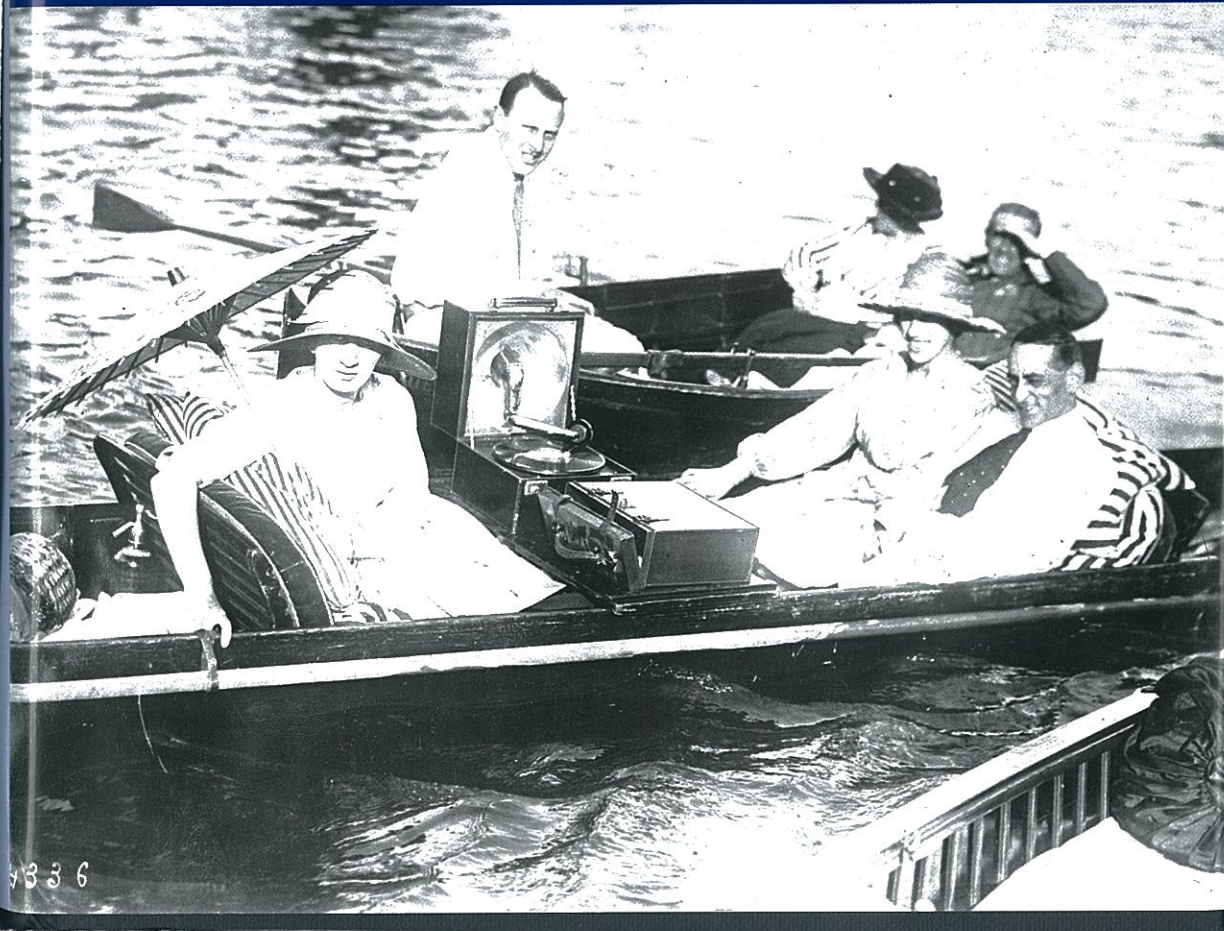


MUSICAL CULTURES OF
THE TWENTIETH CENTURY


ASHGATE

MUSICAL LISTENING IN THE AGE OF TECHNOLOGICAL REPRODUCTION

Edited by
Gianmario Borio



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Chapter 20

Recording Out-takes: What can be Discovered in the 'Historical' Recordings of Traditional Music

Maurizio Agamennone

I have titled this chapter 'Recording Out-takes' because I will examine only those short segments of magnetic tape that concern aspects usually considered marginal in sound documentation. In so doing, I have largely ignored the musical works themselves in order to concentrate on what precedes the musical performance and might actually accompany it, before and afterwards. I will consider what is usually abandoned, destroyed, or simply eliminated, when it passes from the recording in the field to the studio, analysis, publication, and to the critical edition of the sound documentation.

The historical-cultural context of these recordings embraces several remote locations of central Italy in the years 1954–60, and is the work of two celebrated documentarians, Alan Lomax and Diego Carpitella. These are 'historical' recordings not only because they were realized 60 years ago with technology and procedures quite distant from those currently used today, but above all because they document musical practices which have largely died out and are no longer relevant within contemporary society and culture, representing ceremonial customs and rituals typical of pre-industrial society, predominantly rural and agricultural.

The Institutional Landscape

In terms of methodology, Lomax and Carpitella practised a kind of 'urgent anthropology' at a propitious time, before dramatic social processes (massive emigration, depopulation of the countryside, rapid industrialization) modified many of the expressive customs of Italian rural populations. Alan Lomax had already been in Europe for a few years, and arrived in Italy after travelling the Iberian Peninsula to make some records for the Columbia label and for his BBC radio programmes. Diego Carpitella had worked for some years with the Centro nazionale di Studi per la musica popolare (CNSMP) (National Centre for Folk Music Studies) at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, which operated in close collaboration with RAI Radiotelevisione Italiana (Italian state television). In 1989 the CNSMP assumed the name Archivi di Etnomusicologia

(AEM) (Archives of Ethnomusicology), at the express desire of Carpitella, who became its first curator only a few months before his death. In spring 1954 Carpitella had just returned from some important and innovative experiences in sound documentation, realized together with two great personalities, later key figures in Italian and European ethnology and anthropology: Ernesto de Martino, in 1952, and Alberto Mario Cirese, in spring 1954.

Between summer 1954 and the first months of 1955, during the course of an adventurous and intense journey,¹ Lomax and Carpitella produced the so-called 'Raccolta 24' ('Collection 24') of the CNSMP-AEM, whose impressive documentation depicts traditional music performed in the Italian countryside that was until then largely unknown.² Two years later, in 1957, they released two LPs on the Columbia label,³ which were released in an Italian edition almost twenty 20 years later,⁴ and the bulk of this collection was preserved in the archive, albeit silent for a long time because of the ongoing great difficulty of access. Carpitella galvanized vigilant and constant interest with his extensive presence on the radio (see Carpitella 1992) and by mentoring numerous degree theses when teaching in the faculty of Rome University. The activities of the CNSMP experienced a long standstill during the 1970s and 1980s. Recently, a large selection of the materials included in 'Collection 24' has been released in the USA as a series of recordings, *Italian Treasury*.⁵ Recently, a legal controversy pitted the heirs of Lomax against the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia concerning ownership rights of 'Collection 24'.

The Ethnographic Landscape

Today, finally, an Italian edition is being prepared with philological criteria, extended historical-cultural investigation and musicological analysis, within the framework of an ambitious long-term publishing programme.⁶ During the preparation of the

¹ The vicissitudes of Alan Lomax's Italian 'journey' are effectively retraced and chronicled by Goffredo Plastino (2008).

² On the events that led to putting together and preserving this impressive documentation, and on the differences between what is kept at the AEM in Rome and at the Association for Cultural Equity which holds the impressive archive put together by Lomax in New York, see Brunetto (2013).

³ *Northern and Central Italy and the Albanians of Calabria and Southern Italy and the Islands*, edited by Alan Lomax and Diego Carpitella, The Columbia World Library of Folk and Primitive Music, vols XV and XVI, New York, 1957.

⁴ *Folklore Musicale Italiano*, vols 1–2, curated by Alan Lomax and Diego Carpitella, two LPs, Pull, QLP 107–8, Rome 1973.

⁵ *Italian Treasury*, curated by Goffredo Plastino, 11 CDs, Rounded Records, 1999–2005.

⁶ The Italian edition of 'Collection 24' of the AEM is the result of an agreement between the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia and the publisher Squilibri: it calls for specific volumes with one or more CDs enclosed, relevant to the various regions and areas

first volume (Agamennone 2014) I was able to draw upon the audio documentation preserved at the AEM and to identify the recording out-takes which I intend to discuss here: these concern the recordings made in Puglia, on the promontory of Gargano and in Salento, between the summer of 1954 and the summer of 1960.

Lomax and Carpitella spent a lot of time together – travelling the dusty roads of the Italian peninsula in an old Volkswagen van packed with their equipment (tapes, tripods, microphones and tape recorders) in which they also sometimes slept – often conversing with the informants and taking notes on the events: this contributed greatly to consolidating the friendship between the two great documentarians and to complementing favourably their individual attitudes. Years later, the account of this experience brings certain aspects into better focus, with regard to some unique, but efficient, expressive aspects:

Lomax spoke 'Itagnolo', if you can put it like that, because he came from Spain and tried to speak Italian, but it was an *Italianized* Spanish. Anyway, sometimes I was the interpreter, which created not just a little difficulty for me; it was problematic to render the sense of some gestural expressions verbally: for example, the well known gesture 'OK' often gave rise to misunderstood and malicious interpretations Sometimes, Alan demanded the immediate translation of very unusual vernacular expressions that could not be easily interpreted, out loud, often having to do with subtle nuances or a particular situation. In any case, though, Lomax made himself well understood, the music helped him enormously in this because every so often he would take the guitar and start to play, singing cowboy songs. At heart, it had to do with situations that inspired curiosity and congeniality. People always wanted him to stay. (Diego Carpitella, in Agamennone 1989: 26)

In fact, both of them had wide experience in the field, acquired under very difficult conditions. Before arriving in Italy, Lomax was in Spain during the harshest period of Franco's dictatorship, and he had certainly had the opportunity to test effective dialogue techniques, in order to break through the barrier of suspicion when a foreigner and stranger comes to your home to pose unusual questions. Lomax and Carpitella's 'journey' had a broadly panoramic character and called for very short visits, with recording sessions often limited only to a few hours.

The skills they had acquired allowed them to 'optimize' the interaction, even when contact was ephemeral and occasional:

At heart, we were a bit like pedlars, we immediately noticed the climate and went straight off to identify the sources; in the end we had a precise sense of which persons could be the ones who knew what we were looking for. The levels of these musical pieces were so/to such an extent defined that as soon

explored by Lomax and Carpitella; numerous releases have been announced, the first of which (*Collection 24/B*) will be dedicated to Salento.

as they 'tuned in' to that which could have been defined sociologically as the peasant/pastoral or artisan/rustic-country category, immediately the timbre, the way of performing and of singing, the gestures, the movements of the body unequivocally revealed themselves. (Diego Carpitella, in Agamennone 1989: 26)

The expertise of the two documentarians helped to forge a particularly satisfying relationship with the informants encountered in the field, whether instrumentalists or vocalists. The interaction of the time can be understood as a relationship between 'specialists' – which, in fact, the two scholars were, as were many of their informants, recognized and identified as representative performers of the local repertory.

The Guitarist of the Gargano

Thus, the dialogue between fieldworkers and local interpreters seems to be a friendly interaction, albeit of very short duration: the informants know their milieu fully and handle the encounter with the external observer well, thus creating a strongly dialogical 'interplay', on equal terms. It is not clear whether, finding himself together with Carpitella at Monte Sant'Angelo, on the Gargano, on 25 August 1954, Lomax played the guitar in front of his informants to inspire greater 'complicity'. Surely, the result he achieves is extraordinary. On the tape preserved at the AEM one can hear the instructions Lomax addressed to 'Diego' – who acts as his recording assistant⁷ – as well as some misunderstandings between them, the announcements of the performance, several signs of interruption of the recording, but above all the 'pivotal' invitation the Texan researcher addresses to his Puglian informant, in perfect 'Itagnolo': 'Show me how it's strummed.' The 'guitarist of the Gargano' answers by proposing, in rapid sequence, a wonderful inventory of the many accompaniments he is able to perform: it is a sort of self-presentation of the performer – a 'specialist', evidently – who shows to the scholar an 'anthology' of what he can do, outside any context or social relationship: in the local tradition, the same guitarist would have hardly had the opportunity to propose the same 'anthological sequence' to the usual recipients (singers and dancers); on the contrary, each singing and dancing act requires its specific accompaniment, related to different customs.⁸

⁷ 'Chitarra battente, Diego, let's go right to ... Oh Diego, ten seconds. Stop, stop' are some of the instructions that Lomax imparts, starting and interrupting the recording several times; Lomax's 'Itagnolo' looms large over the spoken parts, though with great communicative efficiency.

⁸ The original sound document is currently indexed as 'Rhythms of accompaniment of the chitarra battente' (AEM, Collection 24/B, piece 105, Monte San'Angelo [Foggia], 25 August 1954; see Brunetto 1995: 144).

Traces and Memories of the 'Journey to Italy'

Another trait of the method employed by Lomax emerges here: his curiosity and his keen interest in performers, whom he considered as persons with specific skills and knowledge, managed and expressed through individual practices. This was not only about being attentive to the 'traditions' – to the complex social scenarios in which the different musical practices are revealed – but, moreover, to the personal behaviour of the 'informants', with their essential peculiarities and differences. It is then evident that, under the given conditions, a privileged relationship with outstanding interpreters makes the recording process easier, faster and more reliable: particularly in the relationship with the instrumentalists, considered as local 'specialists' in leading the dancing, in accompanying the singing, in several ritual processes. It is also true that in the field, our documentarians encountered singing practices every bit as exuberant, widely representative of local customs that are still very vibrant. Lomax articulated this on various occasions:

- a. in a recollection of Carpitella offered in 1991 – 'The people wanted to sing, and when they finished, [Diego] made them feel happy and proud of having done so' (Alan Lomax, in Plastino 2008: 42);
- b. celebrating his old family roots – 'Diego and I felt truly at home in Lombardy. The last name of my forebears is Lomazzi, and the family fled from this zone to escape religious persecution during the time of the Albigese. Everything seemed natural: the place, the music, the people. It was as if a profound bond connected me to this environment, and the women who sang were like my distant cousins' (Lomax 2008: 172);
- c. recalling and comparing events that occurred in the field in Italy with previous research experiences carried out elsewhere – 'One was skinny, with crazy brown eyes and tousled hair, distracted, had not had anything to eat the whole day long – another with a dark African face, large mouth, many black-stained teeth. And they sang for me the most moving song that I had heard in all of Italy, a song that reminded me of the endless pain of the blacks of Mississippi and Texas who had sung for me many years before' (Lomax 2008: 155).

On the other hand, in those days, large group polyphonic singing fully unfolded during work or other required activity, often with local differentiations of genre:

In southern Italy, where young women don't have permission to go out with the boys, dance with them, sit with them in the parlor, and not even to talk with them on the street, the girls, all of them, sing during work. All of the songs are about love, and their shrill, high, voices can be heard from afar, across the olive groves, and they say to the boys who pass by: we are here, we are thinking of you. (Lomax 2008: 136)

Similarly: 'In Puglia, in the sheds where they work on tobacco, the young women sing sitting on the ground, with their shirts unbuttoned, quickly and carefully threading the fragrant green and gold leaves of tobacco with a long steel needle' (Lomax 2008: 144).

Analogous research focused on the men's activity:

The government offers some of these unemployed men a bit of work on the roads. And so, in Puglia, I followed my friends to a road in the countryside: with a hammer they broke some stone boulders, and to pass the time, they sang a song that was bitter, dry like the warm summer wind. (Lomax 2008: 151)

These last observations refer to the polyphonic practices of large groups with broadly inclusive participation.⁹ Lomax describes how they are done while they are happening. Moreover, it was precisely during his 'journey' to Spain (1952) and Italy (1954–55) that the American scholar began to develop his ideas on the strong connections between vocal styles and the customs relevant to gender relationships and to sexual morality, which later merged in his *opus maximum* (Lomax 1968). Lomax often indulges in impressionistic descriptions with very strong narrative passages, allowing his own emotional reactions to emerge, underlining a few reasons for affectionate and 'mythic' affinity – Lombardian women are his distant 'cousins', the Salento stone cutters and labourers are his 'friends'. In this sense, his account of the 'journey to Italy' seems much more sensitive than his companion's comments on this adventure. Carpitella's prose is much more reserved, less inclined to simple cultural assimilations, without personal references, and more careful in defining the first analytical and taxonomical hypotheses as to musical expression, which at the time were lacking a critical literature. It might be useful to compare some texts from the same period influenced by the shared 'journey to Italy' (Lomax 1955–56; 1956; Carpitella 1956a; 1956b; 1961). Some historical-cultural hypotheses proposed by Lomax are today unacceptable, even if offered with warm enthusiasm at the time; vice versa, Carpitella's observations – prudent, dry and focused on the analysis of the stylistic music features – still seem persuasive. Perhaps, being closer to the observed customs, Carpitella was much more cautious and discreet, whereas Lomax was outside the same practices, thus indulging in a larger interpretative euphoria, combined with a freer expression of his feelings; in addition, the differences were undeniable between the two formidable documentarians, who were, for this reason, close friends. Moreover, I do not intend in the slightest to praise a 'cold' approach over a 'warm' one, in both ethnographic survey and in critical interpretation.

⁹ Everybody present, in a defined space and context, can take part in the performance and place themselves, also migrating, within the different vocal parts of the polyphonic structure.

In the Field in Salento

On 16 August 1954 Lomax is with Diego Carpitella in Salento, in Martano, a village consisting of a linguistic 'island' where Greek-Salentino, a Hellenic dialect, was and is still spoken today; he is standing before a group of young people assembled to sing into the microphone of his Magnecord PT-6. Some of the singers intone, in alternation, a monody that, at the time, was probably still performed during the course of the archaic threshing done with a horse pulling a type of sled.¹⁰ On the tape, which is the witness to this event, at the beginning of the piece, Lomax gives a few directions to Carpitella, expressing himself, again, in 'Itagnolo': 'Ready Diego [yelling]!!! OK! Ten seconds.'

Besides this, he intervenes to support the performance, at a hesitation of the singer, and to ask for a repetition of the strophe: 'Again, Again! Start with this strophe again!'

At the end of the long piece on tape (almost eight minutes), Lomax intervenes to check some procedures of the performance (I've indicated in italics the singers' reactions to the scholar's requests):

Uh, there's something, something interesting to understand because we don't sing like ... this way. I see that today ... nervous here?

[Perhaps Lomax means 'tense', and he probably touches the chest of the vocalist, as the next reference to the lungs shows, offered by the others present.]

Nervous?

No no ... nervous? Me? No ...

And how ... sing wi ...

With the lungs, he sings with the lungs. Don't tremble you say Sing with the lungs ...

Where you sing ... Sing a little!

[Other voices ... the informant resumes singing: *Veni veni me disse e ma na massara*]

I don't hear it from here. [Apparently, Lomax touches the singer's body and notes the muscle tensions that support the vocals; one can assume he continues to touch the chest and the neck of the informant to test for possible tension.]

Wh ... where?

I have a headache.

... No, Diego.¹¹

¹⁰ The melodic profile and the vocal action reveal analogies with the wagoners' singing: one hears commands directed to the animals at the end of a phrase. Moreover, they sing some verses typical of the *trainiéri*, as the drivers of trucks used for transporting people and goods were called locally.

¹¹ The original sound document is currently indexed as 'Canto per la trebbia' (AEM, Collection 24/B, Work 20, Martano [Lecce], 25 August 1954; see Brunetto 1995: 140). This dialogue was not published in the recent American edition of the Lomax collection:

This curious 'recording out-take' suggests a behaviour that is particularly 'invasive'. Lomax questions the singers; he doesn't limit himself to posing questions, but touches them, literally puts 'his hands on them'. He had identified a vocal utterance supported by a rather intense tension, as in most Italian vocal practices, inducing him to verify the conditions with a certain insistence. The tape is interrupted by the singer's voice acknowledging he has a headache: this could confirm this slight discomfort as a consequence of the vocal exertion protracted for several minutes, or – suspecting a certain impatience in the Texan documentarian – as a reaction to his insistent questions. On the other hand, Lomax had already accumulated considerable knowledge of the local singing styles and different vocal techniques, both in Europe and the US; drawing on his broad experience, he could put a sharp comparative perception into play. Probably, thanks to these quick and urgent assessments, he began to develop the taxonomic templates that were improved in the following decade (Lomax 1968).

On the same day, 16 August 1954, still in Martano in Salento, two weepers perform different versions of the *moroloja*¹² and are immersed in a complicated conversation with Carpitella concerning the performance and the symbolic meaning of the Greek-Salentine funeral lamentation. The dialogue is very warm-hearted, at times playful: one perceives a mutual curiosity between the 'informants' and the scholar¹³ in the alternation between the Romance dialect (during the dialogue) and the Greek-Salentine dialect (for the performance of the lamentation's fragments). The encounter often elicits laughter and takes on a jovial mood. Carpitella requests information about the handkerchief waved by the extended arm, wielded along a horizontal axis from left to right and vice versa, and determined by a binary metre. The weepers answer that such a movement helps to 'give the beat' and to 'give air' – to stabilize the body movement and the metric-rhythmic flow, as well as to support the singing. The dialogue is held mainly by the weepers, who respond to the questions, translating easily from the Greek-Salentine dialect into the Romance dialect and Italian. Moreover, Carpitella's account of a previous experience recording a funeral lamentation amuses the Salentine weepers – as one can hear in the audio documentation; the scholar himself seems to quite enjoy recounting it. Carpitella refers to a previous experience in Molise – not in Abruzzo, as one hears on the tape¹⁴ – together with Alberto Mario Cirese, with the Albanese

Italian Treasury: Puglia: Salento, ed. Goffredo Plastino, Rounded Records 82161-1805-2, 2002.

¹² This is what funeral lamentations are called in the local Hellenic dialects of a small inland area of southern Puglia known as Salentine Greece; on the Greek Salentine *moroloja*, see Corti (1995) and Montinaro (1994; 2009).

¹³ The informants address Carpitella with the title *signuria*, which locally indicates respect and a subordinate position to the interlocutor.

¹⁴ Carpitella's 'geographical blunder' can be explained: in 1954 Molise was part of a single administrative region, composed of Abruzzi and Molise (Constitution of the Italian Republic, Art. 131). With constitutional law no. 3 of 27 December 1963, Molise was separated from Abruzzo, attaining recognition of its cultural identity, whereas

(*arbëreshe*) communities settled in the region. It was in Ururi, South Molise, a small region in central Italy, where, to fulfil an explicit request of the local weepers, who otherwise would not have been able to 'weep', Carpitella lay down on the table motionless, pretending to be dead, while the women finally wept. In contrast to what he tells the Salentine weepers, he wasn't very happy: in fact, the moment he got off the table he was extremely relieved that everything was over and refused to repeat the 'fiction' again.¹⁵ In Molise – a few months before, in May the same year – the urgent request at the beginning of the ritual, as a contrived 'spark', had the intention of documenting the singing expressions and observing the postures and body movements. Even if activated artificially, following a request and an external action (the 'fiction' of the researcher in the field ... and on the table, outstretched and motionless, between the candles!), the 'weeping' was nourished by a psychological and emotional independence of the performative methods inscribed in the ritual setting, and deeply stored in the body's memories.¹⁶ In Salento, however, the same experience changed meaning completely – from the original inconvenience, in Molise, to a more playful intent – and became an effective narrative issue of interaction, highlighting common experiences and facilitating the dialogue: the distance between informants and researcher was reduced, thus avoiding repetition of the previous 'woeful' fiction. The Salentine dialogue continues on tape: times, places and itineraries of weeping in the Greek-Salentine customs emerge more precisely, with some comparative evaluations of the Lucanis' customs suggested by the scholar. The weepers point out that the ritual use of weeping, even if in decline, is still alive at the time and considered extremely demanding and strenuous. The conversation ends with a very affectionate farewell of one of the two informants ('Mó signuria, l'ha 'ntisu lu lamentu ... pò scrivere tantu' ['Now, sir, you've listened to the lament: you can write a lot about it']); by the way, Lomax – whom Carpitella calls 'the professor' – was absent on the occasion, due to a slight indisposition.¹⁷ In the dialogue, if some of the

its administrative and legislative jurisdiction was ratified only later, in 1970, with the Republic's new regional organization.

¹⁵ The episode has been retrieved thanks to Rosolina Cirese Savino, cousin of the anthropologist Alberto Mario Cirese, recently deceased, who was present at the recording (see Agamennone and Lombardi 2005: 21 ff.).

¹⁶ This perception of a partial autonomy of performative methods inscribed in the performers' body and in the scenario of the ritual is central in Diego Carpitella's teaching. This could even happen for the identification and recording of lullabies and other expressions for infancy; rocking a pillow in the absence of and as a substitute for 'real' babies called forth gestures and behaviours inscribed deep in the body memories of mothers, grandmothers and aunts: expressive modules which were difficult to stop or adulterate even before the presence of external researchers or the intrusion of recording equipment.

¹⁷ The original sound document is currently indexed as 'Interview about the funeral lamentation with examples' (AEM, Collection 24/B, piece 13, Martano [Lecce], 16 August 1954; see Brunetto 1995: 139). This long dialogue was not published in the recent American edition of the Lomax collection: cf. *Italian Treasury. Puglia: Salento*, ed. Goffredo Plastino, Rounded Records 82161-1805-2, 2002.

ceremonial expressions are excluded, the interlocutors seem to be on the same level; the weepers are two 'specialists', celebrants of a particularly emotional ritual in local life; they know their reality very well and possess an exclusive know-how: therefore, the dialogue with the external scholar proceeds at a fast pace, on the right track, and is guarded by cautious expressions. Even over such a short time, mutual confidence is activated between the 'discussants' within a safe interaction: the weeping specialists provide the researcher with information which only they hold, allowing the scholar to use and write about them, as is his *métier*. Namely, the idea of a musical text – within oral tradition – is much more recognizable and stable in the individual action: the text is 'hidden' in the mental and acoustic model that the weeping specialist holds in her memory, and takes an emotional shape only during the performance, according to the intention of whoever acts. It is not subsumed to another individual project, except that of another specialist, with whom she acts in close coherence and co-operation.

The environment in which the dialogue takes place is also important in orienting the interlocution methods. Listening to the original sound document, one senses a domestic venue. Carpitella indicates some photo portraits of the weepers' relatives, defined precisely as to kinship. The only witness alien to the dialogue is a rather young child, as is evident by his crying and by a tender sing-song heard in the background. In this case, too, the relationship between the scholar and his informants seems like an interaction between 'specialists', the dialogue moving forward as a friendly interaction.

The Explosive Euphoria of the Women's Singing (Avetrana, 1960)

Diego Carpitella went through a completely different experience at the end of the decade, again in Salento, but in an area where Romance dialects are spoken, and without Alan Lomax's company and help. On 16 June 1960, in the village of Avetrana (Taranto), our documentarian found himself facing a large group of women involved in the performance of several typical polyphonic pieces conceived for a large group. It concerns a way of performing traditional music throughout Italy, where participation is inclusive (whoever is present can take part in the singing) and the individual action can be extremely mobile, even within the group. Frequently, the following behaviours emerge:

- d. individual migration from one part to another in the polyphonic structure;
- e. sudden doubling;
- f. temporary absence from the group;
- g. delayed entrance into the group;
- h. possible antagonistic undertaking of the role of voice leader for the intonation of the monodic incipit.

In this performative scenario, the idea of a possible text becomes much more blurred, subordinated to the individual choices converging in the action of the group.

Thus, the musical text consists of the various and subsequent results of many possible options, drawn from a common mental model, made up of an amalgam of performative opportunities: these are chosen and set up by means of variable and unpredictable individual actions. Furthermore, these practices of large group polyphony are often exterior to a strictly formalized ritual scenario: they happen casually or at work, without any eurythmic function nor specific programmes, just for the pleasure and euphoria of singing in a group, and can embrace instances of solidarity as well as antagonistic impulses.

This is exactly what seems to cause difficulties in ethnographic survey. During the 1950s, the documentarians worked under the pressure of many circumstances and demands, including:

- a. being in a constant state of 'urgent anthropology';
- b. the speed of the ethnographic research, which did not allow long stays or return visits;
- c. the aim of collecting materials that could also be used in radio programmes or recordings;
- d. economic restrictions that implied the sparing use of magnetic tape and other materials;
- e. (creating) a broad panoramic documentation, considering the few sound documents preserved at the time in the archives.

Therefore, the research aims mainly to collect stable and balanced performances, representative of coherent and reliable texts, rather than performative practices, which can be quite flexible and changeable. The predominant goal seems to be the survey of pieces that are defined, closed and coherent in successive strophic iterations, preferably balanced in timbre and dynamics. In Avetrana, however, Carpitella comes across an impetuous and passionate singer tenaciously standing in the way and making the survey difficult. The documentarian, then, is forced to assume the tactics of a stern confrontation with his informants: suggesting, asking or imposing behaviours and precise performative methods that strictly correspond to a model the researcher has in mind, in the form of a closed, coherent and defined text. In the recording out-takes, on tape, one hears:

- a. Carpitella's voice repeatedly interrupting the performance and requesting a 'better' repetition;
- b. other participants signalling: 'Silence!';
- c. others ordering the singing to start 'On command!';
- d. besides the scholar, all those giving instructions are men, in front of a group made up almost exclusively of women.¹⁸

¹⁸ The episode described here is indexed as 'Sotto l'orologio' ('Beneath the Clock'), in AEM Collection 53, piece 46, Avetrana (Taranto), 16 June 1960.

In another recording out-take, the voice of the documentarian doesn't conceal a certain irritation faced with unacceptable behaviours: Carpitella repeatedly asks his 'informants' not to talk to each other once the tape has started running, and to decide – again, before the tape has started – who and which verse should start the performance.¹⁹

For this reason, with regard to the intentions and the expectation of the documentarian, facing the euphoric group of Avetrana:

- a. the action must begin in absolute silence;
- b. verbal interventions unrelated to the singing are not allowed (suggestions, invitations to start, corrections, disputes about the roles, laughing, expressions of agreement and affection);
- c. the decision concerning which piece to sing and who should start the performance must be made before the tape has started;
- d. the beginning of the recording, in the complete silence, is marked by the silent gesture of the researcher.

At times, disagreement on the starting procedure is rather animated: in addition to the interruptions required by Carpitella, there are excited interventions from others present, and from the same vocalists, overlapping in the evaluation of the methods of intonation. Moreover, in the following repetition of the same piece and in the alternation of the vocalists, the melodic profile of the starting monodic intonation transforms sensitively: again, this is the consequence of individual choices which apparently prevail on the opinions of the other vocalists and over the researcher's supervision, as well as over the other witnesses, who by now are also responsible for the recording. The mayor of Avetrana was also present at the long and strenuous recording session: his judgement was at times conclusive in guiding some of the vocalists' singing, as Carpitella himself suggests. The scholar seems to almost lose patience:

- a. He asks his 'informants' for a performance 'identical' to the previous one.
- b. Then he makes a heartfelt complaint ('Well, then, we didn't understand each other!').
- c. Finally, he proposes a new performance, appealing to the mayor for a crucial intervention.
- d. The mayor, shortly before, had imperatively selected one of the informants as voice leader ('You start!'), assuming the role of conductor of the performance.²⁰

¹⁹ This can be heard in the piece entitled 'Neri so' l'occhi mia' ('Black Are My Eyes') (AEM, Collection 53, piece 47, Avetrana [Taranto], 16 June 1960).

²⁰ This can be heard in the piece entitled 'All'erta di lu sonnu, non cchiù dormite' (AEM, Collection 53, piece 48, Avetrana [Taranto], 16 June 1960).

In front of the performers and the other people attending the recording, Carpitella finds himself in a difficult situation, forced to carry out the following actions:

- a. interrupting a performance because, in his opinion, it started wrongly;
- b. calling for a new performance, 'identical' to a previous one, considered more suitable or representative;
- c. requesting a new performance without any spurious intervention;
- d. reproaching the performers in order to avoid any verbal acts, suggestions or agreements.

Under these conditions, his leadership – as a representative of prestigious institutions – also seems to be weakened, progressively flanked by the verbal intervention of the men present but not involved in the singing: they order silence, invoke respect for the unusual practice and impose strict obedience to a start signal external to the group.

Listening to the sound materials, the annoyance and the discord are quite clear. The documentarian, almost as if he were in a radio or recording studio,²¹ attempts to obtain 'clean' pieces, without uncertainties or outside interference in the singing, preceded by rehearsals and persuasive agreements, and which represent, as much as possible, coherent and balanced texts: that can be explained by some of the above-mentioned reasons. The group of singers, however, behave as is their habit, and the procedures to start singing are flexible and changeable. In the sound documents, the local expressions 'Ci la zzicca?' ('Who's starting?') and 'Comu la zzicchi?' ('How do you start it?') are frequently heard and adopted by Carpitella himself. Moreover, in further iterations, different vocalists intervene, sometimes with sudden doublings; in this way they can transform the melodic profiles of the first monodic intonation, the variations become numerous and substantial, frustrating the occurrence of 'identical' repetitions wanted by the researcher and the other witnesses. Nevertheless, the expressions of comment, judgement and suggestion during the women's performance, which can appear a spurious insert in the audio recording, are largely legitimate and popular in the polyphony of the large group with inclusive participation: the singers interact freely, in the alternation of roles and the migration among the vocal parts of the polyphonic structure. The uncertainties, the quarrelling relationship among the performers, the comments on intonation, dynamic and timbre imbalances are completely legitimate and are all part of the game: they are part of the model shared by the performative action, in which individual reactions adapt to the needs of being part of a group. These procedures are constitutive and essential parts of polyphonic singing, and are activated in an impromptu manner by the performers.²²

²¹ One of the aims of the research, and one of the conditions of the agreement between the CNSMP and RAI, was to produce sound material that could be used in radio programming.

²² On the other hand, Carpitella was well aware of the volatility of oral tradition and of the constant variations of performers (this relates to one of the most fertile legacies of his

On the other hand, the reaction can be very different towards the listener 'from afar' – in the archive, on the radio or on a record – without observing the faces and the bodies, without perceiving the space in which the singing flows and the ways in which the singers and other protagonists enliven the space:²³ the researcher, in the field, has to represent this instant of listening, too, inasmuch as the results of his work will be then transferred elsewhere (into the archive, to the radio, to a disc). He therefore definitively fixes in a closed and replicable document a practice that instead is constantly changeable and fluid. The environment of the recording session, in this circumstance also, is determinant in orienting the modes of confrontation: one guesses a rather large space, with many performers, joined to quite a few extraneous participants in the performance (inevitably the children, considering the high presence of women involved), who intervene in quite intransigent terms.

Furthermore, large group polyphony cannot be described as a practice of 'specialists', since, as already noted, it is fully inclusive, thus increasing the possible moments of contact and conflict between researcher and informants. Thus, the contrast between the scholar and the numerous participants in the group singing appears as a possible prescriptive interaction: the difference with respect to the interaction with the 'guitarist of the Gargano' and the 'weepers of Martano' is completely clear.

An Aesthetic Option?

In conclusion, our two formidable documentarians were moved by an aesthetic option, perhaps not fully conscious, but very robust, that induced them – even if as a result of the urgent needs pointed out elsewhere – to search for and to privilege musical expressions characterized by a strong originality that were indeed representative of local choices, of small marginal and peripheral communities. They were marginal, but capable, nevertheless, of preserving and performing emotional and fascinating music, good enough to 'pass' successfully to the radio and to the disc, withstanding comparison with much more prestigious practices and musical texts. It was, thus, a noble and generous aspiration, handing over music of the greatest quality, at times indeed surprising: one can listen to it even now for what it can offer musically, also far from its original context, beyond the dissolution of the local cultures, and even without considering the information and theories that younger scholars have laboriously and tenaciously produced.

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teachings). Nevertheless, on this occasion he appears overcome by circumstances, as if he were contradicting himself: the situation was effectively 'getting out of hand' and almost 'riotous' during the audio recording.

²³ Carpitella was very sensitive to body postures and actions during the musical performance: in fact, he introduced the idea of 'somaticization of sound' in traditional music, leading him to be among the first to experiment with audiovisual recording techniques in documentation and critical interpretation (see Agamennone 1994).

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