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SOME ASPECTS OF RELATIONS BETWEEN ETHNOMUSICOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

Summary

Folk music (both traditional and contemporary) is the subject matter of ethnomusicology. It consists of a set of musical facts which ethnomusicology observes and records, classifies, theoretically interprets, and explains in terms of certain conclusions. Since the facts of folk music stand in a very definite relationship with certain social facts — often actually dependent on, or conditioned by, these social facts — ethnomusicology should be joined by sociology in attempting to solve vital issues of relationship between folk music and society. At some point in the future, this whole problem area should form the subject of study by sociology of music. Conversely, some folk music phenomena can stimulate sociological investigations, with ethnomusicological research raising certain sociological issues. Though ethnomusicology (and folkloristics) views the phenomena under observation within the context of social situation (regardless of whether this is done thoroughly or superficially), only sociology of music is capable of their in-depth study and analysis, classification and typological arrangement, starting from a systematic and comparative study of social determinants and musical elements. In this way, the function of folk music in the life and customs of a given social community can be explained by taking into account, on an equal footing, both sets of factors. Such a systematic and methodologically well founded study of folk music as part of the subject matter of sociology of music would enable us to postulate our research objectives with confidence. The main aim is to distinguish what is socially conditioned in folk music from what is aesthetically autonomous.

This topic has acquired new importance, and new prospects have opened for its study, in contemporary social conditions in this country. Folk music has undergone numerous changes in recent years - both in terms of the way it is made and in terms of the way it is performed. As for the way folk music is made, it can be studied under three headings: first, comparison of musical forms (folk music facts); second, comparison of social factors in different situations (social facts); third, comparison of the first two sets of facts (new facts). In this connection, it is worth noting the paradoxical nature of certain social facts: modern technological developments have placed at our disposal new analytical tools for a very precise study of change, but at the same time they have been responsible for the disappearance of many of the traditional forms. As for the way folk music is performed, changes are numerous and easily observed. Different occasions and media on which folk music is performed (festivals, shows, radio, television) may be regarded as merely different levels of performance, but in fact they also create different social contexts, and thus also different social conditions, for performing.

The transformation of folk music forms and the appearance of new forms is very closely related to changes in the social environment in which folk music lives. A mere study of change affecting an individual folk music form (tune or text) and a comparison of older and more recent recordings cannot in itself reveal the essential laws governing such change. Ethnomusicological work can bring changes to our attention and describe them, it can help to define their nature and degree, possibly their direction, but it cannot say how they are conditioned. The ethnomusicological contribution is indispensable and fundamentally important, but — for their deeper understanding and synthetic explanation — sociological insights are needed. That is why we stress the importance of a joint thrust by ethnomusicology and sociology and the need for such problems to be treated within the province of sociology of music.

(Translated by Vladimir Ivir)