

ROUND TABLE THEORY AND METHOD IN URBAN ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

June 3 – 5, 2011, Prague, Czech Republic.

Although urban studies are widely accepted in anthropology, ethnomusicology – even though it has been dedicated to urban topics for decades – lacks generally accepted theoretical discourse. This was the main reason for organizing the chamber round table “Theory and Method in Urban Ethnomusicology” June 3 – 5, 2011, at the Faculty of Humanities of Charles University in Prague. The round table thus became part of the long-term direction of the current ethnomusicological program for research in music in Prague.

The format of the round table enabled us to invite those researchers who deal with urban ethnomusicology with clear (however different) theoretical orientations and also provide sufficient space both during structured sessions and during informal more-or-less social events for exhaustive and intensive discussions.

The first afternoon opened with the paper of Adelaida Reyes, one of the pioneers of urban ethnomusicology (in the first half of the '70s she had already written her dissertation on the music of East Harlem, New York). In “Urban Ethnomusicology: A Brief History of an Idea,” she presented a history of research on music of the city as an intersection of influences of anthropology and sociology on contemporary ethnomusicological discourse. Reyes placed basic emphasis on the fact that the concept of the mosaic is

not the right one; the whole is not only the sum of its parts; what is basic in the city are relations and change.

The second presentation of the first day was by Kay Shelemay, on one hand a distinguished researcher in the field of music of Ethiopia and the Ethiopians and also – relevant to this round table – the author of the illustrious book *Soundscape*, the title of which she reconceptualizes. In her paper “Rethinking the Urban Community: (Re)Mapping Musical Processes and Places,” she discussed the concept of research of the city that considers community as one of its key concepts. Starting from her “Ethiopian” material acquired both in Ethiopia itself and, above all, among Ethiopian immigrants in the USA, she put forth her idea of three types of communities: descent – dissent – affinity. As with Reyes, Shelemay also emphasized changes and, therefore, the fluidity of the boundaries of these categories.

The second day featured two basic concepts usually connected with research on the city: two different meanings of the term “soundscape.” The older one was introduced into the literature at the beginning of the '70s through the Canadian sound-ecological school of Murray Schafer. It is interested in all sounds and their local anchoring, the resulting product being the sound map of a city. At the beginning of the 21st century Kay Shelemay applied the term soundscape inspired more by Appadurai's *-scapes* than by Schafer. In her concept, consistent with the Merriam's model, soundscape has social and sound dimensions.

Peter McMurray referred to both of these concepts in his paper, “Urban Het-

erophony and the Mediation of Place,” which was a “collaborative project.” Using three different case studies (New Orleans, Boston, and Prizren) he presented possibilities of construction and ongoing representation of the city through media. His paper concluded with the consideration of the ethical implications of ethnomusicological work in the city (including questions connected with mediation).

Close to Shelemay’s concept was Eugene Dairianathan in his treatment of two musical styles (xinyao and vedic metal) popular among Singapore youth, changes of which illustrate the changing identity of performers and listeners.

Ursula Hemetek and her students have been dealing with ethnic and national minorities in Vienna for a long time. In her paper, “Unexpected Musical Worlds of Vienna: Immigration and Music in Urban Centers,” she mainly emphasized the importance ascribed to musical expressions and their social function.

Bozena Muszkalska familiarized us with a collective research project of the Institute of Cultural Studies at Wrocław University. Its key term is “phonosphere.” Although its basic concept is close to the sound-ecological interpretation of the soundscape concept, the research is aimed at sound reality and its interpretation.

The last day of the round table was dedicated to two more applied topics. Zuzana Jurková, the organizer of the whole round table, presented a plan for the publication of Prague Musical Worlds, in which the concept of soundscapes (close to Shelemay’s concept) serves not only as a demonstration of var-

ious types of specific musical events in Prague, but also of various ethnomusicological perspectives.

The Nestor of applied ethnomusicology Kjell Skyllstad, a long-time representative of the use of art in the mediation of conflicts, among other activities, editor-in-chief of a new, generously conceived magazine, the *Journal of Urban Culture Research*, spoke this time mainly about the Resonant Community project that is intended mainly for children of Pakistani immigrants in Oslo and its surroundings. The main feature of the project is emphasis on the social integration of cultural features that are embedded in the broader context of “immigration and educational policies.”

Publication of the papers in their full-length versions, planned for Urban People 2012/2, ought to be a basic contribution to the discussion of ethnomusicology of the city.

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