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Constructing Musical Heritage in Action: The Case of Wilamowice

ABSTRACT: Wilamowice, a small town in southwest Poland, is unique in many ways. It was settled in the 13th century by German tribes, and it preserved its distinct culture for a long time. The inhabitants of Wilamowice spoke their own language, wore original costumes, and observed local customs. Due to their merchants' skills, they were gradually becoming a wealthy community, which resulted in the most prosperous years of the town and its culture starting from the beginning of the 19th century. The situation changed in the middle of the 20th century. As a result of the dramatic war and post-war circumstances, the culture of Wilamowice began to disappear. Nowadays, thanks to the work of local activists and scholars, intensive revitalisation of the Vilamovian language and costumes has begun. This process had already been described in various writings (Król, 2016, Wicherkiewicz, 2003), but Vilamovian music culture remained almost completely unexplored. I decided to fill in this blind spot, and in 2016 began my fieldwork research on traditional music and dances in Wilamowice. At the beginning of my research, I realised that the task wasn't easy, as there remained only a few archive materials concerning Vilamovian music (Horak, 1960, Horak, 1981). Thus, the primary materials I could use in my research were ethnographic interviews and observations. On this basis, I aimed to reconstruct the forgotten soundscape of Wilamowice. But, what was more important for me, I tried to describe modern contexts in which music is used by the local community as a part of the process of constructing their identity and heritage. The essential question of my text is: 'What kind of music can be called Vilamovian, how do modern people use it and what for?'

KEYWORDS: intangible heritage, folklore, folk music, anthropology of music, ethnography

Introduction

Vilamovian music was the only topic in my whole research experience that wasn't chosen by me. I must admit that I didn't know anything about Wilamowice in 2016. That year I received a phone call from a young scholar who asked me to join the ministerial grant entitled: Documenting linguistic and cultural heritage of Wilamowice. Bartłomiej Chromik (that was his name) wanted me to investigate the town's musical heritage. Before I agreed, I started reading about Wilamowice – its history, traditions, language, and... I found the subject fasci-

nating. I also discovered that there were almost no archival materials concerning Vilamovian music and not too many concerning Vilamovian musical social life in the past. I treated it as a research challenge and decided to use ethnographic methods to try to reconstruct past Vilamovian soundscapes. However, another goal appeared even more important to me. I determined to answer the question: what is the music heritage of Wilamowice? What music do Vilamovians call their music, and why? What do they need it for? Where, when, and why do they sing it, play it, and dance it? For me, as an anthropologist of music, searching for answers to these questions appeared crucial. It led me to some reflections on the phenomenon of heritage treated as a process (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2011) and social action (Harrison, 2010) that contributes to creating a locality (Appadurai, 2005).

Methodology

Thus, in August 2016, I started my ethnographic fieldwork research on Vilamovian music. I stress the term ‘ethnographic’ because I am not an ethnomusicologist. Even though I graduated in musicology, did my Ph.D. in ethnology, and work as an ethnographer and anthropologist. That is why, most of all, I am interested in the social and cultural processes in which music is involved. I follow the main idea of Christopher Small, a New Zealand musicologist, who argued that: “The essence of music lies not in musical works but in taking part in performance, in social action. Music is thus not so much a noun as a verb, ‘to music’. To music is to take part in any capacity in a musical performance, and the meaning of musicking lies in the relationships that are established between the participants by the performance” (Small, 1999, p. 9). During my research, which lasted two years and was divided into three fieldwork stays, I tried to share the local experience of “musicking”, which can be understood as a call for sharing social experience (Hastrup, 1995) and participating in local life (Rakowski, 2021). I took part in local folk dance group rehearsals and went with the group to a traditional music festival in Wisła. I was invited to a local wedding and listened to the music in church. I talked a lot with Vilamovians of all ages about their music. I ethnographically interviewed musicians, dancers, singers, actual and former folk music and dance members, brass band players and conductors, and other citizens not directly connected with music. I also collected a large number of photos documenting music and social life in the interwar, post-war, and socialist times. These photographs often acted as catalysts for memories and stories of my interlocutors. They worked as Roland Barthes’ *punctum*, as photographs that “flow from the picture”, that attracts and penetrate the viewer (Barthes, 1996, p. 47). Finally, I organised a musical meeting for all comers, which can be understood as an act of animation for the local community (Rakowski, 2021). It was a methodological experiment that worked well and led me to several important conclusions. As the reader can see, my research was fully embodied and deeply immersed in sharing the social musical experience.

The shortest history of Wilamowice and its culture

Before presenting my materials and their interpretation, let me make a broader historical introduction, because I am convinced that it is necessary to know the history of Wilamowice to understand modern processes of constructing local heritage and musical heritage in particular. The history of Wilamowice itself can be described as heritage. Undoubtedly it is unique, still full of uncertainties, and it is intentionally used by the modern Vilamovians as a foundation and building material for their collective identity (Kowalski, 2003).

We do not exactly know when and from where the ancestors of modern Vilamovian people came, but it is known that in the 13th century Wilamowice was settled under German law. Linguists and folklorists believe that the settlers were probably of German origin (Filip, 2005; Król, 2016; Wicherkiewicz, 2003). However, the most important thing is that for centuries people there preserved their distinct culture. Vilamovian people spoke their Vilamovian language (that sounded Germanic, but some people think it sounded Flemish), they wore original costumes and observed local customs. For centuries the neighbouring Polish-speaking locals also perceived them as strangers (Libera, Robotycki, 2001). After the partitions of Poland at the end of the 18th century Wilamowice became a part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, and the town was gifted with numerous privileges by the new authority. It was this support of the authorities that probably led to a situation in which, at the beginning of the 19th century, the inhabitants of Wilamowice began to think of buying themselves out of serfdom, which finally happened in 1808. “The entire group adopted a resolution to buy themselves out of serfdom on November 20, 1807. The relevant contract was concluded on April 3 1808 in Kraków. Based on it, the community bought itself, together with the land, from court services and serfdom for the price of 30,000 Rhenish zlotys, paid to Karol Bonawentura Psarski and his wife Salomea” (Korzeniowska, 2001, p. 122)¹.

Due to Vilamovians’ resourcefulness, economic and merchants’ skills, they were gradually becoming a wealthy community, which resulted in the most prosperous times of the town starting from the beginning of the 19th century. They used to produce very high-value fabrics, had their private merchant warehouses in Austria (Vienna, Lintz, and Gratz), and delivered their goods to many places in Europe (Korzeniowska, 2001).

The prosperity of Wilamowice started to break down during the Second World War, and it was not only because of the economic situation. As Urszula Perkowska wrote: “The population of Wilamowice, having its own regional identity and its own language, having its origins in the Old Germanic dialect [...] was, during the occupation, entirely recognised as a former German colony [...] already then many inhabitants of the town declared their German nationality. Likewise, during the action of inscribing on the Volksliste, which began in 1941, many inhabitants of Wilamowice signed the German national list. The fear of being deported or arrested [...]

¹ All the translations from Polish to English are mine.

meant that [...] there was no home or family where at least one person had not signed the Volkslist” (2001, pp. 195–196).

Because most of the Vilamovian people had signed the Deutsche Volksliste, after the Second World War they were considered traitors by their Polish neighbours and were persecuted. To stop numerous acts of violence, local authorities forbade the use of Vilamovian language, costumes, and customs. People were afraid of speaking Vilamovian. They started to hide their Vilamovian identity. So, the language and the culture began to disappear.

But soon, starting in the 1950s, Vilamovian culture (local songs and dances in particular) turned out to be an attractive folklore curiosity. The leader of the local Song and Dance Ensemble, Jadwiga Stanecka, decided to use the opportunity to promote the Vilamovian culture as something exotic, aesthetic, and Polish at the same time. She translated all the songs from Vilamovian into Polish, changed or invented a lot of dances, and... succeeded! The folk group “Wilamowice” started to be financed by the Cepelia (National Centre of Folk and Artistic Industry) and became famous in Poland.

Paradoxically, a much worse time for Vilamovian culture began in the 1990s. The state subsidies supporting folklore run out after the transformation. Vilamovian culture wasn't attacked anymore, so there was no necessity to defend it. Only a few oldest Vilamovians still knew the local language. Professor Tomasz Wicherkiewicz predicted in 1996 that this language would disappear in the next 20 years (Wicherkiewicz, 2003).

It could have been the end of Vilamovian culture – but it wasn't. Because, in the 1990s, two Vilamovians were born who over a decade later decided to document and revitalise their local heritage. Justyna Majerska-Sznajder and Tymoteusz Król learned the Vilamovian language, then started to teach it in primary school. They also contributed to reactivating the Vilamovian folk Song and Dance Group “Wilamowice”. These two people, who for me are the charismatic leaders of Wilamowice (Shils 1983), nowadays work hard for the local community and are responsible for promoting Vilamovian culture outside. They are young scholars researching Vilamovian culture. They also were my guides and gatekeepers during my fieldwork research.

The history (?) of Vilamovian music

In my opinion, the history of Wilamowice contains an interesting paradox. On the one hand, many scholars stress the isolation and hermetic nature of this ethnic group. On the other hand, all these merchants' journeys and local and supralocal contacts had to result in cultural borrowings and flows. This process can be seen very clearly in music.

However, to tell the truth, we don't know much about the Vilamovian music from the past. And, as I wrote in the introduction, that was the first problem I faced at the beginning of my research – the lack of archival materials. Hardly anything has been written about Vilamovian music. Some information can be found in historical studies. For example, analysing historians' writings I found

out that one of the oldest musical traditions of the whole region, confirmed in the archives, was the brass band tradition (Płomieński, 1997). As we learn from Wiesława Korzeniowska, many brass bands in the area were established in the second half of the 19th century (Korzeniowska, 2001, p. 159). Probably the popularity of brass music came from the Austro-Hungarian area, as well as the instruments and the repertoire. With time, brass bands adapted also local melodies. Brass bands weren't, however, the specialty of Wilamowice; rather, they were popular in the whole region and played a key role during weddings, playing wedding marches and dance melodies. Vilamovian amateur historian and former brass band leader Jan Mika described the phenomenon in his booklet titled "The history of the brass band in Wilamowice" (Mika, 2004). "Since ancient times, music has accompanied the people of Wilamowice in everyday life, especially during celebrations. The proof of this statement is the fact that the original dances, songs, and chants brought from Western Europe by the first settlers have survived to our times. It is hard to imagine dancing without music. Therefore, the fact that the first brass band was founded in Wilamowice in 1890 does not exclude the possibility of earlier music bands, about which I have no information." (Mika, 2004, p. 3).

It seems important that Vilamovians are aware of the old brass bands tradition in their region. One man told me:

The tradition of brass bands is long in these areas. Oh, long. Here in Wilamowice... because here once there were huge traditions when it comes to brass bands. Because where did they come from? Bohemia, Germany, Bavaria, and Czechs. And we caught it here. And here Czech polkas, waltzes were played, and so forth. And this orchestra played here... there was this famous bandmaster Formas².

Later – in the 1960s and 1970s, brass bands' wedding engagements were taken over by smaller bands called "jazz" – consisting of accordion, trumpet, trombone and drums. Surprisingly, "jazz" bands didn't play jazz music at all – they adapted the brass bands repertoire and gradually have been adding new popular songs heard on the radio. They were extremely popular until the late 80s, when electric instruments and loudspeakers appeared and dominated the wedding scene.

I found also a few interesting articles written at the beginning of the 20th century by Austrian ethnomusicologist Karl Horak, who was interested in the dances of Bielsko-Biała region. In 1937 he visited Wilamowice where he talked to Józef Fox, the musician who remembered the musical practices of the end of the 19th century. Horak reported the conversation in a short text titled "Volksmusik aus Wilmesau" (1960). Fox pointed out that the dominant instruments in old Vilamovian music were bow instruments – foremost the violin. This information seems very interesting, as nowadays there are no violins in Vilamovian bands. Songs that Fox played and sung to Horak and described as church ones were recognised by the Austrian musicologist as German and Silesian folk songs, whose original

² All the quotations written in italics come from my ethnographic interviews.

texts were forgotten or changed, but their melodies survived. Horak suggested that this was due to the process of “polonisation” of church services.

I find Horak’s general conclusions rather disappointing – he claimed that there was nothing like pure Vilamovian music. “In singing, you could hear a lot of Polish and German melodies with Vilamovian words” – he wrote. “The growing demand for workforce in the surrounding industrial factories and the development of transport result in a strong influence of the city and the Polish environment in music” (Horak, 1960, p. 116).

It is hard not to agree with Horak. Probably the most appropriate comment would be that Vilamovian music is nonspecific and that it draws elements from various contexts. In today’s Vilamovian music one can hear mazurka rhythms from central Poland, Austrian waltzes and landlers, polkas, and noble Polish polonaises. Ryszard Tomicki wrote that every culture, even the most isolated one, is influenced by the surrounding world and these elements of culture that are ruled by fashion change the quickest (Tomicki, 1973). Music indeed belongs to these elements, as music is ruled by fashion. In the end, Horak concluded that the music traditions of the Vilamovian region would disappear in the near future. Fortunately, he failed with this prophecy.

Ethnographic research – the emic perspective

In the face of a shortage of existing source materials, I decided to do classical ethnographic research using all the ethnographic methods – ethnographic interviews, participant observation, and social animation (Rakowski, 2021). I started to talk with Vilamovians about their music. I wanted to understand what they call their music and what they consider to be their local music heritage. Sometimes I asked direct questions: was there anything that could be called Vilamovian music? A lot of answers referred to the songs’ language.

I think only the language. Melodies are popular in general. They are not specific at all. People in the whole region sing them. These are very similar melodies. Only the language.

Some of my interlocutors pointed to a specific rhythm of Vilamovian dances. Some of them stated that this is a characteristic Flemish rhythm, but weren’t really able to explain it to me.

Cikum, cikum [title of a dance – MMP] – this is a Flemish import, no need to say.

Other people pointed out that there are many polonaise rhythms in Vilamovian music:

It is not common elsewhere, so many polonaises. We call it in Wilamowice “chodzone” [walked dances – MMP].

These calm, guided by three-way rhythms “chodzone” dances were the most popular dances played at weddings for a long time. They still were danced in the

1980s, played by the “jazz bands”. The polonaise, called “chodzony” was also obligatorily danced at the beginning of a wedding party. When all the guests gathered on the dance floor, it was time to begin a long-lasting custom called “przodki” or in Vilamovian *rozasaoufuln*. There is some information about this custom in the literature. „The dance called ‘przodki’ is a specificity of Wilamowice. A walked dance in a polonaise rhythm [...] it used to last very long because of the accompanying songs. In the first pair danced the wedding foreman and the bride, in the second one – the groom with a forewoman, next the bridesmaids and groomsman and all the guests. Every pair approached the orchestra and sang improvised stanzas addressed to the dance partner” (Lipok-Bierwiczzonek, Pieronkiewicz-Pieczko 2001, p. 290). My interlocutors remembered, however, that these stanzas always were sung in Polish, not in Vilamovian – even before the Second World War.

However, most Vilamovians believed that traditional Vilamovian repertoire consists above all of these dances and songs that are performed by regional folk groups. They are shown on the stage as Vilamovian, so no one should doubt their authenticity – people argued. Also modern elaborations concerning Vilamovian music focus exclusively on the folklore stage repertoire (Turek, Wójcik, 2001). Initially, I found it absurd and unreliable. But during my fieldwork research I changed my mind. I think it is crucial to treat the activity of the folk group and its leaders as the practices belonging to the process of producing heritage or the heritage discourse, as Laurajane Smith would say (Smith, 2006). The embodied process of this production contributes also to forming a Vilamovian locality (Appadurai, 2005). Let me explain how it works.

My research shows, in fact, that many pieces presented by Vilamovians on stage have a quite short genealogy. They were composed to the needs of Song and Dance Group “Wilamowice” led by Jadwiga Stanecka, whom I already mentioned. Stanecka is the author, the inventor in Eric Hobsbawm’s sense (Hobsbawm, 2008), of almost all the stage presentations that are performed till today. And people in Wilamowice are aware of that.

The entire repertoire of the “Wilamowice” Song and Dance Group and some songs were arranged by Stanecka. She did it. She wrote poems and wrote songs.

They admitted that Stanecka used to attend thousands of folklore competitions, and she borrowed from other groups whatever she liked.

Mrs. Stanecka also used to go to competitions. When she heard some nice piece, when she liked something, she just took it, adapted it to our conditions, changed something, and it functioned as ours. And everyone was happy.

She was also a very good poet.

She used to say: “You know, at night, when something came to my mind, I woke up, took the draft, and wrote it down”. And she composed the songs and everything herself. She had a knack for writing lyrics.

I met three men who were the participants of the Song and Dance Group “Wilamowice” in the 1970s., and who admitted that they themselves composed the melodies to the texts written by Stanecka. One of them told me that Stanecka used to call him at night and ask to compose melodies fitting her new song-words. Another one claimed that she used to sing the melodies and he was asked to make a music notation:

She sang to me, and I was looking for the key, which it would be. So, in a few minutes, it was written. “Well, then write it down for me so that during the rehearsal you could play it” – she said. Well, I wrote it. At the rehearsal I gave a piece of the notes to the harmonist so that he ... And the melody is done. The song is already done.

I am sure that Jadwiga Stanecka was an extraordinarily talented person – a real charismatic leader. She not only brought prosperity and success to the dance group but also created a place where young people believed that Vilamovian culture was of value, and that it was worth cultivating. At the same time, Stanecka has to be identified as the inventor of Vilamovian music tradition (Hobsbawm, 2008). She created music that was identified and accepted as Vilamovian. According to Marcin Lubaś, a community could accept new traditions only when they refer to something already known and when people can benefit from them (2008). The new melodies sounded familiar, as they were borrowed from neighbouring groups. The songs’ words were direct translations from Vilamovian old songs, or they referred to the Vilamovian reality. In my opinion, Vilamovian people also profited from Stanecka’s efforts on various levels. I consider prestige to be one of them – the folk group “Wilamowice” under Stanecka’s leadership collaborated in 1956 with “Mazowsze” – the biggest national folk group in Poland. This collaboration became an opportunity to show Vilamovian dances and songs to a bigger audience, as “Mazowsze” included them in its repertoire. Wilamowice thus was seen as an important element of Polish culture and not as a Germanic minority whose traditions were banned. The Song and Dance Group “Wilamowice” recorded a lot for the Polish Radio in those times and travelled all over the country. All this seemed to enhance the status of the members of the amateur group. But the most important thing was that members of the group constituted a strongly consolidated community. I suppose that Stanecka also contributed to that.

She was like our mother. She, in the evening, used to sit with all of us, and we used to talk. Like with a mother.

Jadwiga Stanecka died in 1976. However, the folk group “Wilamowice” continued the activity with a new leader – Józef Gawlik. They performed not only in Poland, but also abroad, which turned out to be an occasion for small businesses and some escapes from communist Poland. However, at the beginning of the 1990s, the group met serious troubles. Due to financial and organisational difficulties that arose as a consequence of transformation of the government system in Poland, and due to the end of national subsidies, in 1993 the “Wilamowice” folk group officially ceased its activity.

But the "Wilamowice" Song and Dance Group was reactivated at the beginning of the 21st century by the "Association for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage of Wilamowice". The key roles in this association are played by two young leaders – Tymoteusz Król and Justyna Majerska-Sznajder. As teenagers, they learned the Vilamovian language from the oldest ladies in the town. Then they started to teach it to kids and teenagers in Wilamowice. They used to search the attics and basements of the Vilamovian houses, looking for elements of old traditional costumes and other material things connected with the locality.

In my opinion, these two young leaders made their identity project out of Vilamovian culture, as Anthony Giddens would say (1991). Their projects and activities are so wide-ranging that it is hard to point them all out. They promote local culture in the region, in the country, and abroad. They write their PhDs about Wilamowice and do scientific research on the Vilamovian language, customs, and costumes, and they publish a lot. Also, they actively work for the local community. For example, in 2014 they formed a local theatre group that gives performances in the Vilamovian language. Thus young actors learn the Vilamovian language by performing on stage stories that they like and in which they can get involved. Among others, they prepared the staging of "The Little Prince" and "Hobbit". The leaders also offer dramas that are based on local history or refer to local writers³.

Their activities seem to link with each other. Most of the young actors belong to the folk group "Wilamowice". Due to Justyna Majerska's and Tymoteusz Król's efforts, this group became an intergenerational one. Members are from 8 to 90 years old. I think that Justyna Majerska and Tymoteusz Król try to modernize the past in a very smart way. They suggest to the Vilamovian people that a certain way of looking at the local community, its history, and identity, can be very attractive. In Wilamowice, there are not many possibilities to hang out. Weekly rehearsals are not only places where people practise dances and songs, but also these are spheres of local social life. People talk to each other about locally important matters, celebrate birthdays and names days, and gossip. Moreover, they travel together, spending a lot of time in buses, and visiting together new cities and countries. They also reconstruct old traditions on stage (like wedding or feather plucking ones), and they just have fun. Participants form strong relations, which contribute to the attachment to the locality and to what is meant as heritage.

In this sense, the ideas of locality and heritage interlace, which is close to Rodney Harrison's concept (2010). Referring to Arjun Appadurai's term for locality, Harrison stated: "For Appadurai, locality is a relational rather than a spatial concept – 'the local' is not so much the place where you live but a space to which you feel connected and through which you feel connected to others. Appadurai's radical contention is that the local is not inherent, that societies must do cultural work to create it and make it real. We establish a sense of belonging to a community and to a place through cultural practices that create this sense

³One play was based on the tragedy written by the local poet Florian Biesik, who was called „Dante from Wilamowice”. The second, „Ymertihla”, was based on the memories of the oldest inhabitants in the town (for more detailed information see: Szlachta-Ignatowicz, Wicherkiwicz, 2019).

of locality. Humans use heritage to produce the local by rooting particular practices – which they use to help link them to a particular community and/or to a particular place – in the past” (Harrison, 2010, p. 243).

Thus, Vilamovians actively participate in practices rooted in the past – they practise traditional Vilamovian folklore – at the same time establishing a sense of belonging to the community and the place. They produce locality in Appadurai’s sense (2005) and heritage in Harrison’s meaning (2010). Vilamovian matters become something obvious, undisputed, become part of everyday life, and also are being practised during non-official situations, which I was able to observe during my research. For example, teenagers at their home parties dance Vilamovian dances that they have learned in the folk group rehearsals. They do that spontaneously, for themselves, not for the public.

I was also curious whether the repertoire presented by the Song and Dance Group “Wilamowice” has changed since Stanecka’s times. Nowadays members use the Stanecka arrangements, but they also introduce some new items. For example, the local poet, Józef Gara, and then Tymoteusz Król, translated many song texts into Vilamovian. Today the language is one of the most important elements of Vilamovian identity; it functions as a symbol of the Vilamovian community and the folk group as well. That is why members of the group treat singing in Vilamovian as a priority.

Finally, some new dances also appeared in the stage presentations. One of them is called *Ytaytakymta*. I asked Justyna Majerska-Sznajder where it came from and what kind of melody it was. Her honest answer surprised me. These two leaders of Wilamowice – she and Tymoteusz Król – invented these new dances. One day they were browsing the international dance website “Dancilla”, and they discovered melodies that, in their opinion, sounded Vilamovian.

We were studying in Kraków with Tymek and we were missing the group, the rehearsals... So we decided that there was no time to waste and that it was a perfect time to create something new. But we wanted it to be “ours”, you know. Tymek found somewhere the “Dancilla” – this is a side-web of Wikipedia... and there were recordings. I think the Austrians did them. And some of them were transcribed into notes and there was also an annotation that they used to appear somewhere in our surroundings... And in fact, some of them overlapped.

You mean – you and Tymek invented this choreography?

[laughing] Yes! Trial and error method!... and it just happened. Tymek made use of YouTube as well. I won’t go into it. It is better to think that it is authentic in some part [laughing]

So, they choreographed the new dance to the popular highlander folk melody. One may ask a question about the authenticity of this kind of cultural production. Surely, measured with “cool” factors, it would fail. It cannot be proven with scientific evidence. It is confirmed neither in archival documents nor in the remembered social practice. According to Tom Selwyn’s (1996) distinction, this kind of authenticity should be rather treated as “hot”. “Hot” authenticity refers to the way we experience the world, to our emotions and affects. The feelings, experiences, personal and local stories play the dominant role here (Selwyn 1996, pp. 18–28). As Scott Cohen and Eric Cohen stated, “hot” authentication “is an immanent, reiterative, informal performative process of creating, preserving

and reinforcing an object's, site's or event's authenticity. [...] The process of 'hot' authentication is emotionally loaded, based on belief, rather than proof" (Cohen, Cohen, 2012, p. 7). Members of the folk group accepted the new proposal. They dance the new choreography, sing the new song, and treat it as Vilamovian. It was invented by their leaders, who are Vilamovians, who work for the local community and act as local authorities. Thus they "attest" the authenticity of the new dance. People also have fun while learning new choreographies. They value it emotionally.

The last part of my fieldwork was an ethnographic experiment, which I called the social animation after Tomasz Rakowski (2021). I invited all comers from Wilamowice for a singing party organised with help from the local leaders. So in the evening, we prepared some treats and waited for the guests. I was surprised that so many people of all ages came! They sat together at the tables, and I asked them to sing and play "real" Vilamovian melodies. That was an absolute bull's eye. For more than five hours, the guests sang and played melodies that they consider Vilamovian. They also told me thousands of interesting things I didn't know about before. They explained to me where and for what purpose which song had been sung in the past. They argued about the words of the songs and they mentioned older and past musicians. During this one meeting, I gained more knowledge than during a week of individual conversations. I also learned that the "Vilamovianness" of songs and melodies is not determined by any "cool" authenticity, as Tom Selwyn would say (1996). Much more meaningful was the common and practical use in Vilamovian life. For example, as one of the most Vilamovian songs the guest indicated a pastoral song known throughout Poland – "Hey, hey shepherds from the field"⁴, whose text was changed; it is still always sung during midnight mass, extremely quickly and jumpy, which annoys the parish priest.

What is Vilamovian musical heritage?

In this paper, I showed only a few examples of Vilamovian music history and Vilamovian music locality in actual social practice. I have chosen those elements, which, in my opinion, can shed some light on the problem of naming and understanding the category of intangible heritage in general and music heritage in particular. I fully agree with Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, who wrote that heritage is a "mode of cultural production that has recourse to the past and produces something new" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2011, p. 126). That is why heritage cannot be stable and constant. In the process of creating it, people choose from the past these elements, which seem to be the most beneficial and necessary from the actual point of view. As Krzysztof Kowalski wrote, heritage should be understood as a definitive reading of the past, in which the past itself is not so significant (Kowalski 2013). Much more important are people, the heritage

⁴The original incipit sounds: *Hola, hola, pasterze z pola.*

depository, and their needs. Heritage settles the past, but it can also creatively transform the past or even create it. That is why the meanings and interpretations of heritage are temporal and changeable, and this can be observed in the Vilamovian musical heritage. Above all, heritage is a discourse about the past (Smith, 2006).

In the post-war times, when Jadwiga Stanecka was the leader, the heritage needed to be constructed anew, so that it could correspond with locality and not necessarily with “foreignness” and “Germanness”: these values had to be forgotten. That is why Stanecka gave up on the Vilamovian language; she used and freely linked various elements of musical traditions from the region and named them Vilamovian. I think that today Stanecka herself can be designated as heritage. She is the main character in the stories about the Song and Dance Group “Wilamowice”. People truly loved her, and even those who were born after Stanecka’s death, repeat the same stories in the same way. She has become a part of cultural memory (Assman 2006). People also are aware of the fact that they perform her choreographies and sing her songs. Paraphrasing the words of Rodney Harrison, I would say that remembering Stanecka and performing her art means “taking part in an unofficial heritage process of collective imagination and memorialization” (Harrison 2010, p. 258). She “has become a part of the social glue that holds the local [...] community together. The connection between heritage and performance” is here crucial (Harrison 2010, p. 258). It still builds the sense of continuity. And the sense of continuity is a dominant factor of heritage.

The heritage doubtlessly is also a part of memory policy (Klekot, 2014) – it has its leaders, and charismatic individuals who form it and promote chosen meanings. “Heritage is heritage *because* it is subjected to the management and preservation/conservation process, not because it simply ‘is’” (Smith, 2006, p. 3). It means that heritage can become heritage only through human actions and discursive practices. Leaders can act efficiently when they offer the local community some particular benefits – for example, the sense of being a community, collective identity, particular point of view, and moral values, that are undisputed and commonly accepted. Re-introducing the Vilamovian language to the folk group repertoire, teaching young people this language, and getting Vilamovians involved in the local activities; these are very clever moves of the local leader. They actively contribute to constructing a “heritage in action” (Harrison 2010), using music as a linking tool.

In conclusion, heritage can provide entertainment and pleasure. And music understood as heritage does that in Wilamowice. People benefit from singing and dancing together to the music that they consider local. This music, regardless of its actual origin, people treat and feel as their own, because it is commonly known and it accompanies significant moments of social life (weddings or holy masses, for example). This music connects people with each other and with a place. It contributes to building a locality that is rooted in heritage. As Laurajane Smith noted, heritage is “a cultural and social process, which engages with acts of remembering that work to create ways to understand and engage with the present” (Smith 2006, p. 2).

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