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# Zuzana Jurková (ed.): Pražské hudební světy / Prague Soundscapes

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The book *Prague Soundscapes* is the successful result of at least two years' work of a team of music anthropology seminar students at the Faculty of Humanities of Charles University in Prague under the leadership of Zuzana Jurková. The title of the publication reveals its authors' aim to introduce our capital as perceived by ethnomusicological ears. Ethnomusicology (music anthropology) conceives music in a complex way: not only as a sound phenomenon, but also as a social one. Music is, first of all, the people who play it and those who listen to it – it's the world around sound, the music world, the soundscape (p. 8)! And that was exactly one of the authors' goals: to introduce ethnomusicology as a discipline that seeks to understand people through music and music through people (p. 293) – to further link anthropological theoretical concepts with a particular musical world, or soundscape.

The 304 pages of the book contain a symbiotic combination of two genres: impressive "snapshots" on one hand and a theoretical part on the other. A total of twenty-four snapshots – original inside views of music events – very well portray the authors' experience of musical events, including a detailed description of the music, place, musicians, listeners, and context, and illustrative photos. At the same time, the authors present information that is potentially relevant to the specific soundscape. All snapshots are interpreted by Zuzana Jurková through appropriately chosen theoretical concepts professed by ethnomusicologists and anthropologists such as Timothy Rice, Arjun Appadurai, Kay Kaufman Shelemay, Alan Lomax and Alan Merriam. Individual parts of the book are also distinguished graphically: beige pages indicate the theoretical part, while the snapshots are represented by white pages. In addition, the text is supplemented by information on the artists or musical genres. This information is also graphically differentiated. The purpose of this differentiation is explained in the introduction, where the authors instruct "how to read the book." This book can be read from different points of view. Those who "do not want to waste time with theory" can just follow interesting snapshots which show what is happening in Prague or skip arbitrarily to the parts that interest them. The book also satisfies even the most demanding reader ("who does not fear theory" p. 9) who does not ask just "how?" but also "why?" in terms of understanding ethnomusicology.

"Soundscapes" are an important concept in this publication: a term coined by the American ethnomusicologist Kay Kaufmann Shelemay (first used by the acousticologist R. Murray Schafer as acoustic characteristics of a given environment – a sound parallel to "landscape"). Shelemay's (2001) concept of the term combines theoretical inspiration of socio-cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1996) and the ethnomusicologist Alan P. Merriam (2000). The term soundscape refers to the world of music (-scape is a morpheme we can find in the word "landscape," for instance) in its dynamic variability (characteristic for seascape). Being inspired by Appadurai's theories of global cultural flows (ethnoscapes, technoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes, ideoscapes), she adopts the terms and so do the authors of *Prague Soundscapes* when they refer to specific examples of these -scapes. And so, for example the chapter *Music and Identity* reflects ethnoscapes when talking about migration; technoscapes appear in the chapter *Electronic Music*, etc. The content is inspired by Merriam's model of exploring music from an anthropological point of view, in which music is regarded as a product of human activity (music is the result of human behavior, whose roots are in human values and ideas [p. 10]). The reviewed book certainly shows Merriam's model too, for instance in the categorization of soundscapes, in which the values and significance of individual music worlds/communities stand out clearly. *Prague Soundscapes* fall in urban ethnomusicology. In this research discipline, similar studies in other world capitals were carried out (the above-mentioned Shelemay 2001 – research in the USA, or Philip Bohlman, Sebastian Klotz, Lars?Christian Koch 2007).

The book is divided into seven chapters. Except for the initial one, each of the following addresses one soundscape. Although it would be possible to find in Prague more soundscapes (soundscapes such as music therapy, music and children, music and politics might come to mind), the publication still covers a very wide range of topics: *Music and Identity*, *Music and Social Stratification*, *Music and Rebellion*, *Music as a Commodity*, *Electronic Dance Music*, *Music and Spirituality*. The authors state that it is not the only possible and certainly not an exhaustive division. They have set these criteria for selecting the topics: (a) the music event had to take place in Prague and (b) musical language and the events had to be well explained through the values ??of the community in the perspective of anthropology. The authors were looking for a variety of genres in relation to the multidimensionality of the capital.

Each chapter would deserve its own publication, as the majority of the authors spent a large part of their studies on their given topics (the themes were pivotal to their bachelor's, master's and doctoral theses) and hence show extensive understanding of their domains. Especially admirable is the work of Zuzana Jurková, who led the student team and who managed to skilfully organize all the information into a compact image. Compactness is also evident in the sequence of the individual themes and sub-sections (snapshots, theoretical concepts), in which, despite their seeming contradiction (stratification, commodification, rebellion or electronic music, spirituality), they are connected. For example, the chapter Rebel Music ends with a snapshot of Tom Stoppard's performance Rock'n'Roll (a play about, apart from other things, the Czech band The Plastic People of the Universe) at the New Scene of the National Theater (a very non-rebel place) and this apt question: "How rebellious is music if it keeps features of a rebellious musical style, but fills stadiums with listeners – members of that very system against which the music protests (p. 294)?" Similarly, the interpretation of Judith Beckett's unconventional text which deals with the relationship of music, emotion and trance and which is placed here within the context of electronic dance music directly precedes the chapter Music and Spirituality.

The introductory soundscape explores the relationship of music and identity. It focuses on "the others" through the studies of Romani/Gypsy music and music of today's migrants. The chapter outlines the term "identity" – the question whether music can express who we are.

In the next chapter, the authors Zuzana Jurková and Pavla Jónssonová deal with music in relation to social stratification. The authors illustrate stratified music with the example of Dvořák's Rusalka, applying Lomax's cantometrics and, when analyzing the performance The Makropulos Affair, they look at music through the lens of semiotics. They use Thomas Turino's adaptation of Charles S. Peirce's theory in an attempt to answer the question of how music actually affects people (p. 110).

In the 1970s, the British cultural anthropologist Victor Turner comes along with the concept of *communitas* – a mode of social existence complementary to normal stratified society (p. 21). The authors used this theoretical concept in the chapter Music and Rebellion when they applied it to modern punk concerts in the Modrá Vopice club and to the original Czech soundscape around the band The Plastic People of the Universe (Czech underground).

The previous two chapters are thematically linked with the soundscape of commodified music described in the chapter Music as a Commodity. Commodification is a process by which (in this case) music becomes a commodity with the clear intention of making money. How money influences the form of music is illustrated with the movie *Mňaga: Happy End*, as well as in the KLF group's manual "How to Win the Hit Parade."

Electronic dance music directly refers to one of the mentioned –scapes: technoscapes. The authors focus on the relationship between music and technology that changes the very nature of music in many ways. When analyzing the two forms of electronic dance music, *freetekno* and *psytrance*, there appear values in a completely opposite pole from that in the chapter on commodification; the participants of this soundscape long to escape from that commercial and anonymous sector into the world created through the nearest symbiosis with technology (p. 34).

It is possible to view the relationship between music and spirituality from many angles. The author Veronika Seidlová chose to illustrate it in a demonstration of faith in the form of *harinam* – the procession of Hare Krishna movement members through the city, which catches the eyes and ears of urban dwellers. Another example, in fact an opposite one, was the Saint Wenceslas Christian Celebrations, which nicely showed the dichotomy between specialization and secularism. The snapshot of the gospel workshop then shows another dichotomous model which distinguishes between the participants' level and the presentational level associated with the performance of music (Thomas Turino).

The book is definitely an interesting contribution to the field of (dare I say not only Czech) urban anthropology and ethnomusicology. Cultural Prague is viewed here from an entirely new perspective; not only from a historical point of view, as it used to be until now, but also from the perspective of its variable soundscapes. Although the authors did not want to embark upon a search for a systematic theoretical model with which they would analyze the musical worlds of Prague, they managed to find a few basic features that characterize Prague soundscapes. For urban space, it is the typical ambiguity and overlapping borders of musical genres and musical sound. In all the field studies we clearly see what the authors anticipate in the introduction, i.e., that music is not just sound itself. In each case, aesthetics and *modus* of behavior correspond with the musical language. Another feature is the desire to become different from others, which continually gives rise to constantly new worlds (as we read in the chapters on rebellion, electronic music and spirituality).

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