
Coping with Change. Changing Musical Traditions, Changing Ethnomusicology

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First of all, let me thank the organising committee and all my Polish friends and colleagues for this unexpected honour, which is even greater as I have for a long time had the privilege to be part of ESEM in different capacities, and therefore the appreciation and the consideration of my colleagues and friends are the more dear to me.

When recalling my participation in ESEM in the past years, I cannot but think with affection about Ruediger Schumacher a dear colleague with whom I shared for a long time the involvement and dedication to this Seminar, and who is no longer with us. He is, and will be, sorely missed.

Back to ESEM, I must say that I have been around for a rather long time. I was not, however, among the first group that gathered to found and create the Seminar in 1982. I was kept informed by my close friend and senior colleague Francesco Giannattasio and by my professor at that time, Mantle Hood who, in Maryland, was an eager supporter of the new endeavour by John Blacking, to whom he was closely associated.

I learned that, after a preliminary gathering of 14 scholars that took place in Belfast in 1981, there was a more formal meeting in Strasbourg, on the fourth of September 1982, where Blacking had gathered a rather small but authoritative number (27, to be precise) of ethnomusicologists, to found a European forum for exchange and debate in ethnomusicology. With him, there were some of our colleagues who have continued to be with us, and

are still here today in Warsaw (Anna Czekanowska and Jeremy Montagu, who was also among the first group of fourteen in Belfast). As a tribute to the work of John Blacking, and also to make better known facts that not all of you might know in detail, you can see in Figure 1.1 a copy of INFO 1 prepared in 1982 by Jos Gansemans with the announcement of the foundation of ESEM, and the list of participants in the first meeting in Strasbourg.¹

The impressive list of the names of the participants, and the expressions of gratitude, remind us of the great effort that Blacking had put into this project, and of the response that, from the very beginning, this call had elicited. I think that it is important to remember sometime how it all started, and to remind to ourselves what principles, ideas, and also people were behind the foundation of our Seminar.

Later on, having already participated in some ESEM meetings, in the mid-eighties I had the privilege to get to know John Blacking personally and to work with him in July 1987 as his translator during the 'famous' (for us Italians) Siena seminars, organized by Diego Carpitella.² On that occasion, Blacking lectured for two weeks three hours every afternoon. Besides learning so much from him, it was quite an effort for me, because of his highly cultivated English and his 'torrential' way of delivering his speeches - full of energy, passion and enthusiasm, that was quite difficult to follow and to render in Italian.

It was on that occasion that I got to know him and his family (his little daughter Deena had just been born that year a few days before my son, and I recall that we shared impressions and observations – in the pure Blacking style – on the 'musicality of infants' in which he was very keenly interested at that time. And then I had the chance to work with him on the organisation of ESEM 1989 in Siena. I like to recall also my vivid memories of him here in Poland, when we all came to Tuczno in 1988, hosted by Anna Czekanowska,

¹ I am most grateful to Francesco Giannattasio who provided me with a copy of the Bulletin.

² Diego Carpitella, who also has been made an honorary ESEM member for life, for several years (1977–1989) had organized a July Seminar in ethnomusicology in the town of Siena, at the Accademia Musicale Chigiana. To this Seminar, Carpitella invited some of the most authoritative international scholars in the field of ethnomusicology (besides Blacking, also Hood, Nattiez, Lortat-Jacob, Zemp, Fodermayr, Tran Van Khe, Arom, among others) that taught to a group of advanced students for one or two weeks. On this experience, cfr. Diego Carpitella, ed. (1989).

a meeting when, for the first time in ESEM, a large group of colleagues from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe met with scholars coming from Western Europe. I can still see his enthusiasm for the reunion of scholars from the two parts of our continent just before the fall of the Berlin wall, and I wonder what he would say today, when we are back to Poland in such different conditions for ESEM and for Europe!

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His work has been an inspiration for all of us, and often our ESEM John Blacking lecturers have quoted his book *How musical is man ?* and other theoretical works by him. Many are his significant contributions, but I would like to draw your attention mostly to one paper that I stumbled upon long time ago, while I was writing my dissertation on the music of Cambodian refugees in the United States.³ This paper has been inspirational to me, among others, and it is relevant to what I would like to say this evening. It was published in 1977 in the *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, under the title of 'Some Problems of Theory and Method in the Study of Musical Change' (Blacking 1977).⁴ Blacking's attention to cultural and musical processes was acute and in that paper he was exploring concepts that were to become important in our trade later on, taking them from anthropology, and adapting them for the needs of music studies.

I am well aware that the issue of musical change is not new, and that it has always been of interest to us ethnomusicologists. And it is also a tricky issue, because change is so embedded in our work that it is difficult to isolate it as a concept and a methodology. While preparing for this lecture, and trying to make reference to seminal works on this topic, I tried to associate some other researches to that of Blacking and I had much difficulty in finding any. The term change recurs, of course, in a large number of papers and researches that are impossible to list here, and implies several different approaches that encompass all sorts of processes taking place in music, but it is not as of-

³ G. Giuriati, *Khmer Traditional Music in Washington, D.C.* Unpublished Dissertation, University of Maryland Baltimore County, 1988.

⁴ This issue was of constant interest for Blacking. Nine years later he published another paper on the same topic (Blacking 1986), and the term 'change' recurs also in other papers by him (e.g., Blacking 1987).

ten addressed as a specific issue from a theoretical standpoint. Perhaps, the scholar that has most profoundly dealt with this concept is Bruno Nettl, to whom I have found repeated references, starting from the well known *Eight Urban Musical Cultures*, edited by him, that bears the term 'change' in the subtitle (Nettl 1978), and including a more recent one, published online for the journal directed by the late Tullia Magrini *Music & anthropology* (Nettl 1996). In fact, change is a term, and a concern, that was more popular in the 1970s following a debate in anthropology in the light of the growth of an antiessentialist perspective (Vayda 1994). Later on, it is found frequently, as it is the case with this paper by Nettl, with a strong connotation with the historical dimension, one of the directions that ethnomusicology has recently taken.

To give some continuity to my line of thought, let me go back to a previous ESEM seminar organized at SOAS in 1999. During that Seminar I served as programme chairman, and contributed by selecting as one of the main themes that of 'Changing soundscapes and the continuity of ethnomusicology'. I went back to the proceedings of the Round table that was organized then, published by *Studi Musicali* (Giannattasio and Giuriati, eds. 2001), and to the introduction delivered by Francesco Giannattasio bearing the same title. In that introduction some key issues were outlined. Only little less than ten years have passed by, but the scenery has changed again, of course. For example, the issue that was 'hot' then, that of the budding World Music, seems already to have gone out of fashion somehow, due to the dramatic change in the record industry, with the explosion of i-pods, playlists, digital sampling, and the crisis of CD labels (major and independent). However, one aspect that we wanted to discuss continues to be topical, and even more today than ten years ago. I shall use the words of Giannattasio to sum it up:

[...] the considerable change in our traditional object of study and the increasing importance of musical *metissages* in a general process of cultural syncretism. [...] Of course, the ethnomusicologist could resist this change, and transform ethnomusicology into a historical discipline, confining itself to the traditional forms and behaviour. But some of us believe it would be a nonsense, since we've always studied living music, and not mummified music. We all know, in fact, that our traditional field of study is more and more restricted by the disappearance of many folk and ethnic social contexts or by their radical transformation. This inexorable process is also connected with the increasing

phenomenon of musical revivals and forced survivals which the ethnomusicological research itself has nourished. [...] The problem is that musical change is not an ethnomusicological object in itself, but a process of transformation affecting one or more musical traditions. This means that studying musical change and detecting its particular patterns is a very difficult task, because it requires a deep knowledge of the original musical languages. On the contrary, a lot of studies devoted to musical change are based on a purely sociological approach, and this probably explains why they are so unsatisfying for some of us (Giannattasio 2001: 228–230).

I chose this rather long quotation from a colleague with whom I share several views and experiences, because it highlights some of the issues that confront us today as ethnomusicologists.

That is, a crucial junction of our time: the radical and fast change in the soundscapes around us, that poses us a number of challenges for those dealing with it. And also the paradox that, the more ethnomusicology becomes relevant as a scientific discipline within the larger field of musicology, and the more it establishes itself in universities, academies and archives, the more the object of our research is vanishing or changing at such a fast pace that it forces us to reconsider our research methods and tools, and to constantly ask ourselves what the object of our study really is, and what is our place within the larger scientific domain of musicology.

Of course, things move on anyhow. In fact, in their research, several authors, especially from the Anglo-Saxon world, have repeatedly dealt with this issue, making reference to anthropology, postcolonial studies, or sociology. I can mention Steven Feld and some of his recent work on World Music (2000), Bosavi (2001, 2004), and the issue of Jazz cosmopolitanism as seen from Accra, Ghana,⁵ but I could mention also the names of Thomas Turino (1993, 2000), Adelaida Reyes (1999, 2004), Veit Erlmann (1996), Martin Stokes (1992), Jocelyne Guilbault (1993) – I could extend this list – to mention only some authoritative scholars who have shifted their interest to music that we could hardly consider as the traditional object of ethnomusicology during the 20th Century. In fact, ethnomusicology is dealing increasingly with musical genres and styles that go beyond and outside what were considered as

⁵ This research has resulted so far in a series of films and of CD releases. I can just mention here the three recent films: 'Hallelujah!' (2008, 60 mins) 'Accra Train Station: The Music and Art of Nii Nio Nortey' (2009, 60 mins) 'A Por Por Funeral for Ashirifie' (2009, 70 mins).

the customary boundaries of the discipline, and happily so, at least in the United States. This trend is following also what is happening in anthropology, where the debate on cultural change was alive in the Seventies (when Blacking wrote his paper), and that has continued with other scholars in more recent years. I can just quote here the very well-known works by James Clifford (1988) and by Jean-Loup Amselle (1999, 2005) among several other scholars who focus on change, contamination, syncretism, cosmopolitanism in trying to interpret contemporary dynamics of culture. Even the never-ending and very fashionable debate on identity and ethnicity can be interpreted as a study on how cultures resist change and try to place boundaries and limits where they in fact do not exist.

It seems to me that somehow ethnomusicology in Europe is more resistant to these new developments in the discipline, for a number of reasons that it would be interesting to discuss further on some other occasion. I think that the fact that most of us are studying the music of our own country is one of the factors, and another are the stronger ties that we have with art music and musicology. Also, the presence of large archives, perhaps, induces us towards a more historical inclination in our view of the discipline. I do not want to dwell on it in detail, but just to mention some of the issues that could be taken up and developed in future.

In fact, I do not want to enter into such a complex scenario of research methods and views about anthropology and ethnomusicology. Rather, in the rest of my paper, I will try to see what John Blacking has to say to us concerning those issues, and then to present some of my considerations on the same topic, based on a few examples drawn from my own research. Therefore, let us go back to Blacking's paper, and see what were, as I understand them, his thoughts on change.

A crucial issue that Blacking emphasises in his paper is that change 'must be concerned ultimately with significant innovation in musical sound' (Blacking 1977: 2) implying that there is something specific to music (and music-making) for us to deal with, and indicating that it is properly our task as ethnomusicologists to find out, and to define, the musically specific ingredient in cultural change. It is a fundamental statement in my view, because it

distinguishes us clearly from sociologists of music, or from the many mass-mediologists and popular music specialists that today deal with music as a sign of change in the society, but without any insight whatsoever into the music itself, and the musical processes.

Another important statement by Blacking concerning the uniqueness of musical change, and why music can offer a privileged perspective on cultural change, is that music, according to him, is able to combine cognitive and affective elements:

Music [...] obeys the laws of culture, and so through bodily experiences enables man to come to terms with the natural and cultural grounds of its being: it is a kind of adaptive ritual behaviour that by the special nature of its means of production combines the creative conditions of objective technological mastery and subjective human experience (Blacking 1977: 5–6).

And Blacking tries to find out what the problems and the conditions are for the study of musical change:

Musical change may epitomize the changing conditions and concerns of social groups, perhaps even before they are crystallized and articulated in words and corporate action: but it also may reflect an affection for novelty and changing intellectual fashion. Conversely, an absence of musical change may reflect a retreat from challenging social issues, or a determination to face them and adapt to them, while maintaining essential social and cultural values (Blacking 1977: 3).

What I find very interesting and still highly relevant is also the evaluation of the absence of change by Blacking, something that has to do with the ‘traditional music’ of our times of which precisely the absence of change is cherished. ... I think here of some policies of Unesco (and this could be another topic to debate among us).

And he goes on:

The retention of traditional music can be enlightening and positively adaptive as it can be maladaptive and stultifying: the meaning of musical change or non-change depends on their structural and functional characteristics in the particular context under review. There is some justification in the traditionalists’ argument that musical non-change can signify a successful adaptation to the threat of anarchy by the retention of essential cultural values, as there is to the opposing view that musical change expresses a vigorous adaptation of musical styles to the challenge of changing social conditions. But the traditionalists (or ‘purists’ ...) have neglected the dead weight of traditional routines, as the modernists (or ‘syncretists’) have seemed unaware of the superficiality of merely fashionable changes, and both have failed to distinguish the varieties of musical change, and

the levels at which they operate, or to relate them to other changes that are taking place in the society, especially changing relationships between classes and changing patterns in the allocation of power. It can, in fact, be argued that all evaluation of musical change tells us more about the class and interests of the evaluators than about the real nature of musical change. This objection can certainly be made to my own arguments, as well as the work of the 'purists' and the 'syncretists', and to the efforts of the Ministries of Culture and other agencies to promote the performances of traditional music (Blacking 1977: 3–4).

Prophetic words especially in pointing out the role of political and cultural institutions (pervasive in Italy nowadays) in promoting – for a number of mostly nonmusical purposes – the so-called traditional music, an issue with which we as ethnomusicologists are increasingly confronted up to a point that is becoming almost unavoidable in our work today.

There is another passage in this article dedicated to the syncretists that retains its importance today, in my opinion, even more than John Blacking might have suspected back then:

[...] but they have not followed up the logic of their approach and considered in their analyses all that is heard by the groups whose music they study, on television, radio, and in films, as well as in live performance. Modern listening habits have been the concern only of radio stations and a few sociologists, but they are an essential feature of any orally transmitted music tradition [...] If Mozart, Gershwin, the Beatles, Ellington, Indian classical music, Country and Western, and Lutheran hymns, are all available for listening, we cannot ignore the positive or negative influence on 'folk' music of Mozart because his is 'art' music; or of Gershwin because his is not 'ethnic' music (Blacking 1977: 8).

And he insists on the fact – very important to me – that:

A sociology of music may legitimately confine itself to studying the groups that use music and the different meanings that they assign to it, without analyzing musical structures. But musicologists cannot account for the logic of musical systems without considering the patterns of culture and of social interaction of the music-makers (Blacking 1977: 8).

These are the words of John Blacking written in 1977, and I assume that there is a general consensus that we can find in them great insight into the processes involving traditional music that we are witnessing today, so that this paper can still be of much use for all of us in our own research. Of course, several things have changed, but, even in a deeply transformed setting, several remarks made by Blacking can be of assistance.

Let us take, for example, the distinction that Blacking makes, between 'purists' and 'syncretists'. It is a distinction that serves the purpose of creating a somewhat artificial dichotomy expedient to his line of reasoning, even though we all know (and Blacking was the first) that there is some purism and syncretism in all of us.

However, there are still, among us, those who could be termed 'purists' according to Blacking's categories. In that group I would include, for example, most of contemporary French ethnomusicology. Those who were there will perhaps remember that Simha Arom stated it explicitly during the round table of 1999,⁶ and also very recently Bernard Lortat-Jacob in a private conversation reiterated to me, quoting his recent research in Albania, namely, that in the world – Europe included – there is still plenty of music that follows the patterns of what we ethnomusicologists would have considered as object of our interest a few years back, that is: oral tradition not influenced by 'Western' musical patterns, socially circulated among a rather confined community, vitality that allows renovation within the tradition, and so on.

I agree with these 'purists' that there is still plenty of such music, even in Europe. I may mention also the example of South-east Asia where there is a wealth of unknown, and under-documented, musical cultures and traditions. Just think of Laos, or Burma, for example. I agree that it is our task as ethnomusicologists to study these unknown musical traditions. Who else? Perhaps we can all agree on the idea that it is an important, and even primary task of ethnomusicology to document all these forms of traditional culture, and to understand how they work in terms of musical, social, and dynamic cultural processes. But one cannot escape dealing with another term – and a set of issues that come with it – the idea of marginality.

⁶ In his statement in response to Giannattasio's paper, bearing the title of 'A conservative point of view' Arom writes: 'What is our main task? It is to go into the field, to make descriptions of music in its cultural context, and in the ways and the various levels at which it is articulated within the culture in which this music comes into existence [...]' (Arom in Giannattasio and Giuriati, eds. 2001: 233). And, in his conclusions: 'I think we should leave sociology to the sociologists, anthropology to the anthropologists, philosophy to the philosophers, and just do *our* work, i.e. go into the field, collect what we can collect before it is too late, work it through, return to the field, try to validate and publish our results, and go on, and on, and on [...]' And this will be useful not only for science, but also for the preservation and conservation of cultures to which the music belongs' (Arom in Giannattasio and Giuriati, eds. 2001: 235).

In fact in several contexts, such musics cannot be confined within themselves, and they become part of larger processes of change – willingly or unwillingly – that the researcher cannot escape from noticing and documenting. And I think that it is not by chance that, even in the case of the two names of our greatly respected colleagues that I have mentioned, a purist attitude cannot be maintained. A few years ago Arom, together with Denis-Constant Martin published a paper in which they analyse the procedures of World music in musical terms (Arom and Martin 2002), and I can remind you of a similar effort made by Dalia Cohen and Ruth Katz at our 2003 ESEM meeting in Gablitz.⁷ Lortat-Jacob told me of an instance that seems to me emblematic of the problems of our work today. After the release of the beautiful documentary film that he presented in ESEM Lisbon, *Chants d'un pays perdu*, the resonance of his work among Albanian Nationalists has been strong, so that the film was taken – without the author knowing anything about it – as a sort of implicit ‘statement’ for the Albanian Nationalist Party (rather Annexionist), and this summer Bernard told me that he was very surprised when, on arriving at the airport in Tirana, he was unexpectedly met by a chauffeur in a Mercedes provided by that political group. Even though the stands and ideas of the Albanian annexionists, dreaming of a Great Albania, are totally foreign to Bernard’s view and intentions in making the film, I quote this as an example to stress another major change in our work today. Any attempt to remain ‘pure’ clashes with the increased resonance and relevance of our work for the communities concerned and with the informed and interested competence of the people where our work is done.

In fact, the increase in the so-called applied or collaborative ethnomusicology that deals with issues such as survival, promotion, visibility, documentation (that implies circulation) is another relevant aspect of change in our work. While in earlier times an ethnomusicologist could pretend to come to a field, to stay there and to return home with his or her ‘treasure’ to study and publish, nowadays our work in the field implies all sorts of negotiation, of collaboration, and involvement in the debate, in the dynamic processes of a community, and a diffusion of the documents and of the results of the re-

⁷ The title of their unpublished paper was: ‘Characterizing various styles of world music’.

search that has to take into account the views, expectations, and needs of the communities concerned, not only because it is an ethical principle to be followed, but also because it is nowadays almost unavoidable (that is, inherent in our research), especially if we use multimedia to produce research.

And we enter the much larger category, again, according to John Blacking terms, of 'syncretists'. But, if we see it that way, to be a syncretist is not such a radical position. Some of the founding fathers of modern ethnomusicology state it in their definitions. Not just because of value judgments (or prejudgments) that consider change as positive anyway, but because the object of study for ethnomusicology has for a long time now been 'an approach to the study of *any* music, not only in terms of itself but also in relation to its cultural context' (Hood 1969: 298), or 'We believe that we must study all of the world's music, from all peoples and nations, classes, sources, periods of history' (Nettl 1983: 9, in his 'Credo'). And you know well that, in selecting the definitions above, I have not chosen the most radical ones.

The issue nowadays is that *any music* means in fact for us – really and not just in theory – a much wider world of music because of the widespread diffusion of information, the increase in research, the blurred landscape of contemporary music where all the boundaries among genres, repertoires, live and reproduced music, oral and written, and all the geographical and territorial boundaries are constantly being moved and redefined.

Common sense required that ethnomusicology had to deal with Oriental, primitive, and folk music. These used to be a world apart from art and popular music, and the role of ethnomusicology was to present this great unknown to the Western culture. I would say that this role is nowadays almost gone. The musical cultures that interested (and interest) us are, by now, widely known, and, literally, everywhere. Ligeti, Berio, Tan Dun, World Music, Coltrane, digital sampling, MTV and National Geographic music channel, You Tube, radio stations. I just mentioned some of the first names that came to my mind, taken from the most various domains of contemporary music, and in each of them I can find a number of elements and processes that can be related to the interest of ethnomusicology. And I am asking myself: under whose disciplinary jurisdiction should the study of Indonesian

art music fall, or of certain forms of African popular styles, assuming that there is continuity with local musical utterances? And this continuity makes us privileged as observers of a number of processes that involve both popular music, art music, and the so-called traditional music as well.

Should the study of a given musical culture observe and describe (perhaps trying not to promote) the processes of spectacularization, patrimonialization of traditional music, the theatralisation of rite, and other processes of a similar nature, that happen everywhere today? Do we not have anything to say about policy of patrimonialisation of culture propelled by so many local, national and international institutions mostly for economic and tourist purposes, the inclusion of several musical tradition in the commodified market of music, and the consequences that such processes have on local musical communities on one hand, and on the global development of music making on the other hand?

These are immense questions that I certainly cannot answer. But I think it is fruitful to pose them, and to discuss, taking each of us our particular perspective and point of view, perhaps trying to reconstruct, through a puzzle, a European position on some of the issues that I mentioned above. In fact, it seems to me that, at least in looking at it from an Italian perspective, we are confronted today by a paradox. Ethnomusicology is becoming increasingly institutionalized (Universities, Conservatoires) and recognized (radio programs, festivals), increasing also our responsibility for rethinking and reconsidering musical processes in a perspective of general musicology. Yet, the so-called traditional music continues to be marginalized and disappears, surviving in most cases only if it becomes a 'source' and 'fuel' for some musicians of the important music world as a remedy for some creative standstill, or the need for an exotic touch, or for the economic development of local communities – in simple terms – often directed and promoted by local politicians.

In other words, what has been for over a century the main object of study for ethnomusicology is shrinking and being marginalized, while the need for a multicultural, intercultural, anthropological, comparative approach pervades the world of musicology. This becomes increasingly true of music edu-

cation, for festival organizers, for scholars dealing with contemporary music, even for the new and budding field of popular music studies. An emblematic example of this new approach, though sometimes criticized for its shortcomings and lack of balance, may be the *Enciclopedia della Musica* in five volumes edited by Jean Jacques Nattiez and published in Italian and French where the intercultural approach and the space dedicated to the music of different cultures, also with a marked comparative approach, are of unprecedented dimensions: only one volume out of five is devoted to the History of Western music (Nattiez 2001–2005).

These very general, and highly theoretical (or political) issues may seem very distant from our daily work, but each of us is constantly confronted with them during research. As a partial illustration of some of them I can offer some examples drawn from my own experience.

To attempt to explain how I understand Blacking's statement that musical change must be in the music itself, and not just in the social conditions around music making, I can mention the example of the tarantella of Montemarano where musical change, that is, change in musical features and deep structures – to use another term dear to Blacking – can be considered as a dynamic driving force that allows to go on, and not just an impoverishment, and decay of a given tradition.

Change in the musical structure: the tarantella of Montemarano

I have already presented this case in a past ESEM, in Rauland, but I want to reiterate it here, from a different perspective, because it seems to me that it fits perfectly the case at hand. A tarantella, that is, a dance music typical of Southern Italy, is played at the Carnival in a village, Montemarano, in the mountains near Naples. The Carnival in Montemarano consists of a processional dance performed for three consecutive days by the masked inhabitants of the village (see Figure 1.2), accompanied by a music performed by clarinet, accordion, and frame drum (see Figure 1.3).

I have been studying and participating in this Carnival for a little over thirty years by now (see Figure 1.4), and I was able to observe and detect



Figure 1.2 *The Carnival in Montemarano: processional dance*



Figure 1.3 *The Carnival in Montemarano: instrumental ensemble.*
Clarinet: Berto Cantone

continuity and change, that go even beyond that span of time, and that can be traced back at least to World War II (Giuriati 2003). The traditional shawm (ciaramella, Figure 1.5), was replaced by a clarinet introduced by a musician of the local marching band, Domenico Ambrosini. This change apparently occurred at the end of the 1940s, and was beneficial to the continuity of the tradition – this is my point – without altering those who were the main principles of that Carnival music.

It is apparent that, besides the difference in sound quality, the clarinet allows the performer to cope with the rules of Western harmony (it is possible to use modulations along the whole cycle of fifths), to employ three different modes (major, minor, and 'lydian' – with the augmented fourth degree)



Figure 1.4 *The Carnival of Montemarano*

within the same tonal framework. The use of the clarinet also helps the performer to extend the duration of phrases and, on a larger scale of time, to go on with his playing for a longer time and more easily, prolonging the duration of the Carnival for hours.

If one listens to a performance of the two instruments – the shawm and the clarinet, it is possible to notice clearly all the elements outlined above: while the ciaramella usually maintains two (three at the most) tonal levels, two modal settings (major and Lydian) due to the characteristics of the instrument that requires more breath in order to make the thick double reed vibrate, and has no mechanics to facilitate the fast closing of the holes, the clarinet ranges continuously over several keys, changing the three modes



Figure 1.5 *The traditional shawm (ciaramella) played by Orlando Corrado*

and extending the phrases to eight bars, allowing the performer an agility of touch and speed impossible to attain with the ciaramella.

Change in the instrument, and accordingly in the musical structure that is performed, has allowed the Carnival to continue and to flourish until recent times, with constant modification in relation to modernity. Change in the musical structure is an index and a signal of changes in the social structure that continue until now.

Nowadays the local success of the tarantella is such that several young players consider it as a possible source of income (primary or, mostly, secondary). Some permanent musical bands have been formed and play at all sorts of country fairs, weddings, festivals, alternating tarantellas and popular dance music (waltzes, polkas, lambadas, Latin American hits such as 'Macarena', and so on).

Furthermore, in Montemarano, there is a Museo della tarantella, and a local association has constructed a website⁸ that, among other local news and information, describes the anthropological, choreutic, and musical aspects of the Carnival (I have also contributed a text to it). The debate in Montemarano today is on how (and whether) the Carnival can be promoted as a tourist asset (together with local products of quality such as wine and chestnuts) in the budding field nowadays in Italy, called 'agrotourism' (*agriturismo*). Musicians, local people, local administrators become actors in a dialogue with the researcher, and the interaction with them and their needs must be taken into account.

What a change from when Alan Lomax went there in January 1955, and recorded the tarantella for the first time, publishing a short example of it on the two seminal LPs devoted to Italian folk music edited by him with Diego Carpitella!⁹ A study of musical change in Montemarano can tell us so much, and in a unique way, about social and cultural change occurred in Italy between 1955 and 2008.

Change in repertoires. Music for the 'Gigli' in Nola

Referring to another quotation from Blacking mentioned above, in which he stated that the traditional musicians live in our contemporary society and listen to any kind of music that may influence their own music making, without boundaries imposed by genre or tradition, the example of my most recent research in Nola comes to my mind.

In this case, we can witness a dramatic change in musical repertoires as a reaction to being exposed to different genres of contemporary music, but this change in repertoire does not seem to affect the function of the music in relation to the feast. I am referring to the music for the 'Festa dei Gigli' at Nola. It is a festival, held in the month of June in Nola, a town of about 20.000 people in the fertile flatland near Naples, and next to Mount Vesuvius. It is a propitiatory ritual of fertility on which a Catholic cult was superimposed,

⁸ www.promontemarano.it

⁹ *Southern Italy and the Islands*, collected and edited by Alan Lomax and Diego Carpitella 'The Columbia World Library of Folk and Primitive Music', vol. XVI, Columbia, KL 5174, LP 33.30, 1957.

honouring the bishop of Nola St. Paolino, and celebrating his return from Northern Africa where he liberated from slavery some inhabitants of Nola. The 'Festa dei Gigli' takes place when nine very heavy wooden towers 15 meter tall – called *Gigli* (Lilies) – are carried by about one hundred porters each through the narrow streets of the town. The procession lasts nearly 24 hours and music is an essential component of it (Figure 1.6).

It is not known when this tradition started, but there are accounts from Gregorovius in the 19th Century that tell us that the procession was accompanied by incredibly loud music (1966; ed. or. 1853). Some oral accounts tell us that the music at the end of the 18th century was a mix of local peasant music and urban music of the town of Naples. From the beginning of the 20th century we know from photographs that the music was played by a brass band (Figure 1.7).

A unique feature of this feast is that the musicians are placed ON the *Giglio*, and therefore they have to be carried by the porters, establishing a very peculiar relationship between sound and body (that I think Blacking would have been much interested in, by the way).

During the 20th century we know from audio recordings that the music for the 'Festa dei Gigli' was made up of mainly of two kinds of repertoires: songs composed according to the style of Neapolitan song, that is popular urban music style, and marches from brass bands. Starting with the 1980s these marches have gradually been substituted by commercial music taken from anywhere, jingles from television advertisements, popular international hits, television theme songs, soundtracks from popular cartoons, any kind of Italian pop music.

A further change starts in the 1980s with the use of amplification, loudspeakers and microphones. The instruments change as well, with the introduction of the saxophone as the main instrument, and the use of the electronic keyboard as the instrument in charge of sustaining the harmony, making this ensemble resemble more and more the groups that play pop and commercial music in the area, with the exception of a consistent percussions section made of snare drum, big drum and cymbals (Figure 1.8).



Figure 1.6 *Giglio in Piazza Duomo (Archive of Museo etnomusicale dei Gigli di Nola)*



Figure 1.7 *Brass Band on the Giglio in the 1950s (Archive of Museo etnomusicale dei Gigli di Nola)*



Figure 1.8 *Musical ensemble in the Giglio: Pino Cesereno and his band (June 2005)*

Some aspects remain unchanged – the function of sustaining and coordinating the movements of the porters, ‘canzone per l’alzata’ (for lifting the *Giglio*), relationship sound, music, body, movement, but the musical repertoire has changed in such a way that it sounds as if it should be more of interest for popular music studies than ethnomusicology (Giuriati 2007). However, it seems to me that we are witnessing here precisely what Blacking had mentioned in his paper: the musicians of Nola, profiting from the development of new technologies (microphones and amplification) and listening to the popular music that is surrounding them, have dramatically changed the musical tunes used for the ‘Festa dei Gigli,’ while leaving nearly untouched the other elements and functions of the music that make this feast unique and a significant object of inquiry for an ethnomusicologist.

Diaspora and globalization: Southeast Asia

I just want to mention briefly an instance from another area of my interest, that is Southeast Asia, namely Cambodia and Indonesia, in order to stress how difficult it is now to study musical systems as confined to a given area and a given culture, and how deeply change is embedded in contemporary research.

For example, in the case of Cambodia, in recent years, there has been a significant phenomenon of relocation of refugees, and the diaspora has affected traditional music, forcing the researcher to try to understand the processes of change that music undergoes in the transplantation from the homeland to a foreign environment. In this case, perhaps, change in the music itself is present, but in a very subtle way. On the contrary, changes in the social structure and in the function of the music are more apparent. In this case, as well as in the others mentioned before, music remains a strong indicator of change and therefore, by inferring changes in music, one can also gain a better understanding of the social and cultural changes that take place in a community (of refugees in this case).¹⁰

¹⁰ On this aspect, in relation to Vietnamese refugees, see also Reyes (1999).

For example, the different relationship that the musicians entertain with improvisation practices, or the shortening of the duration of the pieces, are small but clear signs of adaptation to a changed environment. On a higher level, I have spoken of the shift in the function of the music among the Cambodian refugees where music becomes mainly a sign of musical identity within the larger multiethnic society to which they are relocated, rather than a necessity related to continuing their traditional lifestyle (Giuriati 2005).

Another example that I want to mention briefly is the case of Javanese or Balinese gamelan music. Nowadays is really difficult to study gamelan music of the academies and of the leading musicians of Java and Bali without taking into account two processes of contamination and internationalization of that music that have been taking place in the last decades. Two factors could be mentioned here:

- The encounter of Indonesian musicians with Western musicians, with the exchange and contamination that are becoming increasingly strong in a world where musicians travel constantly (with so many Indonesian musicians in residence in the U.S., Europe, Australia) and sounds travel so easily as well. This implies a profound change in the aesthetic paradigm of Javanese and Balinese music, with repercussions both in Indonesia and in the West.
- The urge from the political and cultural agenda of Indonesia to construct a 'national' music and dance that would take into account different cultures and styles within the multicultural country, trying to build a new style in which the local music is encompassed a larger 'container' that can be identified as 'Indonesian'. This is a phenomenon that I perceive very clearly in the views and musical choices of our teacher of Javanese gamelan in Rome, Widodo Kusnantyo, who graduated from ISI in Yogyakarta¹¹ and that one can encounter in so many Indonesian musicians today. And it is certainly not just a phenomenon restricted to Indonesia where a specific political agenda can account for such a development. In a totally different

¹¹ Mr. Widodo Kusnantyo is a dancer and a musician in residence at the Indonesian Embassy by the Holy Seat in Rome, where he teaches Central Javanese gamelan and dance at the Embassy, also in agreement with the Università di Roma 'La Sapienza'.

area I can feel the marketable appeal of the construction of a 'Mediterranean music' that is a total invention of contemporary musicians coming from the circles of folk revival and world music.

To conclude, in order to cope with changes in our object of study, we must change, refine, and rethink our research methods. It is music, ultimately, and the people who make it that tell us where to go and how to proceed, rather than the fixed categories of our discipline. It is a process of reconfiguration that is taking place, reestablishing and moving the relative boundaries within a network of related disciplines (historical and systematic musicology, popular music studies, sociology of music, semiology of music), with the belief that music, and musicology, can ultimately become a unitary field of research. Challenges of urban ethnomusicology (ethnicity, identity), multiculturalism, and world music, diasporas and refugee movements, new technologies digital sampling and the internet, music education and interculturalism, archives (and copyright) and the historical dimension: in all of these areas the issue of musical change is essential, and they force us to change our research methods and perspectives. Furthermore, these domains are all at the intersection point with other disciplines within the larger domain of musicology (and anthropology) forcing us to take interdisciplinary paths, and sometimes posing (not too often, please) the question of redefining our task, research methods, and object of study.

But in presenting issues related to change I do not want you to believe that I think that we as ethnomusicologists are losing our 'identity'. I still think that in this reassessment of the soundscapes, and of musicology, the discipline that studies them, there are some stable foundations that we can derive from our history. Some points still stand, in my opinion on which we can rely in our trade, such as (just to mention them briefly): the capacity to carry fieldwork, a comparative look at ANY music, study of music in relation to cultural systems. And I see Europe as a place of exchange and debate for these experiences, much less monolithic than other scientific environments.

For example, what our European tradition of study may offer to this debate is the capacity to recognize, because of a long history of coexistence of folk and art music, the inner imbalances and changes in a rather complex network

of musical styles and traditions within one country and one society, linked inextricably to the complex European society and history. Such a model, that is shared by several European schools of ethnomusicology, starting with Bartók and Brailoiu and continued in France, Italy, and other Eastern and Western European countries, can offer some insight into the complexity of the contemporary globalised soundscapes.

Just some examples of how I think we should try today to cope with change, by meeting the challenges of a constantly changing soundscape around us. And in this endeavour it might be useful to keep in mind some of the thoughts that Blacking pointed out to us some years back. To keep the focus on music and to continue to make a link between the musical systems and the music-makers, in that inextricable bond of cognitive and affective processes that is music. In doing so, we can make a contribution to the development of our discipline, and also, more generally, to the understanding of contemporary world, society, and culture.

Let me conclude with what the Cambodian friends tell me sometimes, quoting a saying attributed to the Buddha the 'enlightened': «Nothing is constant but change».

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