

Thematic Issue

MUSIC AND CROSSING BRIDGES

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MUSIC AND CROSSING BRIDGES

Zuzana Jurková

While the last issue of *Urban People* devoted to ethnomusicology, entitled *Theory and Method in Urban Ethnomusicology* (2/2012), had a rather narrow focus, this time we have taken a wider stance. Our aim, through the theme of *Crossing Bridges: Journeys, Migrations, and Diaspora*, is to find out more about the role music plays in human interactions across geopolitical, social and cultural borders.

The broad theme (or, rather, idea) of *Crossing Bridges* was also the general theme of the conference of the *European Seminar in Ethnomusicology* which took place in Prague in September 2014 and in which some of the authors from this issue participated. And it is no wonder that Prague called for (and, as the place where this journal is published, continues to call for) an ethnomusicological view of the metaphorical crossing of bridges. Prague, the city where Guido Adler wrote his famous article in 1885 often considered the “sound of the starting gun” for contemporary ethnomusicology. Prague, whose geographical situation necessitated 17 bridges. Prague, which according to Bruno Nettl had an “inter-cultural character” and represented a sort of “cultural equilibrium” in history due to the cohabitation of Czechs, Germans and Jews (and occasionally others as well) (Nettl 1994: 224). Prague, which we believe can continue in this role.

What does this issue of *Urban People* have to say about the place of music in human interactions? Above all, it provides material of the greatest possible diversity – not only in a geographical sense (more or less by chance, the issue contains pairs of articles dealing with Turkey, Israel and the Czech Republic), but also through the character of the given interaction (which is, for example, in the case of the transit migrants in Turkey as Evrim Hikmet Ögüt describes them, strikingly different from the “quiet” interaction of the Romanian rural community of the Oşeni with their neighbors in the article by Speranta Rădulescu), in a theoretical and methodological sense, or through narrative. And precisely due to the awareness of the possibilities of diverse perspectives, we open the issue with Thomas Solomon’s article on the possible dual conception of diaspora in relation to music.

If we dare to make generalizations in the context of this diversity, then these generalizations are carefully formulated and very broad. The first finding is that in traditional rural worlds (Rădulescu) or in places where nation-states are being formed (Burstyn), borders, even those reflected in music, are maintained, yet they are constantly taking on new forms. In modern worlds, above all urban ones, bonds of a new type are being created (Verbuč), and borders fade or shift (Yıldırım, who uses the expression “bordering” from urban anthropology).

In addition to the common feature of the constant negotiation of borders, there is an apparent emphasis on reflexivity, above all in the texts by younger authors, both self-reflexivity (the researcher him/herself as the most important research tool; this is evident above all in the article by Lee Bidgood, but in others as well) and participant reflexivity (how do participants perceive, or in fact present their own community? see e.g. Pánek Jurková or Ögüt).

The reflection of Baumann’s theory of liquid modernity in the humanities and social sciences has evidently caught up with ethnomusicology as well.

References

- Nettl, Bruno. 1994. “Paul Nettle and the Musicological Study of Culture Contact.” Pp. 223–228 in *Colloquium Ethnonationale Wechselbeziehungen in der mitteleuropäischen Musik mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Situation in den böhmischen Ländern*. Brno.