Zuzana Jurková,
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Music – Memory – Minorities:

Between Archive and Activism

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Contents

Introduction: Music – Memory – Minorities: Between Archive and Activism

Zuzana Jurková and Veronika Seidlová

The titular subject of this compilation lies at the intersection of our long-term interests: on the one hand communities of minorities[1] and their music, and on the other hand, the relationship between collective remembrance and music.[2] The connection of these interests seems logical to us, and not just for the simple reason that we have dedicated ourselves to them for a rather long time and therefore have "touched on" field material and thought through several theoretical concepts related to them. A reason that is stronger yet is that collective memory and remembering represent, in our concept, one of the axes of group identity and at the same time – given our comprehension of the process of remembering – makes it possible for us to follow interactions between the majority society and minorities very well. The combination of both these research subjects, therefore, promises us the opportunity to focus, through the medium of music, on the dynamics "inside" minority societies and in relation to the majority society.

One consequence of our long-term interest in these research areas is also the fact that we have many colleagues and friends here whose competences make it possible to look at this subject from different perspectives. Some of them accepted our invitation to publish in this compilation, while others (especially Dan Lundberg, Edwin Seroussi, and Kay Kaufmann Shelemay) had already published their findings and we have been able to profit from them. However, because not all of those contributing come from academic institutions in the strict sense, there are texts of different natures here, or let's say, of different genres. We are, of

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1   E.g., Jurková 1998; 2001; 2003; 2004; 2005; 2006; 2007; 2008; 2009; 2013a, c; 2018a; 2019; Seidlová 2006a; 2006b; 2008a; 2008b; 2012; 2018.
2   E.g., Jurková 2012; 2013b; 2014; 2015; 2017; 2018b; Seidlová 2018.

course, convinced that thanks to collaboration with other colleagues as reviewers, among other matters, we have managed to create a collective, comprehensive monograph on a subject that is all but unresearched to date.

There is one more reason for our choice of two minorities who, in the previous literature, have been called "autochthonous" – i.e., Jewish people and Romani people – in addition to the long-term research attention we have paid to them. That reason is the opportunity to ask about their representation in Central European majority cultural institutions, specifically, in archives of music here. That opportunity could not be considered for newly established minorities, and we would deprive ourselves of the opportunity to follow the situation from a diachronic perspective. The inclusion of the groups chosen by us side by side provide one more exciting opportunity: To follow, through the indicator of music, their ethno-emancipatory process (or less ambitiously, to follow music's role in the ethno-emancipatory process). Naturally, we are not considering these phenomena in categories of social evolution, but our process-oriented, situated perspective has revealed deeper, fascinating relationships and tendencies to us. From this perspective we were, therefore, unable to avoid referencing the special case of the State of Israel, where the members of a centuries-marginalized group became the majority.

Memory in our title refers to *collective* memory – and before we launch into a more detailed discussion of what we mean by this concept, it is appropriate to warn that this is a very different phenomenon from individual memory. Both phenomena are connected not just by the noun "memory" but also by some characteristics,[3] and it essentially applies that while individual memory is determined by the dynamics of emotion and psychology, collective memory reveals dynamics that are social. (This preliminary remark aims to draw attention to the fact that some of the favorite authors whose texts on collective memory we cite here use psychological terminology, so the reader should not be confused by this.)

A basic characteristics of collective memory is that, in and of itself, it is not observable: it is addressed through remembrance. Collective memory, therefore, can be comprehended as a certain ability of a society (see Erll 2011: 8). The character of collective memory is illuminated on

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3   In the first place, what I mean is the reconstructivity of (collective and individual) memory in the present: "Memory is like a page in Wikipedia. Matters other than what we actually experienced speak in our recollections." See the interview with cognitive psychologist Elisabeth Loftus, LN 15. 9. 2018: 13.

the one hand by historians Jan and Aleida Assmann, and on the other hand by another historian of literature, Astrid Erll, as well as by the anthropologist Nancy Wood.

According to Jan Assman, "each culture creates something that can be called a *connective structure*. This structure establishes connections and obligations… in two dimensions: social and temporal." While the first dimension creates a shared space of experience that "contributes to the development of trust and orientation", the temporal dimension (close to our concept of collective memory) "connects yesterday with today, or creates … formative memories and keeps them present, enclosing images and history from another time in the ongoing horizon of the present." Both dimensions then "establish a solidarity or identity that makes it possible for individuals to speak of *we*" (Assmann 2001: 20). In other words, making formative memories and images of the past part of the present is, according to Assmann, one of the pillars of collective identity. Assman then categorizes the temporal dimension of connective structures[4] in four groups: mimetic memory, related to behavior; the memory of things, into which one invests one's ideas of the expediency of beauty, thereby capturing it; communicative memory, the seat of which is communication and language; and cultural memory, which creates "the ambit into which all three of the preceding areas more or less fluidly pass" (Assmann 2001: 24).

Jan Assmann's conceptualization of collective memory is continued by Aleida Assmann through her conceptualization of the dynamics between collective forgetting, which is the absolutely predominant tendency of collective memory, and remembering, which represents an exception.[5] In the scheme introduced (Assmann 2010: 99), forgetting and remembering exist in two forms, active and passive. While active forgetting is caused by intentionality associated with the idea of censorships and is implemented by acts such as destruction, passive forgetting is a consequence of lack of intention, associated with ignorance, neglect, etc. This is comprehended to meant that while the intentional destruction of objects means they can no longer become, at a later point, a memory support, relics that have been overlooked in the contemporary remembering of the past are able to attract attention and become a component of a new remembering when seen from that new angle. The active or passive forms of remembering are also called the working and the reference memory by Aleida

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4   Elsewhere Assmann calls this the "external dimension of human memory" – 2010: 23.

5   Aleida Assmann is one of the authors who uses psychological terminology to discuss social science subjects.

Assmann.[6] The first of these is a collective identity support, as discussed above. It is based on a relatively narrow selection of texts, locales, people and artefacts that have undergone a rigorous process of selection and are subjected to constant re-affirmation and reiteration. Assmann calls this selection process "canonization", or sanctification. The elements of the canon are burdened with exceptional meaning and value.

The passive form of remembering is, according to Aleida Assmann, halfway between forgetting and working memory; its institutions are archives, museums, etc. Archives, which according to Assmann are the main representative of collective memory reference matter, are categorized into two groups, as historical institutes and political institutions (2010: 103). In association with discussions of both types of remembering, Assmann uses a formulation that, in several words, expresses the main theoretical starting point of our publication: that the tension between reference memory and working memory "is an important key to understanding the dynamics of cultural memory" (Assmann 2010: 98).

Anthropological literature on music, of course, sees the border between active and passive remembering as "blurred", because archives, museums and other institutions of passive memory are, after all, cultural expressions in and of themselves. Wherever there is an unquestionable attempt to conserve elements of the past, their role as active agents is indisputable, at least in two directions: in the process of selection (archiving) and in the subsequent influencing of the community.

This is exactly captured by the ethnomusicologist Dan Lundberg: "Archiving always involves choices whereby some objects or cultural expressions are chosen to represent certain traditions, cultures or nations," continuing with references to the history of his own institution: "[t]he collection and documentation of folk music and music-making has most often not been governed by democratic principles of everyone's equal rights, but by utopian visions of individuals and organizations, and sometimes by state and national interests and needs" (Lundberg 2019: 217).

In his excellent article about the role of musical archives in society, Lundberg gives several examples from the history of Sweden that illustrate his basic thesis about "music archives as co-creators of the music cultures that they themselves document" (2019: 219). The main concept

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6   Aleida Assmann is among the authors who apparently blithely passes from collective to individual memory. This understandably creates a certain terminological confusion. One of these confusions is the more or less synonymous use of the concepts "active versus passive remembering" and "working versus reference memory".

is that of "cultural heritageing," the actively performed process in which cultural elements "become cultural heritage" (2019: 224).

The conceptual scheme of the types of collective memory – or rather, of remembering – that the Assmanns present is usefully augmented by an actor's perspective close to that of Dan Lundberg, this time from the pens of Astrid Erll and Nancy Wood. Erll emphasizes that "[m]emories are not objective images of past perceptions, even less of a past reality. They are ... highly selective reconstructions, dependent on the situation ... *Re*-membering is an act of assembling available data that takes place in the present ... Individual and **collective remembering are** never a mirror image of the past, but rather **an expressive indication of the needs of the** person or **group doing the remembering in the present"** (Erll 2011: 8, our emphasis). The formulation by Nancy Wood is even sharper: "public memory ... testifies to a will or desire on the part of some social group or disposition of power to select and organize representations of the past so that these will be embraced by individuals as their own. If particular representations of the past have permeated the public domain, it is because they embody an **intentionality"** (Wood: 1999: 2, in Kansteiner 2002, our emphasis). If we comprehend collective memory to be an "ability", i.e., something like a society's software, then the fact that actions of remembering reveal these needs or intentionality in the remembering society points to the very nature of memory itself.[7]

It is difficult to more thoroughly theorize the role of **music** in the collective process of remembering, above all because of its polysemantic character; in other words, because in different contexts, music fulfills different functions.[8] Music's role specifically in collective identification is recalled by Thomas Turino, whose thesis fits snugly with the Assmans' concept of collective remembering as one of the axes of group identity:

> "Music, dance, festivals, and other public expressive cultural practices are a primary way that people articulate the collective identities that are fundamental to forming and sustaining social groups ... The performing arts are frequently fulcrums of identity, allowing people to intimately feel themselves

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7 Exactly because we are emphasizing the active, intentional nature of collective remembering we are not referencing several otherwise important texts here that are different in terms of perspective, especially the article by Michael Stewart entitled "Remembering without Commemoration: The Mnemonics and Politics of Holocaust Memories among European Roma", 2004.

8 In his brief discussion of the discipline of ethnomusicology, Timothy Rice presents six metaphors that link music to other domains of human thought, in other words, ways that ethnomusicologists conceptualize the function of music: as a psychological and social resource; as a cultural form; as a social behavior; as text; as a system of signs; and as art (Rice 2014: 44–64).

part of the community through the realization of shared cultural knowledge and style and through the very act of participating together in performance. Music and dance are key to identity formation because they are often public presentations of the deepest feelings and qualities that make a group unique" (Turino 2008: 2).

It is, however, necessary to present one idea here that recurs about collective remembering and music's role in it. When Kay Kaufman Shelemay analyzes how remembering functions through the genre of *pizmonim* in the community of Syrian Jews, she specifies: "memories relating to pizmonim are embedded in two different domains: memories *about* the pizmon repertory, and memories *of* the songs" (Shelemay 1998: 25). Similarly, the material about "musical remembering" in Prague collected over the last decade can be roughly differentiated according to whether music is a medium of remembering that is more or less independent of the matter being recalled, or whether it is itself the subject of that remembrance (Jurková 2017).

As to whether music functions in the specific environment of the collective remembering done by Central European Jewish and Romani **minorities in relation to the majority**, so far we know practically nothing about this. It is understandably necessary to constantly recall the basic idea of minority studies, i.e., that "a minority does not exist without a majority" (Reyes 2013). At the same time, however, it is not possible to avoid considering the relationship of one minority to other minorities, or the question of the heterogeneity/homogeneity of each minority. This subject opens up, in an environment of ethnomusicological investigation, room for research into the sharing or transformation of musical styles, appropriation, etc.

The structure of the book

The authentic world of Romanian lăutari

Our book opens with an essay by Speranţa Rădulescu, one of the most experienced fieldworkers among musicians of Romani origin in Romania. Rădulescu presents readers with the authentic world of the *lăutari* in Romania as a world of both an apparently "shallow" interest in the past[9]

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9   Michael Stewart expresses a similar observation in association with the Gypsies of Hungary.

(at least in comparison with the form of diachronic linearity to which we are accustomed) and a powerfully present conception "of a timeless netherworld". Here, music is an essential medium for interconnecting/unifying both worlds. The image Rădulescu presents corresponds well to Aleida Assman's characteristic according to which "[i]n oral cultures in which the cultural memory is embodied and transmitted through performances and practices ... the range of the cultural memory is co-extensive with the embodied repertories that are performed in festive rites and repeated practices. Embodied repertories and performances ... are multiplied and continued in a constant state of againness." For that reason, in such societies, "...cultural memory that is stored in embodied practices and live performances is kept within human limits and cannot expand indefinitely" (Assmann 2010: 105).

In this quirky world, of course, the reality of the minority status of the *lăutari* leaves a mark when the *lăutari* recall – absolutely beyond their own customary way – the names of their forebears who have been "confirmed from very high up, outside of their world", i.e., from the majority world.

Archives as actors

One of the central – and challenging – points of this subject is doubtless the question of archives, or more exactly, archiving and its subsequent act of co-creating the culture that archives document. How does the choice take place as to what is meant to be represented, and what are the visions determining this archiving? Furthermore, how do the chosen phenomena contribute to the re-formation or re-production of the culture of a minority, or rather, how do they enter the process of "heritageing"? Reading three articles in our compilation – by Kratochvíl, Fennesz-Juhasz and Dlab – confirms some of the already-formulated knowledge and contributes new knowledge.

Those who are not very familiar with the Czech National Revival and its (hidden) persistence in Czech culture throughout the entire 20th century will find it difficult to comprehend the fact that Matěj Kratochvíl's contribution attests to, namely, that during a comprehensive ethnographic investigation of the Kladno region in the 1950s, the Romani minority

They – unlike the Hungarian farmers who surround them and who see the basis of a successful life as the handing down of one's bequest to one of one's children – base their identity, according to Stewart, on a horizontal "brotherhood" (Stewart 2005: 59–60).

remained "invisible" to the researchers – when in reality members of that minority were both quite audible and visible. The same phenomenon, of course, is also written about by Lundberg from Sweden: "Minorities that in many cases had lived in the country for centuries, such as Jews, Roma and Finns were not included in the collecting project" (2019: 225).

Christiane Fennesz-Juhasz, the curator of the Romani recordings in Vienna's *Phonogrammarchiv* (the oldest institution of its type in the world), above all confirms Lundberg's observation that "the driving force [behind archiving] is perhaps just as often the joy of individual amateur collectors, something that is easily forgotten in the discussion" (Lundberg 2019: 217). That is exactly the case of roughly 80% of the musical recordings of Romani people in the *Phonogrammarchiv*, the most extensive known collection of music by Romani people. Another important subject of the article by Fennesz-Juhasz is the discovery of the policy for including collections of music from private donors in this influential, renowned institution, where they then are able to become the easily audible voice of reference memory, anticipating being invited into the environment of working memory (or – in Lundberg's terms – where they become components in the cultural heritageing process). How such invitations are extended is a third essential subject of the article.

The contribution by Matyáš Dlab clarifying the course and intention of a long-term exhibition project of the Museum of Romani Culture in Brno, Czech Republic, *Lavutara – cestami romských muzikantů a jejich písní* (*Lavutara* – Travels of Romani Musicians and Their Songs), shows the Brno-based museum to be an active agent both in creating a representative image of the music of Romani people,[10] and an actor forming the community's (musical) reality through the live events associated with the exhibition.

These three contributions, of course, draw attention to very distinct contexts of the institutions being discussed: while the collections of folk music on the territory of the Czech lands lay for a long time in the shadow of a romantic view of national folklore that later became mixed with accents of a politics precluding the inclusion of minority voices, the Austrian *Phonogrammarchiv* historically strove (and is striving ever more urgently) for a certain collection of universality, and the Brno-based Museum of Romani Culture is rooted in the ethno-emancipatory movement of the Roma.[11]

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10   It is characteristic that this Brno-based museum is presenting Brno-based musicians of Romani origin even though the title of the exhibition evokes the idea of a certain universality.

11   The Museum of Romani Culture "was born from an initiative of Romani intellectuals… in 1991…" https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muzeum_romsk%C3%A9_kultury (May 11, 2020).

The case studies described reveal the dynamic, gradually-activating role of archives, museums, etc., not as passive depositories, but as actors – individual (amateur) collectors, museum curators, archivists and their superiors mutually negotiate a matrix of different circumscriptions and determine, by means of the above-mentioned intentionality at work, how things will be remembered – and what will be remembered. Because remembering is one of the axes of identity, these actors apparently play an essential role in forming in it. Whose intentionality, whose needs are asking for the floor here?

Two sources of information appear to be useful for finding answers to those questions – at least for the groups we have chosen: the web pages of RomArchive,[12] and the article by the Israeli ethnomusicologist Edwin Seroussi (1995), "Documenting Music in Israel". RomArchive presents itself as a "project of transnational movements of Roma" and declares its aims to be "to foster the process of deconstruction and reconstruction of Romani history, arts, and cultures. New narratives of both the past and present need to be created and preserved for future generations." To create these new narratives, primarily Romani people are invited, in accordance with the slogan of Decolonizing Knowledge. The curator of the collections of music is Dr. Petra Gelbart, an ethnomusicology graduate of Harvard University who also collaborates with Vadim Kolpakov, who comes from a family of musicians of Romani origin from Russia and is established in the USA.[13] It is exactly Kolpakov's recordings that are abundantly represented in the musical section of RomArchive, similar to how the Brno-based musicians of Romani origin are the main exhibits in the Brno-based museum's exhibition project. Back to Nancy Wood – those who dispose of power – for example, cultural and social capital – choose and organize how the past is represented.

What could, from a micro-perspective, appear to be a certain kind of nepotism, is assigned, through Seroussi's article, a place in the broad social process of constituting a new collectivity. Seroussi describes the history of the documentation of music in Israel in the 20th century: the history of recordings taken with the leading idea of Zionism (both ahead of the birth of the State of Israel and after it was born), recordings guided by ideologies against the Israeli establishment, and commercial, radio and other recordings. As Seroussi warns right from the beginning, the process of documenting Israeli music "is bound ... to a complex set of

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12   https://www.romarchive.eu/en (May 5, 2020).
13   http://vadimkolpakov.com/via-romen/ (May 5, 2020).

social and cultural variables" (Seroussi 1995: 153), in other words, to a complex set of intentionalities. What is essential, of course, is summarized by Seroussi in his conclusion as the resulting advantages of this originally unintentional complexity of intentionalities. He sees these advantages in two areas: in the arena of the culture of music, "music documentation has been a chief source for the cross-fertilization between different sectors of musical activity and creativity" and in the area of social life, "(m)usic documentation has also become an area of negotiation between different sectors of the society" (Seroussi 1995: 165). Individual interests, i.e., the partial intentionalities of the inherent new (cultural/ethnic/national) narrative being born and its acceptance of other societies, are considered[14] to be the basis of a non-totalitarian – decolonizing, multicultural – society with its own varieties of cultural displays and variations of remembering (viz Erll 2011: 26).

The final three chapters illustrate the role of individual, non-institutional actors in negotiating the forms of collective remembering. The contribution by Ruth Davis corresponds to the above-mentioned article by Seroussi, explaining the circumstances of the inception of the ethnically variegated Lachmann archive (discussed by Seroussi) on the territory of so-called Mandatory Palestine during the second half of the 1930s, the birth of which was initiated by Hebrew University, but above all following in detail the method by which part of the archive is used by the Palestinian filmmaker Jumana Manna eight decades later and how, therefore, the archive materials become a medium for a new perspective on the past.

In both of the studies from Prague (Seidlová, Jurková), what is strongly present is the subject of the negotiation of minority remembering through the relationship between the majority and the minority. In the first contribution, the organ – originally a majority-society instrument (and its "social life", in which the concept resonates with Assmann's "memory of things") – is a source "of a cultural difference between Jewish communities themselves", or rather, an instrument for revealing the internal heterogeneity of Jewish communities, at least in relation to the past. At the same time, the role of the individuals is revealed – of both gentile and Jewish organists – as collaborating in the process of conserving a historic musical instrument and its repertoire, which explains the birth of an archive of community music on which these same musicians subsequently draw for musical performances of remembering.

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14   From the recent literature, see, e.g., Levitsky – Ziblatt 2018. Here the authors call mutual (including cultural) tolerance and institutional restraint the two basic elements of defending democracy (Levitsky – Ziblatt 2018, Chapter 5).

The chapter about remembering the Holocaust of the Roma (Jurková) presents, in a diachronic perspective, the gradual constitution of distinctive forms of that remembrance which, of course, are influenced by different actors in the majority society, including audiences rejecting confrontational narratives, and, e.g., by the commemorative praxis of the Jewish minority.

The introductory miniature snapshot of that chapter from Náměstí Míru in Prague, where Romani people are remembering their ancestors who died during the Holocaust on a summer evening, can be comprehended as the proverbial dewdrop reflecting the entire world, which in our case is the world of collective remembering. The event well illustrates the historical and societal complexity involved. Moreover, just as in the cases of the organist of the Jewish community, Václav Peter, or the musicians of Romani origin in Romania performing at the burial of a family member, or Manna, the Palestinian filmmaker, this event confirms (not just Assmann's) the perspective of collective remembering as one of the axes of collective identity. It is possible here to recall the pregnant formulation of the sociologist Stuart Hall emphasizing the crucial role of remembering in constructing collectivity: "actually identities are about using the resources of history … in the process of becoming …: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from' so much as who we might become" (1996: 4).

We are ascertaining something else here as well about the form of music in collective remembering. Our actors in each chapter use different genres of music in diverse ways, but we notice that this is not usually in the "flat" sense of symbolism – although in the case of the *Requiem for Auschwitz,* the prestigious venue and musical style could imply this. Everywhere, rather, we are encountering the kind of music for which we can adapt the words of Nancy Wood, that it is "embraced by individuals as their own", and in such a personal way as to be intimate: it is not just that the Romani vocalists on Náměstí Míru are performing songs they know from their own families; or that the organist, Václav Peter, is reviving the organ in an environment of Jewish ritual that is inextricably connected to his own personal history; or that the musicians of Romani origin in Romania, remembering their dead, "perform … the party music of the place, the favorite music of the deceased – which actually belongs to all those present" (Rădulescu). Even the ethnographers in the Kladno area record (just) the music that is a component of their own world – and therefore are deaf to the local music performed by Romani people.

Music, which according to Turino (2008: 4, paraphrasing Bateson) allows individuals to experience integrative wholeness, is the ideal medium

for the comprehensive process of collective remembering, which itself "connects yesterday with today", creating room for trust (Assman). What is being replicated here, therefore, is an "experience of deep connections with others…, which is crucial for social … survival" (Turino 2008: 4).

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