At a time when digital technology enables the simple emergence of an unlimited number of copies without a loss of quality, one of the fundamental methods of creation becomes the treatment of already existing material, which is, furthermore, simplified and accelerated by unlimited distribution via the Internet. It is therefore not surprising that right here – in the realm of the media and of the virtual medium of the Internet – is the main battlefield of commodification.[47]

However, we can also follow its docile form in the Prague streets. The most flagrant example is the so-called **Royal Road:** a historical route along which the coronation procession of the Czech kings wound its way from Old Town to the Prague Castle. Today it is the first walk recommended by tourist guides to visitors of Prague. Along this hardly three-kilometer (two-mile) route there are 17 (! – a concentration unseen elsewhere) places in which concerts take place regularly, usually daily. These are publicized exclusively in English and their programs are composed of the most popular, usually short, mainly classical-romantic (less often, Baroque) compositions: besides a choice of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons,* there are Dvořák's *Largo* from the New World Symphony and or his *Humoresque*, Mozart's *Little Night Music*, etc.

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45 In other cultures, it is an unusual idea that an individual is the exclusive creator and thus owner of music.

46 Today's Czech copyrights apply both to (fixed) musical and textual works and to the performance of musicians on recordings and, in addition, on concrete recordings.

47 Of the many contemporary reflections, let us mention only one of the very opposite positions: discussion between the IFPI (International Federation of Phonographic Industry) and the Czech Pirate Party: http://www.piratskenoviny.cz/?c_id=33612.

Fig. 4: At the Royal Road.
Source: Photograph by author.

It is obviously the same scheme: well-known, easily digestible musical "pieces" (the choice does not matter) are sold to tourists, to whom, on the whole, the concrete music does not matter as long as it is some sort of general "cultural experience of Prague." The main role is played by publicity in the form of large English posters and "distributers" of colored flyers, of which the center of Prague is full (Fig. 4).

Topic 4: Electronic dance music

In the previous section we mentioned the change brought to music by digital technology. In reality, there are many types of changes,[48] and these changes, moreover, apply to various musical genres. In this section only one of these is dealt with – electronic dance music,[49] and from it, even more specifically, freetekno

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48 Reyes (2005: 92–102) mentions these basic categories: a change in understanding of what musical sound is and who the musician is, and further changes in the realm of production and distribution of music and in the ream of its ownership.

49 In particular the musical aspect of EDM is discussed in detail by Butler 2006.

style. In it (and in other related styles) perhaps the most fundamental change that appeared in music is manifested.

Over some thousands of years, the performance of music has existed in two basic situations: either musicians and listeners face each other or both groups intermingle.[50] In electronic dance music the listener/dancer faces the loudspeakers.[51] This is completely new. If the most common Western understanding of the meaning of music is communication, now the listener has nobody with whom to communicate. He is reliant on himself; he sinks into his own separate world. The medium of this sinking is primarily music: electronically generated sounds uninterruptedly repeat in rhythmic loops, without melody, in high tempo and at such a high level of volume that one perceives it in one's whole body. If this is music, then it is practically in all respects different from that which we were used to in Western culture.[52]

The concept of "otherness" is also clear in ethnographic data which confirms the value of "the other" – non-commercial, non-anonymous "free" world: the orthodox events of the "techno world," freetekno parties, are free[53], are not publicized by advertising agencies, but by social "friendly" nets or even by personal contacts (cell phones, etc.). These events take place in rather abandoned, neglected places seemingly owned by no one where – at least for the time of the events – the rules of the majority society do not apply, in areas sufficiently large, which enable "freer" use of the space, and even their beginnings and ends are not firmly delimited.

And one more feature is apparent here: the symbiotic relation of the human being to technology (Fig. 5). This is also shown outside of the realm of music, e.g., in the graphics of flyers (Balog 2009: 46). This basic dependence of the techno world on digital technology recalls Appadurai's *technoscape,* (1996: 33) – both in its influence on crossing the distance (and thus, on one hand, the dissemination of style, including "material" and, on the other hand, the dissemination of information) and, more basically, in the shaping of the "new" world.

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[50] Or possibly there is a mixture of both concepts, viz. Turino 2008.

[51] Behind them, indeed, is generally hidden the person who "creates" the resultant sound, the DJ – disk jockey; the concept of his task and also his behavior usually differ from that of active musicians. At freetekno parties, he is practically invisible behind the walls of the loudspeakers – sound systems.

[52] For the concept of otherness in connection with EDM, I am grateful to my student Peter Balog (2009).

[53] This, to a certain degree a symbolic feature, is usually maintained in the case of techno parties in the Prague multi-genre Cross Club (viz. Stehlík 2010).

Fig. 5: The sculpture at the entrance to the Cross Club : symbiosis of the human being and technology. Source: Photograph by author.

Topic 5: Music and spirituality

The connection with spirituality is one of the few universals in music: *In all societies, music is found in religious ritual – it is almost everywhere a mainstay of sacred ceremonies...* (Nettl 2001: 9) Spiritual music, however, has the most various features, not only in the material from the whole world, but also in today's Prague. Let us note this variability on several axes. Under the influence of thoughts of the Enlightenment about the separation of the sacred from the profane – a footprint of Appadurai's ideoscape – in Prague spiritual music mostly retreats from public space. An exception is the *harinam,* a regular Wednesday procession in the center of the city of devotees of the Hare Krishna movement[54] (Fig. 6). The group is led by the movement's members wearing more or less Indian-style clothing. Accompanied mainly by rhythmic instruments, they sing (with a microphone) a simple melody whose text glorifies Krishna. The public performance is not a chance event: it is obvious because the singers are convinced of the objective beneficial effects

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[54] For details of the *harinam*, viz. Jurková – Seidlová 2011.

Fig. 6: *Harinam* in Prague. Source: Photograph by author.

of the sacred sounds – here, mantras in the form of God's name – which they produce. This concept, in the Prague context, is not at all usual: beginning with the Biblical Psalms, music, in the Jewish and Christian tradition, is understood as heading from the earth to heaven rather than as a picture of heavenly affairs (Sullivan 1997). Apart from this, in the *harinam* the notion of trance as ecstasy, when one is removed from reality, is close to the Dionysian psychedelia of some musical rebels (besides, in the case of *The Plastic People of the Universe*, we were also witnesses to a certain implicit spirituality) and the (non-spiritual) trance as the basis of the experience of electronic dance music. By the way, devotees of Krishna are connected to this style in their advertising video *Harinam in Prague*,[55] partly using a remix of electronic music from the film *Matrix*.

The autumn St. Wenceslas Festival,[56] the most important event of the Society for Spiritual Music, offers axes of various kinds. One of them is the axis between

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[55]   http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-8096811527582997164#.

[56]   http://www.svatovaclavske.cz/.

Fig. 7: St. Ludmila Vespers, basilica of St. George. Source: Photograph by author.

specialization (which, in a Christian milieu, was embodied both by monks and priests and also their acolytes) and non-specialization represented by laymen. A crystalline example of musical expression of specialization is Gregorian chant, performed during the St. Wenceslas Festival in the form of the St. Ludmila and St. Wenceslas vespers in the basilica of the Prague Castle, that is, in the most prestigious and also most authentic milieu: it was right here that the chant was sung. The musical language of this genre, i.e., monophonic, rhythmically irregular Latin singing, requires, for perfect sound, long, concentrated practice and therefore this specialization was indispensable. Today, however, this is a different type of specialization. In the context of the concert today, the members of the orders perform the chant only minimally. During the St. Wenceslas Festival it was sung by members of the choirs focusing on spiritual music both as parish choirs and as choirs whose focal point is in concerts (Fig. 7).

At the other – laic – end of the axis is, e.g., the Pilgrimage from Litovice to the monastery in Hájek: worshippers walk along the path of the Stations of the Cross from a small village on the outskirts of Prague to the famous pilgrimage

Fig. 8: Pilgrimage to Hájek with singing. Source: Photograph by author.

monastery in Hájek. During the approximately four-kilometer (about two-and-a-half-mile) road they sing long pilgrimage songs from the 17th and 18th centuries. In the singing, after two stanzas, the cantor, walking in the back of the procession, alternates with the pilgrims. It is obvious that singing is not the main reason why these some tens of people came: they chat and then again join in the singing. The accompaniment of four wind instruments helps them in musical orientation and supports the weaker singers (Fig. 8). The high point is the solemn mass, which will be celebrated by a Roman-Catholic primate in the Hájek monastery. The axis of specialization – non-specialization today, in the context of Christian spirituality, to a certain degree parallels the axis of "music as art" – "music as a part of spiritual practice."

Summary

Although we did not produce a sufficiently systematic theoretical model for the description of Prague musical worlds, through the exposition of five topics chosen on the basis of various criteria, a few basic features emerged. The first of them

is the blurring of various borders (in the concept of music, in style/genre, in the concept of musical sound...). This is a consequence of the merging of individual worlds or influences that cross the worlds, which is an unavoidable situation in the city – dense and dynamic – environment

A second significant ascertainment is that new "worlds" rise in the attempt to separate – whether already as a supporter of "new" music, which until now has used the unusual language of concrete sounds and directions for the use rather than musical notation; as an aggressively shouting punk rebel protesting against the system; as a dancer at a techno party, escaping from the world of commerce, anonymity and limits to his own autonomous world created in symbiosis with technology; or as a participant in a Krishna procession trying, with the singing of mantras, to extricate himself from this ephemeral world... This corresponds well to the findings of a number of ethnomusicologists that music strengthens group identity by fostering internal values as well as separating them from the surroundings.

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