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To Andrzej Rakowski: an invitation and a challenge at a time of celebration

As is generally acknowledged, it is barely necessary to talk about the competence and the outstanding achievements of Professor Andrzej Rakowski, researcher in the field of acoustics and psychology, musicologist, and member of the Polish Academy of Sciences. However, considering his research interests, I would like to present him with a problem which, despite many attempts, has not so far been satisfactorily resolved.

The issue requires a number of approaches, including anthropological (such as that of Harold Garfinkel) and musicological ones, as well as the use of modern equipment in acoustic and psychological analyses. For this reason, the pages of *Interdisciplinary Studies in Musicology* are an appropriate place for the presentation of this issue, important not only for ethnomusicology and ethnology, but also for areas of research familiar with the challenges of music education. I am emboldened by the passage in Professor Rakowski's biography which tells us that '[...] he concentrates on the issues of objective measurement of auditory impressions, the problems of pitch perception in music and the perception of timbre [...]'.¹

The auditory identification of different music traditions takes place, initially, through the acquisition of some auditory familiarity with their sounds: the vocal, instrumental and vocal-instrumental music; this is followed by identification through analyses of its detailed properties, which requires professional knowledge. An instructive example is provided by the music of the Podhale highlanders, generally recognised and associated with the region of Southern Poland even by Polish non-specialists.

During field research into particular musical cultures, it is only exceptionally that a record is made of: a) existing local terminologies used by the participants of the cultural communities in question, which distinguish purely

¹ Andrzej Miśkiewicz, 'Rakowski Andrzej', in Elżbieta Dziębowska (ed.), *Encyklopedia Muzyczna PWM* (Kraków, 2004), 294.

audially the music of other traditions, closer and more distant ones, on the basis of criteria for which they are able to offer an explanation; as well as b) classifications of the genres and styles of their own repertoires with the corresponding names and criteria.²

The difficulty of devising a general method for identification and classification of musical-cultural idioms lies in the absence of appropriate terminology, which would encompass, clearly and systematically, the sounds which are heard, together with their electroacoustically objectivised counterparts. This possibility has escaped the attention of psychologists such as John A. Sloboda,³ and the attempts undertaken so far may, at most, be regarded as possible points of departure, after the *a priori* and artificial efforts to connect and interpret them in other categories have been abandoned. These have included racial,⁴ as well as cultural and musical categories,⁵ yet what is absent is the acoustic objectivisation of audial impressions. Moser's encyclopaedia reports attempts at correlating various sounds with exotic races (*exotische Rassen*), as well as local or regional styles (*Ortsstil*), and tribal (*Stammescharakter*) and national (*Volkstum*) characters. Remarks about the correlation between races and music refer, among others, to an article by Richard Wagner.⁶

Alan Lomax undertook an attempt to link the styles of folk songs with the cultural areas identified by Murdock;⁷ this attempt was flawed, since it was limited to the characteristics based on a closed questionnaire of heterogeneous questions, including the properties of samples of singing, observed audially by a team of experts with different specialisms, but without the support of objectivised acoustic evidence. The purpose of Lomax's project was to include the music culture of the whole world, on the basis of sample recordings from the cultural areas identified by him. The number of music cri-

² Bożena Muszkalska, *Tradycyjna wielogłosowość w kulturach basenu Morza Śródziemnego* (Poznań, 1999); see: Jan Stęszewski, 'Rzeczy, świadomość i nazwy w badaniach etnomuzykologicznych na przykładzie polskiego folkloru', in *Rzeczy, świadomość i nazwy. O muzyce i muzykologii*, eds. Piotr Podlipniak, Magdalena Walter-Mazur (Poznań, 2009), 253-277.

³ John A. Sloboda, *Umysł muzyczny. Poznawcza psychologia muzyki* (Warszawa, 2002).

⁴ Fritz Bose, *Musikalische Voelkerkunde* (Freiburg i. Br. 1958); Hans Joachim Moser, *Musiklexikon* (Hamburg, 1955); Werner Danckert, *Das europäische Volkslied* (Berlin, 1939); Werner Danckert, *Grundriss der Volksliedkunde* (Berlin, 1939).

⁵ Alan Lomax, *Folk Song Style and Culture* (Washington, 1945).

⁶ Richard Wagner, 'Das Judentum in der Musik', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 33/19 (1850), 101-107 and 33/20 (1850), 109-112.

⁷ Georg Peter Murdock, 'The cross-cultural survey', *American Sociological Review* 5 (1940), 361-370.

teria was limited, e.g. to register (chest, throat, nasal, falsetto voice) and the quality of sound (e.g., rough).

Many years ago I was witness to the doubts expressed by Jadwiga and Marian Sobieski as to whether there was any point in agreeing to Lomax's request for a Polish test sample recording, because of the limited duration of the sample, and the highly differentiated ethnomusical nature of Polish cultural territory. It is for this reason that the World Song Style Map⁸ does not include a Polish area among the 233 cultures located between Norway, Central Russia, Moravia and Slovakia, and no attempt at interpolation will enable one to imagine, for example, a characteristic mazurka-kujawiak-oberek-swiatowka idiom from Central Poland, or an idiom specific to the north-eastern area, with the Kurpie musical tradition of Puszcza Zielona.

The attempts undertaken so far have been unsatisfactory, yet finding a solution to the problem outlined here seems desirable on every count and justified on scientific grounds, all the more so since the tools of modern science make it possible to achieve satisfactory results. Professor Rakowski is the right addressee to whom to issue the challenge of taking on the management of such a project.

Translated by Zofia Weaver

⁸ Alan Lomax and Edwin E. Erickson, 'The World Song Style Map', in *Folk Song Style and Culture*, ed. Alan Lomax (Washington, 1971), 75-110.

