

C.4: Traditional Creation and Modern Experience in Folk Music Revival

Organizers: Janika Oras and Taive Särg (Estonian Folklore Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum)

The symposium will focus on contemporary performance processes and experiences of traditional music, especially from the musician's perspective. Musicians have always been tethered to both past traditions and the present, yet in traditional societies, this distinction was less pronounced. In contemporary times, musicians might blend various musical experiences, drawing on both historical models and contemporary aesthetics. The plethora of choices has raised the question of authenticity within the context of the revival of traditional music. This debate often revolves around the connection between traditional musical styles—typically linked to specific community identities—and various aspects of their modern interpretations.

As one aspect of authenticity, Owe Ronström highlights *authenticity of process* in folk music revival, referring to the extent to which the creation and performance processes adhere to traditional models. A significant shift has occurred within the revival movement since the late 20th century, transitioning from a focus on the end product of music creation to emphasizing the performance and recreation processes. This shift towards process has encouraged a deeper understanding of the 'vocabulary' and 'syntax' of traditional music-making. Ronström also highlights a category such as the authenticity of the experience - that is, the emotion people receive from the traditional music is relevant, personal and immediate to them (Ronström 2014).

The symposium aims to explore the reasons and methods through which individuals today seek experiential connections with past singers and musicians who (re)created their music in live performance context. It will examine how these individuals engage with historical music and its inherent sensibilities during performance and (re)creation. One area of focus will be the adoption and application of traditional creative methods (such as improvisation and variation based on traditional forms and formulas) across various performance domains, including song, instrumental music, and dance.

Additionally, we invite discussions on contemporary contexts and venues where past performance traditions are revitalized, alongside the application of participatory and/or presentational performance principles. Examples of such revitalization include participatory singing in traditional styles at organized singing events or gatherings, musician jams, dance clubs, and music and dance in revived or traditional rituals, such as weddings and calendar festivals, as well as solitary expressions of grief in laments.

Literature

Ronström, Owe 2014. Traditional Music, Heritage Music. – Caroline Bithell, Juniper Hill (ed.-s). The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival, pp. 43-59. Oxford Handbooks. Oxford University Press.

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