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Introduction: Towards New Directions in the Dialogue of Music Cultures

The International Institute for Comparative Music Studies and Documentation (Berlin) invited ethnomusicologists to participate in an international symposium on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of its founding.¹ The aim was to assemble a forum of specialists with experience in the problems arising from researching, documenting, and presenting traditional musics. In particular, this symposium was concerned with intercultural cooperation and exchange and the cultural policies guiding these activities. The present book is a collection of the papers from this symposium, which were subsequently revised and enlarged by the authors, as well as of some additional articles and a summary of the final discussion.

This present volume addresses general and specific questions, problems and concepts relevant to cultural policy as it affects intra- and intercultural dialogue, and the contribution of ethnomusicologists to this policy. These writings and statements by authors from different backgrounds represent a forum in which models of cultural policy in relation to ethnomusicology have been drafted and critically reflected upon. In total, they reveal the need for an on-going “dialogue across the borders”² between scholars and cultural politicians.

The topics of this volume subsumed under the heading “Music in the Dialogue of Cultures” are programmatic labels under which - depending upon the experience of the individual writer - selected research and reflections are presented as paradigmatic examples.

The principal aim of this omnibus volume is to foster a dialogue that would bring together divergent ethnomusicological interests by shedding light on particular viewpoints and by embedding them in the overall context of cultural policy. The content of these articles focuses on knowledge and understanding in the broad field of (ethno)musicology. In addition to pure research and teaching, ethnomusicologists in particular experience problems of field work, *in situ*, both in their own culture as well as in others. In the process of intercultural understanding and interpreting, they are confronted by emic and etic views, i.e., by the culturally inherent and culturally transcendent value systems. In dealing with misunderstandings both in their own and in foreign cultures, ethnomusicologists are - whether they like it or not - directly involved with various

questions of cultural politics. The divergent and contrasting horizons of interests can only be reconciled through the principle of an expanded dialogue that transcends scholarly borders. Creating such a dialogue involves cooperation between all parties involved with traditional music, from the musicians to scholars, as well as representatives of institutions concerned with music politics, the media and education. Ethnomusicologists realize that their field or subject goes much farther than from the musical “text” to the musical “context,” but that they themselves have to define their activities and roles as a new part of a much broader “meta-context.” As a go-between for “the own” and “the other,” the ethnomusicologist must create a self-understanding that is conceptionally oriented towards these ethical and political directions.

During the symposium, the final discussion (cf. pp. 416-9) focused on these “new directions in the dialogue of music cultures.” A graphic model (cf. Table 1) illustrates the main questions involving the ethnomusicological environment and the interdependency of the different roles of the ethnomusicologists. The potential functions of the (ethno)musicologist were discussed with respect to her/his role as field researcher, as scholar and teacher, as mediator between different cultures, as mediator between musicians and audience, as author, participant of conferences, as well as organizer of symposia, concerts and workshops. But on the whole, the ethnomusicologist is also a part of a larger communication process involving permanent dialogue in different settings and circumstances, at home and far away from home, often face-to-face, as it is shown in the discussion model:

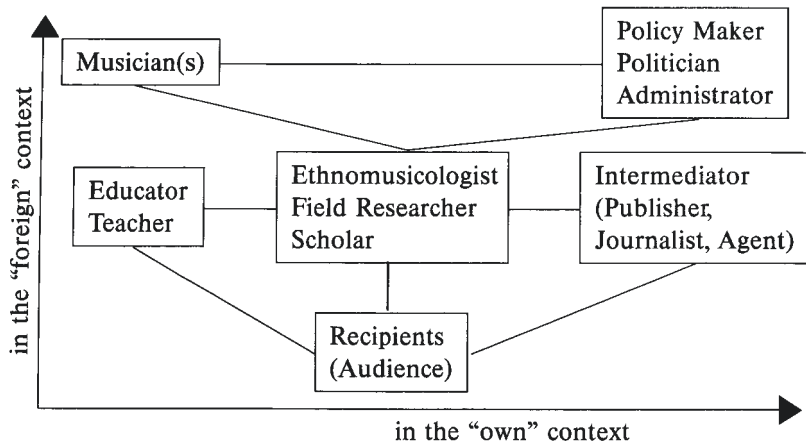


Table 1: Discussion Model “Towards New Directions in the Dialogue of Music Cultures:” The Role of the Ethnomusicologist.

The model must be read in a double way, relating to the own cultural background as well as to the foreign one. It defines different roles of the ethnomusicologists as well as the different levels of interactions between musicians, policy makers, ethnomusicologists, intermediators. This model emphasizes the necessity to implant dialogue structures in both contexts to encourage cooperation, exchange and mediation. Today the role of ethnomusicology must be defined in terms of a multi-cultural policy and must be understood as part of an international communication system. Importance, significance and understanding of cultural identities (or non-identities) depend on time, place and situations. For this reason, there is no such thing as a value-free concept in ethnomusicological observations and research, neither from the point of view within a culture or from outside a culture. The ethnomusicological "observer observed" has always been a participant of particular value systems. Because of this fact the music-political discussion becomes - on all levels - an ethical issue by fostering the premises of musical plurality and variety as a principle of democratic pluralism. It is based on the consensus that cultural systems form different kinds of value concepts, and these value concepts have an equal right in a peaceful *concertare* for tolerance and mutual respect.

The overall subject matter and each of the specific articles deal with questions regarding the planning and realization of music documentation that utilizes the cooperation of two or more countries. Together, these articles form the building blocks for the development of a "philosophy" of music-cultural cooperation that aims for a clearer policy in the promotion (or non-promotion) of traditional music. Also relevant to this process are the questions of how the directives of the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policy (Mexico 1982), the North-South Dialogue and the Helsinki Accord could be applied to music, and how cooperation of institutions in joint field research projects could be achieved.

Also central to the discussion are the relevance and legitimacy of music-related cultural development programs with respect to global communication and local necessities. Traditional music can also be understood as a cultural monument. Here arise questions related to the extension of support to musics perceived as threatened with extinction, suppression, or forces of conformity or assimilation. In the context of the maintenance of music-cultural variety and diversity, the preservation and promotion of oral musical heritages would seem to require urgent attention, as they face the world-wide diffusion of the dominant music styles of the West and the underrepresentation of cultural minorities in the media.

There is a need for ethnomusicological case studies and impact studies that would give us more insight into and data concerning the processes of music documentation, editing and mediating. Other topics of concern include the role of audio, video and monographical documentation as well as the presentation of musicians in concerts and workshops.

The multiplicity of articles and opinions within this volume reflects the broad field of ethnomusicology and its different approaches, methods and directions. All contributions focus upon dialogue as a means of cross-cultural understanding and cooperation. At the same time, it becomes clear that a style of research through paradigmata reveals best "the myth of methodological neutrality."³ As an alternative, one must propose collaboration: a style of intra- and intercultural communication with which field researchers are acquainted. This communication should involve equal partners from two or more cultural backgrounds guided by the concept of a domination-free dialogue. Such a dialogue reconciles different kinds of "understandings," including self-understanding, the understanding of "the other" on both sides, as well as each particular need, interest, supply and demand. It includes the development of working hypotheses with which musical processes can be explained, in order to derive recommendations for cooperation and participatory research. This dialogue must be open to an ethical form of critique and counter-critique in regard to intercultural cooperation, i.e., in the dichotomies of help and self-help, research and mediation, promotion and commercialization, stimulus and feedback, as well as preservation and transformation.

Notes

- ¹ The symposium "Music in the Dialogue of Culture: Traditional Music and Cultural Policy" was held in Berlin, November 8-12, 1988, and organized by the International Institute for Comparative Music Studies and Documentation in cooperation with the Staatliches Institut für Musikforschung, Preußischer Kulturbesitz. Appreciation is extended to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and to the Senatsverwaltung für kulturelle Angelegenheiten, as well as to the Senatsverwaltung für Wirtschaft, for their generous support.
- ² cf. Barthold C. Witte: *Dialog über Grenzen. Beiträge zur auswärtigen Kulturpolitik*. Pfullingen: Neske, 1988.
- ³ cf. *Ethics, Politics, and International Social Science Research. From Critique to Praxis*. Michael P. Hamnet, Douglas J. Porter, Amarjit Singh, Krishna Kumar. Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press (An East-West Center Book from the Institute of Culture and Communication).