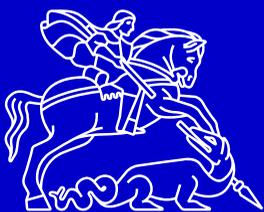


Music of the Twenty-First Century Diasporas: Research and Methods

Edited by Serena Facci and Giovanni Giuriati



ISTITUTO INTERCULTURALE
DI STUDI MUSICALI
COMPARATI

fondazione ONLUS
GIORGIO CINI

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Cover image: Women of the Eritrean Catholic community of Rome in procession perform Marian songs for the celebrations of the Kidane Mehret (Pact of Mercy), February 19th 2017, Rome. Photo by Vanna Viola Crupi.

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Afterword

Giovanni Giuriati

While preparing for this seminar and subsequently editing this volume in collaboration with Serena Facci, I considered myself somewhat of an outsider to the research into musical diasporas. I saw myself more in the role of a supporter of the cause, someone who was not so deeply involved since, although I have conducted studies into the music of Cambodian refugees (see below), I am not currently dealing directly with this topic. On the other hand, Serena has for many years directed a solid team which is based in Rome (Facci 2019) and which has carried out research into the music of the diasporas, achieving important results by developing a methodological reflection that is clearly evident in her Introduction to this volume.¹

However, I never had any doubts about taking part in this publication project as I believe that it is most important for our discipline to reflect on the issue of musical diasporas. I also think that this topic was highly appropriate for one of the International Seminars of Ethnomusicology organised by the Intercultural Institute for Comparative Music Studies of the Giorgio Cini Foundation, due to its relevance in the contemporary world, and to the interdisciplinary perspectives it implies. A relevance that must also address fast change in contexts and music, which forces us to come to terms with constantly evolving situations of an unstable nature. It is an intrinsically transversal research theme reflecting the global, transcultural, hybrid, connected and mediatised contemporary musical world. A sort of heap of issues at the heart of the current debate of our discipline emphasising topics which we have been reflecting on in recent years.

In addition to dealing with musical outputs, this topic also implies an analysis of the relationship between music and sounds on the one hand, and deep social conflicts, economic inequality, national and international political processes involving contact with minorities, lack of freedom and human rights as well as environmental disasters on the other.

Thus, a wide crossroads of musical and contextual issues, as Adelaida Reyes writes so well in her contribution to this volume: “Ethnomusicology’s growth and progress as a discipline requires acknowledging—and acting on—the transformative power of migration and the substantive changes that it has already wrought and promises to effect in the character of the discipline’s subject of study, the questions it asks, and the issues it addresses [...] The current and growing interest in migration underscores more notably, what the discipline has shifted *toward*: the study of complex, culturally diverse societies the boundaries of which are not givens but constructs».²

1 Serena Facci is also curating a series of books for the NeoClassica publishing house; the title of the series is *Musichemigranti* of which two volumes have been published so far, while others are already in an advanced stage of drafting.

2 See Reyes, in this volume.

The transformative power of migrations is thus giving rise to a mutation in research interests in the field of ethnomusicology towards the study of complex, transnational societies, whose limits and connections are cultural constructs to be studied and interpreted one by one.

The issue of musical diasporas is widely present in the current international ethnomusical debate, which is well evidenced by the comprehensive introduction by Serena Facci and supported by a number of bibliographical references. However, the bibliography is constantly increasing, and significant writings have been added even during the short period in which this volume was being edited. Immediately after our seminar, Martin Stokes published a long essay in which he presents a wide-ranging overview of the theme of Music and Migrations (Stokes 2020). Moreover, various monographs have appeared including Alessandra Ciucci's on Moroccan male communities in Italy (Ciucci 2022) and one should also mention the publication of a new journal, *Music and Minorities*, which dedicated the first issue (2021) to the topic of *Music and Forced Migrations*.³ This theme has become particularly popular in Italian ethnomusicology, and various research projects are being carried out that involve a number of young scholars. I do not think this is a coincidence, or just an ephemeral trend. On the contrary, I believe that there are profound reasons which have made the new generations of Italian researchers, guided by some exponents of the "old guard", take an interest in this theme. One of these reasons may coincide with the social and historical processes that led our country to become a hosting nation, especially from the 1980s onwards, after having been a country of emigration for so long.

For us Italians who were used to internal migrations, especially from the southern to the northern regions, the arrival of refugee communities, particularly after the fall of the Berlin Wall and other planetary upheavals, was indeed a novelty, not only from a sound and musical point of view, but also socially and culturally. Communities of Filipinos, Bengalis, Peruvians, Chinese, Eritreans, Congolese, Nigerians, Moroccans, Senegalese, Romanians, Ukrainians and Indians are now widely settled in Italian urban and rural contexts, thereby joining other earlier arrivals such as, for example, the Armenians and the Albanians.

This has inspired even greater interest in students and scholars, since they now have "on their doorstep" the opportunity to document live musical traditions which they could previously only access through research recordings. It is also a great opportunity for them to directly face the problematic social contexts which must be dealt with. Just to give an example, one might consider the significant issue of creating inclusive schools in which musical activities might play a crucial role.

The sudden arrival in Italy of a large amount of diasporic community music also coincides with a period, the beginning of the twenty-first century, in which the object of study of Italian ethnomusicology was undergoing a profound change. While the post-war period concentrated on the study of the music deriving from our own local oral tradition, the last decades have seen numerous and quite profound changes take place, and one might be led to think that the repertoires and contexts studied by the researchers of previous generations are fast vanishing. The generation of our Masters, such as Carpitella and Leydi, "discovered" peasant and pastoral music and brought it to the attention of the Italian cultural debate of the 1950s and 1960s. Such folk music was subsequently studied and documented in living contexts by our younger generation in the 1970s and 1980s. This music, which was functional and central to a community life, is gradually disappearing and being replaced by heritagisation, spectacularisation and revivalism. Carpitella and Leydi themselves already pointed out the gradual disappearance and intense changes in the performing practices and repertoires of the music that was born into the tradition and oral mentality of the 1960s, under the pressure of the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation, internal migration and the wide diffusion of the mass media. Our generation has studied these phenomena while they were still alive and functional—also documenting their inevitable transformation (and perhaps even contributing to this process).

3 <https://doi.org/10.52411/mm.2021>.

An ethnomusicology student or a young researcher wishing to resume this research path in Italy today would find a profoundly different context in which the heritagisation process, the diffusion of reproduced music and the profound transformation of rural contexts have almost eliminated those musical practices which were functional to a community life, including ceremonies, rituals and work, all so typical of that oral mentality our professors taught us about so well. However, it is not only a question of the object of study. In addition to focusing on the music of the oral tradition in Italy, Italian ethnomusicologists have, since the post war period, developed a research methodology which is strongly characterised by social and political commitment, solidarity and sympathy towards the peasant world, particularly that of Southern Italy. This commitment has walked hand in hand with documentation and research and has also partly determined our object of study and the ways of approaching it. I believe that the disappearance of the traditionally investigated contexts and repertoires, combined with the intention to maintain a certain attentive look at social issues, has created the conditions for a natural shift of interest. In these first decades of the twenty-first century, researchers have started to focus on the music played by the people who were arriving in our country, often in very precarious and disadvantaged conditions. For the migrant communities, music—whether liturgical or performed at festivals and celebrations—continues to play a role which is similar to the one it used to have for the peasant societies studied by our Masters, i.e., live and living music functional to their religious and community life. This trend did not develop with the intention to revive an essentialist attitude that was excluded from Italian studies, an essentialism that the diasporic music is undermining at its roots, as Reyes also reminds us. On the contrary, this approach has spread in order to continue with research projects that can deal with more than just the stages, mediatisation and recognition of an intangible cultural heritage. Rather, with fieldwork that can tell us how music continues to play a role in the life of small and close-knit communities. In this way, it has replaced the interest in the music of peasant Italy, as there are no longer so many contexts to investigate using this research setting.

I can see the contradiction between research into music which is by its very nature global and a method still referring to the ethnographies of small groups. However, I believe that the interest in an investigation at the heart of this contradiction characterises a particular Italian approach and constitutes one of the reasons for the wide interest shown by young researchers in the music of immigrant communities, thus continuing a line of studies and methods applied by previous generations.

One of the goals that we had set ourselves for the Seminar and this volume was precisely that of sharing with an international audience what we have been doing in our country in recent years, promoting a reflection that has its own peculiarities (I quote, for example, the research on the confluence of different Catholic and Christian musical liturgies in Rome, or an European dimension deriving from the relation between Western and Eastern Europe during the second part of the twentieth century) and, at the same time, participates in the international debate of which the authors of the essays published in this book are fully aware. Furthermore, the purpose of this volume is also to try to ‘take stock’ of a situation which is constantly evolving. It is an attempt to obtain a picture, as far as possible taken with a wide-angle lens, of the specific ways in which the musical diasporas in our country have been developing in recent years, fully aware that the picture will have profoundly changed in only a few years. We also wanted to highlight different ways in which these phenomena can be studied: from multi-site research to research based on historiography, from ethnographic participation to musical analysis.

After having participated in the seminar and on reading the contributions published in this volume, many of which derive from it, I must say that the premises have been fully confirmed and also further articulated and examined in depth, with the addition of ideas indicating numerous possible paths of investigation. In particular, the volume provides us with a significant and varied mosaic of research.

This mosaic, which constitutes the central body of the work, is then supplemented with important methodological contributions both as a premise and as a reaction to ethnographic presentations. I believe that all this collective reflection emerging from the volume can objectively provide a significant addition to the international debate on contemporary mu-

sical diasporas. The transversal themes that can be identified are many. In her Introduction, Serena Facci presents a broad spectrum. I would like to mention some of the most significant ones, both in terms of content and method, in order to add some of my own considerations.

A first methodological issue concerns the extreme diversity of the nature of migration. Beyond the definitions (forced migration, voluntary migration, economic migration, environmental migration, seasonal migration, asylum seekers, irregular migration, etc.), this volume contributes to the survey and investigation of several specific cases, each with its own quite particular needs and circumstances in making music.

In addressing this great diversity, one also realises that each community requires a specific approach, including the development of a particular ethnographic method, e.g., the investigation of the musical practices of the cosmopolitan Armenian community which settled in Italy decades ago and has become an integral part of the Italian and European musical culture is quite different from a study that approaches the Indian communities of the Sikh religion who have recently arrived and are facing significant settlement issues.

It is also difficult to identify the approach required to deal with predominantly female communities, such as the Ukrainians and Georgians who have come to Italy mainly to take care of people, as compared to almost exclusively male seasonal workers, e.g. West African communities.

The gaze must be even more different when one enters into relationships with refugee communities whose return to their homeland is currently precluded or very difficult, such as for example Somalis or Syrians, compared to communities of migrants who frequently and repeatedly visit their country of origin, like the Chinese.

The cases are highly complex, a fact that makes a classification of these intertwined experiences even more problematic, also because they are shaped by the particular configuration of the society and culture that hosts them.

In this regard, it should be noted that ethnographic research reveals that a strong dialectic is established within each community, and we are therefore well aware that the labels 'Chinese', 'Indians', 'Armenians' etc. should be evaluated in a much more subtle way than usual. In this way, we can see that among the Indian immigrants in Italy the Sikh communities prevail with their religious influence, while the Egyptian Coptic community and Lebanese Melkite Christians constitute a minority that often suffers hardship for their religious beliefs. Furthermore, as regards the Chinese, it is rarely emphasised that most of them come from a single region of this immense country, that is mainly from the area concentrated around the city of Wencheng, in Zhejiang.

As the research projects presented here have shown, what seems most interesting to me is that we have gained an insight into a specific place (Italy) and a specific time span (the first decades of the twenty-first century) which allows us to make considerations regarding the place of origin of the different communities, but also and above all, on how their presence in the host country is shaped—also through sounds.

The question of identity is controversial and now largely outdated in the debate among scholars.

Francesco Remotti has given much thought to this issue and discusses it with great insight and careful consideration. He uses the term *convivenza* (living together) to refer to the processes of encounter, underlining from his point of view all the reasons that push us to investigate the moments and dynamics of exchange, involvement, even conflict, by using a term that stresses the network of relationships that is established when different social and cultural groups share the same places. Indeed, if we observe the contributions to this volume using his inclusive and dialectical perspective, we can see how the concept of multiple and fluid musical identities is widely present and constitutes one of the points of strength of a shared research method, even if it is carried out in different contexts.

Another peculiar aspect of the reflection in this book revolves around the centrality of the religious sphere, which is addressed in almost all the ethnographic contributions. It emerges that music and sounds are always present in religious practices and that they contribute in a fundamental way to the marking of the life of the diasporic communities in Italy, to defining their cultural belonging, and creating a network of relationships.

The religious sphere has always been a central theme in ethnomusicological research. Filtered through the lenses of the research into the diasporas, it takes on new meanings. Music seems to be essential for defining a way of expressing the religiousness that is brought along on the journey, which really is a crucial part of one's cultural background. The same (relative) absence as in the case of the Chinese reveals something about how the communities are structured in their diasporic context and in the relationship with the motherland through a particular relationship with music belonging to the religious sphere.

This is linked to another central aspect of the reflection on musical diasporas, which can once again be seen as a cluster of major issues. This is underlined by Serena Facci in her introduction, also with reference to Martin Stokes' essay. I am referring to the new creativity dictated by the living conditions in which the musicians of the diasporas find themselves, including the musical encounters made possible or even favoured by such diasporas. In the various chapters of this book there is often an evaluation of the musical results of the observed practices which is different from what could have been observed in the motherland due to the particular conditions in which the musicians are operating.

These conditions include the frequent changes in the composition of the ensembles due to continuous arrivals and departures, in addition to the fact that there is often a lack of musicians who play crucial roles in the group, a gap that is much more difficult to fill than it would have been in the motherland. These conditions determine the resulting sound and music and are closely intertwined with the social issue. In this connection, see the chapters dealing with the ways of rooting African music in Croatia, or the frequent changes in the musical groups of the Eritrean community in Rome.

However, a close reading of this volume also reveals a highly diversified picture which is quite different from what was once claimed, i.e. that the music of the emigrant communities was more conservative than that of the motherland. Far from being seen only as a shortcoming or a flaw, it allows us to observe the process of transformation of musical repertoires and understand which essential elements are required in musical practices—if any—, to detect new creativity such as strategies implemented to replace any lack of musicians or skills, but also resulting from meetings and exchanges that would hardly have occurred in the mother country.

As regards the method, there is increasing evidence of the vital role played by the network of relationships that have developed over the Internet and through social networks, connecting diasporic communities with each other and with the motherland in ways unheard of a few years ago. Creativity develops through virtual relationships. These processes can be observed, e.g. in the case of the *kirtan* performed by Sikhs, or the way in which the Orthodox communities in Palermo adapt their practices; however, this phenomenon is present in all the ethnographic contributions.

This pervasiveness of social networks and the virtual dimension of relationships also poses the question of multi-site research as an important methodological tool in the research on migration carried out by some of the researchers (China, Armenia, Ukraine). Among other things, the multi-site perspective allows us to understand these new processes of creation and adaptation by also referring to similar processes that are already present in the motherland, often put into practice some time ago and further developed by the diasporic communities.

Moreover, the multi-site perspective grows and is transformed as it is also extended from the places of departure and arrival to virtual places where the network of relationships is enriched sometimes in unexpected ways. This includes the mobility of the researcher who, in various contexts, also adds the so-called virtual fieldwork to on-site research.

During the conference I gradually recalled that I too had already dealt with this topic in the 1980s and 1990s and that I was not entirely unfamiliar with it, even though in the meantime I had set it aside. I became directly involved while I was working on my PhD research topic in the 1980s and early 1990s, when a study of Cambodian music was bound to involve research into the music of refugee communities because of the dramatic political situation in the country (Giuriati 1988).

Therefore, in thinking about this again, I also realised the extent to which these contexts have profoundly changed in these forty years, forcing us to rethink a new theoretical framework including renewed methodological tools.

In those days, diasporas were nearly always a definitive, drastic step which were both forced but also economic migrations. When I went to Cambodia in the 1980s, means of communication were almost non-existent: it was hard to make phone calls and communication between the diasporic communities and the motherland was quite difficult. I remember that many Cambodian friends entrusted me with letters to be sent by mail to their refugee relatives living abroad once I got home to Italy.

The situation in Cambodia, fresh from the Khmer Rouge regime and in the midst of a civil war, was somewhat extreme, but it reflected general conditions. Today, on the contrary, people come and go with great ease and if this is not physically possible, virtual communication can easily take place thanks to the Internet, social networks, the digital platforms that we all discovered during the pandemic (which has also created new and unprecedented obstacles that hinder people from moving from place to place), easy communications and the continuous circulation of images so that one can be present or co-present and interact daily even at a great distance.

The ways music is circulated are also different. Previously, the presence and transfer of musical traditions could take place almost in their original form thus preserving the repertoires and performing practices. Today it is a rarity to find this form of transmission in which the tendency to preserve and protect prevails.

When I was a student, it was rightly assumed that immigrant communities were even more conservative, also thanks to their relative cultural isolation from the motherland, thus continuing to maintain practices that had been lost in the meantime in their country of origin. Studies such as those by Carla Bianco and Anna Chairetakis Lomax, and more recently Giuliana Fugazzotto have observed such differences also in the communities of Italians who emigrated to the United States.⁴

Today I think it is hard to find similar studies, both because the essentialist perspective occupies less and less space in our research, but also because the diasporic communities can no longer be considered isolated from the communities that have remained in the motherland where profound transformations are already taking place. At the time (in the 1980s) I personally wrote about a model which distinguished one type of music played by immigrant/refugee communities with the intention to continue the customs and traditions of their country of origin, where music was necessary and functional to the development of a series of rites and ceremonies, from another type of music that was more linked to global models and popular music or to processes of heritagisation. Traditional music thus became a sort of 'identity emblem' characterising a specific community to promote internal closeness and for self-definition in relation to other communities or the people of the host country (Giuriati 1996; 2005). This dichotomy, which even then was partly forced and useful above all for analytical purposes, must now be completely redefined in the light of the profound changes that have taken place both in musical models and in the models of migration and mobility of people, as the research presented in this volume clearly illustrates.

Much remains to be investigated regarding this fascinating and ever-changing topic, subject to the dynamics as well as the cultural and global processes of today's world, but also to the complex, contradictory, changing relationships between nations, societies, cultures and the increasingly worrying environmental conditions of the planet. Nevertheless, I believe that this book can provide a useful contribution to the debate by presenting a particular point of view adopted by Italian research which is in continuous interdisciplinary dialogue with the international context.

⁴ I refer particularly to the LP, *Italian Folk Songs*, edited by Alan Lomax and Carla Bianco, Folkways Records FE 4010 (1965); *In Mezz'una Strada Trovai una Pianta di Rosa*, Recorded and Edited by Anna L. Chairetakis, Ethnic Folkways Library, FES 34041 (1979) and *Calabria Bella Dove T'Hai Lasciate?* Ethnic Folkways Library, FES 34042 (1979) and the volume with CD-audio *Sta terra nun fa pi mia* by Giuliana Fugazzotto (2010).

While this book was being prepared, Adelaida Reyes passed away, a loss that is deeply felt by all of us. She was a good friend and always participated in our Venetian initiatives with passion and grace. We wish to remember her clarity of thought, her competence and contagious enthusiasm for our common ethnomusicological discipline and particularly for the issues concerning music, minorities and migration.

Adelaida was a point of reference for many of us and her insight into the methods and literature of our discipline that she was always willing to share was always of great support for our research. Her contribution to this volume also confirms her broad vision, her profound competence and her great ability and generosity in indicating research paths. This volume is gratefully dedicated to her memory.

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