

Folk Musical Instruments in Carnival Celebrations

Summary

Starting from the assumption that the folklore musical instruments in carnivals a ritual prop that has the quality of a symbol because of its traits (acoustic, structural, ornamental and the quality of the material it is made of) or a sign used in ritual context, with the objective of stressing the symbolics of the ritual itself, this article attempts to determine the parallel or concordant symbolic values of the ritual and ritual sounds. The basic theoretical assumptions of this article are a vision of the carnival ritual (in modern forms) as a ritual of passage, "rites de passage", a symbolic act of sacrifice whose goals are twofold, according to Leach: a/ establishing the relationship between physical experience and the other world of imagination; and b/ implementing a transition from ordinary to extraordinary time. The final result is a ritual purification from impurity. In accordance with these assumptions, active participants of the carnival are observed as initiates in a ritual that purifies them ritually through sacrificing the carnival effigy (through a reciprocal connection where the victims stands for the initiate) and introduces them to a new ritual status. One of the most frequent stage forms of the carnival (i.e. performance versions of the model) is a funereal rite that includes the stated symbolism of the mechanism of sacrifice and change in status. Analogous to it is the form of court trial and execution of the death sentence. The musical instruments that are in the function to the ritual register this moment of ritual sacrifice and killing the carnival with their sound, or unorganized (rhythmical, melodic and harmonic) cacophony, noise. The noise is created mostly by idiophones (rattles, clappers, cymbals, cattle bells, banged pots and a water drum) and an occasional aerophone (whip). The change in status, that is the harmonic state, is designated by musical instruments that perform structured musical form (with rhythmic, melodic and harmonic elements and patterns). These are usually aerophones (harmonica, accordion, sopile flute, mišnjice bagpipes, diplice double flute) or chordophones (violins, tambouras such as the prim, brač, bugarija and berda, and then the dulcimer). The basic meaning and function of these musical instruments can be reduced to symbolizing of the opposition of disorder-order, analogous to the opposition noise-music, and the opposition ritual murder-change of status. On that level of general symbols Rene Girard's hypotheses are accepted about the role of the ritual sacrifice as a political channeler and replacement for general violence, as well as theoretical assumptions or Jaques Attali's system the foundational analogies of which are oppositions in social reality, i.e. where opposition music-noise is merely a reflection of the social opposition order-disorder in the

medium of sound. Although these oppositions are not always so distinct in contemporary performances of the carnival, since they are more often synchronous due to the new entertainment function of the carnival, it is quite likely that they were distinct at an earlier stage when tradition was better preserved. In contemporary performances of the carnival a several instruments serve to create a symbolic framework such as the animal horn (aerophone) and church bell (idiophone), which designate the temporal border or transition from ordinary time into the extraordinary, or better said a transition from the sacred to the profane, and vice versa. The paper presents two lists of individual types of musical instrument. The first list divides the types of musical instruments according to the criterion of whether they create noise or music, while the second list includes ethnographic descriptions with facts about the ritual and magical context of musical instrument use. On the basis of these scarce facts it is possible to conclude that under the performance modes of the carnival, several layers of contaminated, sometimes mutually superimposed, varied or partially similar antique rituals for gods Dionysus, Mithras, Cybele and Attis, as we glean from numerous archeological findings of shrines and musical instruments on the territory of Yugoslavia, i.e. antique Illyricum. Pointing to elements of Dionysus, Mithras and Cybele's cult, which have been preserved in fragments and present in contemporary versions of carnival performance, a forgotten image emerges of the original microsymbolics of individual musical instruments, that now awaits thorough research in the ethnological studies of the survivors of their ritual context.

(Translated by Ellen Elias-Bursac)