

# A New Journal / Una nuova rivista

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## The Italian and international contexts

Since the beginning of the new millennium, the presence and role of ethnomusicological research in academia and other public and private institutions has significantly increased in Italy. This discipline is now included in a number of undergraduate and graduate degree programs at universities throughout the country, and opportunities for discussion and scientific debate as part of events, seminars and conferences have become increasingly frequent, effectively contributing to fortifying a stable, widespread network of national and international relationships and collaborations. The numerous research projects that have been awarded national and international funding have played a significant role in this process, both as outcome and as additional impetus; these include: PRIN 2008 *Music, disguise, inversion in the oral and written musical traditions*, involving research units from three Italian universities (Bologna, Turin and Milan); PRIN 2010-2011 *Process of change in the music of oral tradition from 1900 until today*, involving research units from six Italian universities (Roma Sapienza, Roma Tor Vergata, Bologna, Palermo, Firenze and Torino); and the international exchange project Marie Curie *DRUM – Disguise Ritual Music*, which involved universities in Italy (Bologna, Naples Federico II), as well as in Morocco (Rabat, Meknes) and Spain (Valladolid).

As a result of this increased disciplinary consolidation, achieved especially in the last fifteen years or so, a new generation of scholars has established a solid presence in the academic landscape. These scholars have proven highly active in terms of scientific production and appear ever more frequently on the programs of meetings and conferences, including those at the international level. In this context, it is increasingly clear that a

periodic scientific publication with an international scope is needed in Italy. Many years have passed since the nearly historical cases of *Culture Musicali. Quaderni di etnomusicologia* (1982-1990), which in the 1980s contributed to the birth of the first generation of scholars who had studied under Italian ethnomusicology founders Diego Carpitella and Roberto Leydi, and *EM*, promoted since 1993 by the National Academy of Santa Cecilia first as a yearly publication (1993-2000) and later as a journal (2003-2006); these two cases are distinguished by the fact that they managed to simultaneously offer an opportunity for Italian scholars and a site for meeting and exchanging ideas at the international level.

After over a century of existence and in a context marked by profound changes throughout the world, ethnomusicology is called on to reconsider its *raison d'être*, its transcultural gaze, its methods and techniques. The roots and specific features of Italian research may represent a perspective from which to face new challenges and embark on new paths. In fact, Italy has an extensive tradition of field work at the intersection between historical inquiry and ethnographic investigation, and methodological reflection stemming from a non-colonial gaze and approach. Today, furthermore, Italy appears to be at the forefront of a critical and self-critical reflection on the challenges and prospects of transcultural research on contemporary musical practices (as evidenced by the conference proceedings on “L’etnomusicologia italiana a sessanta anni dalla nascita (1948-2008)” held at the National Academy of Santa Cecilia, and international seminars held in recent years at the Cini Foundation in Venice, dedicated to new prospects for transcultural musicology and to the musics and musicologies of the XXI century).

The project *Etnografie Sonore / Sound Ethnographies* would thus fill a particularly evident gap in the contemporary Italian context, projecting itself into an international framework that extends beyond Europe, with a focus on Asia, the Middle East and Africa. At the same time, it would serve to reinforce the multifaceted variety of gazes that currently lies at the foundation of this discipline, a discipline that has the transcultural factor at the very essence of its experience.

## Roots and perspectives

Italian ethnomusicology has always displayed certain specific traits that render it characteristic and attract international interest and collaboration. The most significant aspects to be mentioned include: *a*) the balance between focusing on our own country as a terrain of research and looking “beyond home”, a balance which averted the kind of disciplinary divergence or rupture that has often occurred in other countries in which “folklorists/folklore-supporters” interested in their own national traditions contrast with “ethnologists” committed to exploring distant and “other” lands; *b*) the tendency to combine a musicological approach and anthropological knowledge, field work and

analytical work, often carried out in concert with the actors who practice the traditions under investigation, with a particular sensitivity for social aspects and relationship between the observer and the observed; *c*) ongoing interdisciplinary dialogues, with historical musicology in particular, characterized by fruitful and reciprocal influences, but also through engagement with linguistic and literary approaches to song lyrics or anthropological and social research or approaches that draw on semiotic structuralist-oriented methods of analysis; *d*) a recognition of the important role the historical perspective plays in the study of the phenomena under analysis and a willingness to integrate historical sources with field work data; *e*) a strong European vocation, clearly visible from the establishment of the discipline in connection with the seminal experiences of Béla Bartók in Hungary and Constantin Brăiloiu in Romania, and still evident in ongoing contacts with European scholars and institutions; this vocation also reflects a will to highlight the common elements of an experience rooted in the distant past (as demonstrated by the conference held in Palermo in 2014 dedicated to historical figures of European musical ethnography); *f*) a specific attention to (geographical, political, social and linguistic) borders and the way they are trespassed, to social and cultural marginalization, to roles and social groups at the borders and in transition between different environments and ways of understanding and producing music; *g*) a focus on phenomena related to emigration and the musical cultures of the diaspora (Southern Italians migrating North, Italians traveling to other countries or people of different origins coming to Italy); *h*) the tendency to extend the scope of inquiry to include topics such as songwriting and urban folk music as well as new languages and musical genres, foci that often intersect phylogenetic and socio-anthropological issues not all that different from those characterizing the production and dissemination of music from oral traditions (think for instance to the complex issue of the *canzone napoletana* and, more generally, all the phenomena that revolve around the dynamics of the global music market).

## Project issues

The main issues of the project can thus be summarized as follows: *a*) the centrality of field work and ethnographic research, understood as a focus on documenting the event, performance and environment, the use of audio and video tools, and the practice of involving in the research the music makers and the people met in the field; *b*) the publication of research reports, characterized by a balance between detailed investigations of specific contexts and more general theoretical and methodological reflections; *c*) experimenting with forms of scientific communication that bring together ethnographic documentation, primarily sound and visual documentation, and critical analysis, taking advantage of the new possibilities offered by multimedia tools in the digital environment

and internet platforms; *d*) an interest in material and figurative culture, organology, choreology, the music-body relationships, kinesics and gesture-based communication; *e*) attention to both group dynamics and individuals as the makers and promoters of creative processes as well as to the relationships between individuals and their contexts.

## The editorial board and structure of the journal

The journal will be published online so that the texts can be appropriately accompanied by multimedia material (images, sound, video recordings). Thanks to the collaboration of NeoClassica publishing house a printed version will be available, with references to the online version for the multimedia materials.

The journal will release two issues per year, that will contain articles evaluated through a double-blind peer review (with a third review in case of contrasting positions) along with arguments, reviews, presentation of institution's history and activity, or ongoing researches etc. Articles and their associated abstracts published in the journal will be in Italian and English. The journal's administrative structure will consist of: a Direction (Founding Editors), an International Scientific Committee, an International Advisory Board and an Editorial Staff.