# Review of

ETNOGRAFIE SONORE / SOUND ETHNOGRAPHIES

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The new journal is a step to opening up the world of academic writings to different formats and contents regarding sound ethnographies. The title of the journal reveals partly the intention to not limit research to specific communities and musical attractions within those communities. It appears to invite a wide range of research papers, essays, audiovisual explorations, and short comments that go beyond classical ethnographies and sound studies.

According to the editors of the new journal:

“*Sound Ethnographies* is a biannual peer reviewed multimodal journal, published online and in print, with contributions in Italian and English. It arises from the research experience of Italian ethnomusicology and steps forward as an international meeting point for all research perspectives dealing with the complexity and transformation of music practices. It encourages an ethnographic approach directed to the documentation and analysis of musical, choreutic and social behaviours of both individuals and groups.”

This is most welcome in a world of increasing tendencies of an all-embracing commodification of intangible expressions and interactions, among them audible sound and specifically all kinds of musical activities.

The first number of this promising project has an interesting structure, though not entirely new, in the field of humanities. It starts with a rather long introduction of the new journal’s focus. The most acclaimed article is the first under the title “Culture Contact: Cognitive and Psychodynamic Aspects. Transcultural Understanding in Art History, Religion, Music and Animation” by Gerhard Kubik (21-36). He drafts a short statement on the current situation by questioning basic certainties and developing his view on the individual cultural profile of each human. His paper, rich of striking metaphors, reflects in many aspects on similar dynamics described in other currently discussed writings of Amselle, Welsch, and Giannatasio (Jähnichen in No 1 AEMR-EJ, 2018: 65-69). By apparently doing so, he develops an interesting and consistent methodological approach to cultural features of any society with a humorous note on terminology. His way of connecting observations and facts is worth taking up and continued by coming generations of researchers in the field of music, anthropology, and history. However, there is still a lot to be said about this topic, especially regarding the assumption of a general cultural divide which is not sufficiently questioned through the application of an individual cultural profile. One of his core thoughts to be transmitted in this process is expressed as follow: “

Con­trary to popular opinion that music is a “universal language”, our research results un­derline that music is only a *universal phenomenon*, shared by all cultures, but it is not a “language” understood universally. Cross-culturally, it is usually “misunderstood”, i.e. confidently and joyfully reinterpreted by everyone in their own ways. This touches even on the basic realm of auditory perception including the perception of a reference beat…” (26).

The second article by Razia Sultanova, “Female Teachers: a New Concept of Traditional Master-Apprentice Knowledge Transmission in Central Asian Music (Ferghana Valley Case)” (37-54), deals with the many aspects of gender issues applied on a regional tradition and the contemporary appearance of resulting musical behaviors that are being observed. The approach indicates that the author assumes any investigating researcher is coming ‘into’ a culture, which is possibly questionable. Before being a subject of academic discourses, the presented facts were surely known to the community of teachers and learners. It is only now that this rich knowledge is made available beyond this community. Also, considering the focus of the new journal, some facts known due to earlier written documents may not always be the absolute first known at all. In summary, the rich material presented may win through with a better embedding in philosophical thoughts on cultural issues.

The following four articles (55-170) deal with case studies made by the young Italian ethnomusicologists Lorenzo Vanelli, Daniele Zappatore, Emanuale Tumminello, and Giuseppina Colicci. The first two articles deal with changing conditions either in repertoires or in social contexts. The last two articles appear only in the Italian language and address very different issues.

Finally, Jennie Gubner contributes an audiovisual essay with a very long title “More than Fishnets & Fedoras: Filming Social Aesthetics in the Neighborhood Tango Scenes of Buenos Aires & the Making of *A Common Place* (2010)” (171-188). This contribution is indeed a very careful observation of details personally re-researched and well analyzed.

After those rather serious contributions follows an article under the heading ’Arguments’. It is Nico Staiti’s comprehensive writing “The “Rose Garden”: Against Racism in Ethnomusicology” (189-212), in which he discusses the writings of Marian-Bălaşa, who displays, in an offending way, sentiments that can be interpreted as racist against a European minority. This article is informatively rich and also very detailed. From the first view, this category is promising since controversial articles are still too rare and not well promoted throughout academia.

The next section consists of two contributions introducing institutions, one is Rosario Perricone’s “The Antonio Pasqualino International Puppet Museum (Palermo)” (213-224), and the other Gerda Lechleitner’s “The Phonogrammarchiv of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (Vienna)” (225-242). These institutions are well presented, although in some aspects and following the previous argumentative article, the presentations are a bit too perfect. A few real problems could have found their way into these writings since this is a journal with an academic statement and not an advertisement magazine.

Concluding with some notes on the authors, there remains only one critical point, which is the seemingly less observed question of copyright issues regarding illustrations, notations, and photos. Nowadays, it should not suffice to provide only a reference in lieu of stating those specific rights. Also, listing only website addresses might not be sufficient. Since the entire journal is freely accessible online, the contributions and uploaded supplements should be marked with all technical metadata such as date, time, and responsible person or institution for the upload.

Despite those small critical remarks, this new journal is a timely addition to the academic community in various fields of research and should not be missed.