

EDITED BY
FRANCESCO GIANNATTASIO
GIOVANNI GIURIATI

PERSPECTIVES ON A 21st CENTURY
COMPARATIVE MUSICOLOGY:
ETHNOMUSICOLOGY OR
TRANSCULTURAL MUSICOLOGY?



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Contents

Foreword. Pag. 6

Francesco Giannattasio

Perspectives on a 21st Century Comparative Musicology:
an Introduction Pag. 10

Wolfgang Welsch

Transculturality - the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today. Pag. 30

Timothy Rice

Toward a Theory-driven Comparative Musicology. Pag. 50

Lars-Christian Koch

Tonsinn und Musik

Carl Stumpf's Discourse on the Mind as a Condition for the Development
of Ethnomusicology and Erich Moritz von Hornbostel's Proposals for
Music-psychological Examination. Pag. 66

Steven Feld

On Post-Ethnomusicology Alternatives: Acoustemology Pag. 82

Jocelyne Guilbault

The Politics of Musical Bonding
New Prospects for Cosmopolitan Music Studies Pag. 100

Jean-Loup Amselle

From *Métissage* to the Connection between Cultures Pag. 126

Giovanni Giuriati

Some Reflections on a new Perspective in Transcultural Musicology:
the Area of Naples as a Case Study Pag. 136

Giovanni Giuriati

The Music for the Festa dei Gigli in Nola. Pag. 146

Claudio Rizzoni

Tradition and Reframing Processes in the *Madonna dell'Arco* Ritual Musical Practices in Naples. Pag. 158

Giovanni Vacca

Songs and the City
Itinerant Musicians as Living 'Song Libraries' at the Beginning of the 20th Century in Naples: the '*Posteggiatori*'. Pag. 176

Raffaele Di Mauro

Identity Construction and Transcultural Vocation in Neapolitan Song: a 'Living Music' from the Past? Pag. 186

Maurizio Agamennone

Current Research in the Salentine Area: an Introduction Pag. 222

Maurizio Agamennone

An Historical Perspective on Ethnomusicological Enquiry: Studies in the Salento. Pag. 226

Flavia Gervasi

Rhetoric of Identity and Distinctiveness: Relations between Aesthetic Criteria and the Success of Salentine Musicians in the Contemporary Folk Revival Pag. 248

Notes on Contributors. Pag. 272

Maurizio Agamennone

An Historical Perspective on
Ethnomusicological Enquiry:
Studies in the Salento

‘Living’ musical practices: there is more to life than *pizzica* down here!

The Salento is an almost mandatory field of enquiry for ethnomusicology, having been the theatre of pioneering studies in the 1950s that laid the foundations for future research. Here I would mention, among others, the short-lived but productive Salentine foray of Alan Lomax and Diego Carpitella in mid-August 1954,¹ and the enquiry into tarantism, guided by Ernesto de Martino during the ‘legendary’ summer of 1959.² To this original ‘aura’, possibly only of interest to scholars, specialists and enthusiasts, we can add a ‘neo-aura’, which has attracted a mass interest, especially in the last two decades, thanks to the fast-developing processes of rediscovering and heritagising local music traditions: the climax of this trend was the programme of the annual festival called *La Notte della Taranta* (NdT) – ‘The Night of the Tarantula’.

We must always bear in mind, however, that music making in the Salento is not merely a question of paying practical homage in various ways to the musical traditions of rural derivation. It also extends widely to encompass products, experiences, organisations and personalities occupying very different areas. Here I will simply mention that the Salento saw the birth and launch of one of the most interesting and enduring Italian versions of rap, hip-hop or ragamuffin with an international reach and, moreover, which very effectively rooted musical creativity and lyrics in the local socio-cultural processes. I am referring to *Sud Sound System*, a group with variable membership initially inspired by the Jamaican and American-rapper epic, albeit using dialect as a linguistic register from the outset and gradually recovering many other local models. One member of the group, Nandu Popu, has also experimented the path of the creative writing of self-narration with a keen interest in local events connected with the management and protection of the landscape and environment.³

It is also worth remembering that the Salento witnessed the various achievements of the Istituzione Concertistica Orchestrale (ICO) Orchestra Sinfonica ‘Tito Schipa’, currently prey to convulsions seriously threatening its survival due to the reformist whims of the national Italian political leadership, which

1 Their survey was the subject of a recent work of my own (Agamennone in press).

2 I describe the summer of 1959 as being ‘legendary’ because of the pioneering importance of the survey conducted at the time and the remarkable results in terms of publications and the sound documentation acquired (Agamennone 2005). The standard work for that experience is de Martino 2008 (orig. ed. 1961).

3 Fernando Blasi, aka Nandu Popu, is an active ‘eco-cyclist’ with a keen interest in exploring the environment as well as a ragamuffin singer and composer; see Popu (2012).

thought it was a good idea (actually terrible) to cut back the role of the provinces. The consequent loss of competency on cultural matters prevented the Province of Lecce from continuing to support, as it would like to have done, the activities of the Foundation representing the orchestra: this has led to serious hardship for the musicians who have been laid off pending redundancy. Yet the Orchestra Sinfonica 'Tito Schipa' not only includes in its ranks many musicians who trained in the local area, it has also held annual symphonic and opera seasons in collaboration with leading artists, such as Katia Ricciarelli and Ivan Fedele, a Salentine composer with considerable international experience. Moreover, in keeping with recent contemporary stylistic and expressive trends, Fedele usually includes in his symphonic and ensemble writing various motifs of local derivation in a now fairly widespread approach that looks to structures and styles from 'peripheral' music traditions as possible material for contemporary compositions. This is the case with two of his recent works: a) *Folkdances* (*Artéteka* and *Txalapàrta*) for orchestra, with frame drum obbligato; and b) *Calimerita*, a musical setting for three female voices and chamber orchestra of poetry in Griko by Brizio Montinaro.⁴ The Orchestra 'Tito Schipa' also gave the world première and made the first recording of another orchestral work inspired by Salentine material, which was composed by Piero Milesi in 2001 for the fourth edition of the NdT, and subsequently adapted for a concert version.⁵

Moreover, one the most popular Italian pop groups comes from Copertino, in the heart of the Salento. Although connoted by their own creative stylistic features (the frequent use of yodelling by the lead voice and a very sensitive brand of rock), the group Negramaro is named after a celebrated local grape variety (*Negroamaro*) and at times includes a 'wall of frame drums' in its usual set of instruments, at least for more significant occasions.⁶

We must also remember that the Otranto-Gallipoli road axis – crossing the

4 The world première was held at Théâtre le Manège, Mons (Belgium), 17 March 2015: the European Contemporary Orchestra was conducted by Raoul Lay with Brigitte Peyré and Hsiao Pei Ku sopranos, and Elisa Bonazzi mezzo-soprano.

5 See Ivan Fedele, *Folkdances* (*Artéteka* and *Txalapàrta*) for orchestra; Piero Milesi, *Le voci della terra. Otto movimenti per orchestra sinfonica ispirati alla tradizione popolare salentina*, conductor Pasquale Corrado, Orchestra sinfonica 'Tito Schipa', Vito De Lorenzi, frame drum, CD Dodicilune dischi Ed316, 2013. The fourth edition in 2001 was the last I took part in, having been joint artistic director since 1998; I left the NdT programme for good in late June 2001.

6 See, for example, the concert held on 31 May 2008, in the Meazza stadium (ex San Siro) in Milan before an audience of 40,000. The subsequent CD + DVD *San Siro Live* was no. 4 in the FIMI rankings and was awarded a platinum record for selling over 80,000 copies (<http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Negramaro>, 23 March 2015).

Salento centrally from one coast to another – has various disco and dance venues with a large mass appeal, especially in the summer. They attract the same kind of numbers as the NdT programme in those months and experience similar problems of overburdening the local area and having to accommodate such a large and at times invasive participation with the attendant flows of people.⁷

Lastly, the Lecce Conservatory has generously but rather unsatisfactorily experimented with courses devoted to the study of techniques and instrumental and vocal repertoires belonging to the local music tradition.

All the above-mentioned musical products, texts and practices still await an ‘ethnomusicological’ interpretation that can contribute to understanding and assessing the ongoing behaviours. As such, it would thus stand alongside the various descriptions based on anthropo-sociological approaches and popularising journalistic interpretations which, although widespread, are not completely satisfactory in terms of critical conclusions.

Critical editions of sound documentation of historical interest

Ethnomusicological studies have thoroughly explored local traditions in the Salento, highlighting music expressions and practices of great interest. The acquired sound documentation is huge and encompasses over seventy years of research. Moreover, since the ‘soundscape’ and the socio-cultural patterns of the area have changed deeply in the intervening decades, that documentation – combined with the much fewer visual recordings – is now of primary socio-cultural interest. This means that ethnomusicology enquiries involve a further critical task in addition to the usual ethnographic work to be pursued along with the typical procedures of analysing the musical features found in the observed practices. Here I am referring to the need to assess the sound sources as stable ‘closed’ texts to be approached with criteria for handling the material like, *mutatis mutandis*, the subjects of philological practices, despite being fluid and widely conjectural. This entails interweaving other sources, personal accounts, texts and multiform surveys, outside the sound source being studied and produced by other social actors. We must thus seek information that does not necessarily coincide with the various ‘grounds’ explored in the past. Very far from the ‘ground’ of music ethnography, this information can contribute to ‘shedding light’ on the sources, in the absence of the

7 Many articles appeared in the local press in summer 2014 complaining about the inappropriate use of public areas by young people after ‘disco nights’.

direct protagonists, who include documentarists, collectors, interpreters and performers. In practical terms it means identifying, assessing and describing the protagonists' intentions and decisions, and checking the logic underlying travel calendars as well as the choice of places to be explored. We must also consider the representativeness of the collecting done locally in the case of more widespread practices and, lastly, we need to reconstruct and set a more general context around the expressive phenomena documented. So the above-mentioned 'philological' point of view can be combined with the opportunity to devise some adventurous and risky conjectural texts of *ex-post* ethnography. In short, today, several decades later, we take the place of the collectors faced with the informants of the time. To provide arguments for plausible reflection from this point of view, I will begin by examining some aspects of the collection called *Raccolta 24-B* in the *Archivi di Etnomusicologia* of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome,⁸ which contains the recordings made by Alan Lomax and Diego Carpitella during their brief stay in the Salento in August 1954. Their collecting was mainly of an 'anthological' nature: for the various genres practiced, they believed that everything that the informants wanted or could offer should be collected. The methodological and also psychological situation could effectively be classified as 'urgent anthropology': i.e. there was a need to document as fast as possible before the local traditions disappeared and especially considering the few available sound recordings of the period and also to document as widely as possible to obtain representative recordings of the numerous, complex specific cultural features found in the Italian regions. Sixty years ago, the two collectors recorded live, euphoric practices, met exuberant characters, and found some very particular local customs. Consequently, that documentation – also perhaps because it was so broad, occasional, adventurous and fortunate despite being brief – was of great importance and may be useful and stimulating also for those who do not consider music to be an experimental field of primary interest. Many of the practices documented at that time have actually now disappeared. They reveal specific ways of understanding various aspects of that world: the urban setting, work activities, the perception of self in shared space, relations to other social groups and the significant circumstances of individual, family and social life. These processes belong to a now historically circumscribed and acquired past and can contribute to 'writing' the history of local communities as well as retelling a small family epic, thus encouraging an awareness of one's own past also in primary educational activities. Moreover, they suggest ideas

8 Over time the events surrounding *Raccolta 24* have created a good deal of confusion: see especially Brunetto (2011).

of possible heritagisation and contribute to original creations by musicians and artists. The leading players themselves have spoken in eloquent terms: for Alan Lomax, 1954, the year of his Italian collecting, was the 'happiest of my life'.⁹ Carpitella also had very fond memories, which he expressed in late autobiographical accounts.¹⁰ That documentation is also very important, as we said, in historical-cultural terms. However, it raises important issues of reconstruction and critical analysis, which also involve writing the history of that research and the people and the communities in question. Therefore I would like to list some question which I believe to be particularly interesting:

- a. What were the socio-cultural and economic conditions in the Salento at that time?
- b. How were the (few) localities chosen for the survey?
- c. How can we reconstruct the research itinerary in the field in relation to the documented calendar?
- d. How can we explain the fact that most of the material comes from only one (Martano) of all the localities explored?
- e. What are the musical features of the funerary laments, one of the most significant genres of those documented?
- f. How can we explain the special singing-instrumental compactness of the materials collected in one place (Gallipoli), which are so very different from those recorded elsewhere?
- g. How can we interpret the expressions of Carnavalesque origin that emerged so forcefully in August 1954, but in only one locality (Galatone)?
- h. What is the meaning of the inclusion of an unusual *pizzica*, outside the collection but also attributed to it, and which after 1954 was of great importance in describing the music in the therapy of tarantism?

I have reconstructed these issues and tried to provide some answers. But here I will simply describe a few aspects.

The Salento at the time was inhabited by a population that mainly lived in villages and towns with very few people in scattered country houses. The mainly farming population was barely literate and so the oral tradition was still the

9 'At any rate, the Spanish broadcasts created a stir and the heads of the *Third Programme* then commissioned me to go to Italy to make a similar survey of the folk music there. That year was to be the happiest of my life' (Lomax 2005: 183 [orig. edn 1960]); see also Lomax 2008 and Szwed 2011 (especially Chap. 11: *The Grand Tour*, pp. 268-289).

10 'These situations aroused curiosity and pleasant shared feelings. The people would always have liked us to stay longer.' (Diego Carpitella, in Agamennone 1989: 26).

principal means of communication. That is why as soon as our 'explorers' lowered their plumb lines and cast their nets (switched on the microphones and began recording), they hauled on board (documented on tape) a large number of 'songs'. But they would have had an equally large catch had they gathered stories, folk tales, fables, proverbs, etc. The leading figures, especially the women, when they assembled, told stories and chatted a great deal amongst themselves – respecting the hierarchy of age, status and role but at times also challenging it – and they sang and sang for hours on end. In the family groups and village communities encountered in the Salento, singing was the favourite, habitual means of expression and often replaced the spoken voice, since it was more effective, warm-hearted and moving. This explains the wealth of those fortunate recordings.

The same can be said of one particular practice recorded then and today rather surprising: the polyphonic singing of the *cazzatori* (stonebreakers) at work. Alan Lomax describes them as follows:

The government offered some of these unemployed men work on the roads. So in Apulia I followed my friends on white country roads: with hammers they broke boulders and to pass the time they sang a bitter song, as arid as the hot summer wind (Lomax 2008: 151).

These then were the *cazzatori*, stonebreakers working on the roads. Listening to the tapes, however, the arid bitterness of their singing does not emerge so clearly as the Texan scholar suggested. This was the habitual style of singing of those workers and surprisingly contained at the same time several metres with non-synchronous beats, which helped the physical action of the work. The metre shared by the polyphonic singing and the various individual metres of each *cazzatori* as he hammered, gathered together and regulated in the context of three-part polyphonic singing giving 'form', also gave 'beauty' to those collective efforts. In addition to road construction, they quarried and hewed stones for various building purposes. The excavating took place in a quarry, and mainly involved two kinds of stones: a soft stone, the so-called 'Lecce stone', used in constructing buildings (the material employed in the various 'triumphs' of Lecce and Salentine Baroque); and another much harder and more resistant stone called 'Soletto stone', mainly cut out of slabs on outcrops in the hills known as the Serre Salentine (at the time the stone was used to make millstones for oil mills, or large flagstones for streets and roads between towns for which they were cut down to various sizes). But road building was a complex activity, organised in various stages: the stones were brought direct-

ly to the site and a large stone was placed at the centre of the road layout to form the so-called ‘donkey’s back’ as a guide for the rest of the road. Larger and thicker stones were laid along the sides to create the edges and ensure the filling material was contained; rubble made up of smaller stones was then added at the centre before everything was covered by rather large-grain tuff, scattered to fill in the spaces between the stones; lastly a hand-drawn wetted roller was pulled over the tuff to compact all the material on the track. The roads were not asphalted and traditionally remained ‘white’. These activities can mainly be circumscribed to the area between Martano, Soleto, Sogliano Cavour and Zollino. On this subject, too, it is interesting how the two collectors in summer 1954 found some very active music making – polyphonic singing during work – which usually accompanied the men’s labouring and started up spontaneously from the collective work gestures. The music making was not a response to requests by outside observers, but a long-standing behaviour completely ‘within’ that kind of work, and also in building work and the construction of houses, at least until the 1970s.¹¹

I would also like to reflect briefly on a mysterious *pizzica*, accompanied by a drum with a surprisingly dull, metallic sound even though it had no metal jingles, that was said to have been recorded in the Taranto area. In his contribution to de Martino’s celebrated book on tarantism, Carpitella said it had been recorded in the same survey:

Here we should remember that during the collection of folk songs in the Taranto countryside by Diego Carpitella and Alan Lomax in summer 1954, the following *pizzica-tarantata* for two voices and tambourine was recorded, and the informants assured us that it was normally used during music therapy for tarantism (Carpitella 2008: 375 [1st ed., 1961]).

But in the two notes to the ‘American’ records,¹² released in 1957, with material from that collection, the same piece is described as follows:

The ‘Bite’ (La Pizzica). Sung by a group of women with tambourine. Taranto, Apulia, recorded by Roberto Costa. The *bite* (*pizzica/pizzicare*) is the sting of the tarantula, the

11 I gathered all the information concerning stone working and group singing in the construction industry from Pantalèo Perrotta, a craftsman and entrepreneur still very active in his Martano firm.

12 *Northern and Central Italy and the Albanians of Calabria*, Columbia KL 5173, 1957 (vol. XV in the series ‘The Columbia World Library of Folk and Primitive Music’); *Southern Italy and the Islands*, Columbia KL 5174, 1957 (vol. XVI, ‘The Columbia World Library of Folk and Primitive Music’).

poisonous insect from which the *tarantella* gets its name. At the same time, the *pizzica* is the traditional folk form of the *tarantella* as it is danced in Taranto and in Southern Apulia.

Here the recording is attributed to Roberto Costa, a celebrated radio reporter and inventor, together with Sergio Zavoli and other leading RAI journalists, of the ‘radio documentary’. In fact a few months before Lomax and Carpitella visited the Salento, Roberto Costa had made a radio report entirely dedicated to the area and its Greek roots. On the short trip, at Martano, the journalist had the opportunity to meet the *préfiche* (women paid to lament at a funeral), who were later recorded by Lomax and Carpitella. Costa also recorded the same *pizzica*, which is clearly audible in the sound recording transmitted by the radio a few months before summer 1954. But he did not make the recording in the Taranto area – as has been mistakenly suggested and in fact he never set foot in the area when preparing the radio report – but very probably at Martano. In fact it was in this town that he also made the musically very interesting recordings of the same Martano lamenters, who were to be a focus of interest for Pier Paolo Pasolini a few years later.¹³ This could also explain the use in that *pizzica* of a drum with such a weak, dull metallic sound, completely alien to the energetic sonority in the therapy of tarantism; the sound suggests a kitchen utensil (a frying pan or pan), very likely picked up by one of the participants in the absence of a real drum, to beat the rhythm of the *pizzica*, probably to meet a request made by Costa himself. I am fully aware that since no field notes have survived of that trip, this reconstruction is no more than a series of clues. It remains, however, the most convincing conjecture.¹⁴

On some current uses of sound documentation of historic interest

One interesting spin-off from sound documentation made in the past lies in the possible experimental uses by musicians who have driven the recent ‘new wave’ in the Salento. In the last two decades, a lively ‘neo-folk’ process has

13 Pier Paolo Pasolini showed great interest in Diego Carpitella’s research: he asked him for a musicological note to his *Canzoniere italiano* (1955), which came to nothing, however. Later a curious and fascinated Pasolini appeared at the opening session of the first conference of ethnomusicology studies organised by Carpitella (Carpitella 1975) and held from 29 November to 2 December 1973 (Palazzo Torlonia, Rome). At the end of the decade, Pasolini wrote the text for the film *Stendali* by documentary film-maker Cecilia Mangini, released in 1960, and devoted to Griko lamentations in the Salento.

14 This explanation may be a little sketchy, but the story is complicated and cannot be exhaustively dealt with here: for greater detail, see Agamennone (2015).

gradually been moving towards patrimonization ('recover, protect and spread our musical roots') and original writing ('our musical roots can generate an innovative, original new authorial production'). The results are rather mixed and controversial, but interesting nonetheless. A possible use of the sound documents acquired by Lomax and Carpitella can be found in the 'treatment' of the polyphonic singing of the *cazzatori* mentioned above: the unusual multiple rhythms of their singing are generated by the need to give form in the same time interval to the different rhythms created by the individual gesture of hammering and the shared rhythm governing the group song. But on the stage and in recordings these multiple rhythms take on a surprisingly different profile: the irregular mobile fall of the hammers of the *cazzatori* is transformed into a strictly synchronic and isochronal action which seems to assume a 'eurythmic' value which is not present at all in the original sound documents. Clearly the young musicians involved in this 'reviving', thought it was right to associate the local work songs with other memories of work songs in which the gesture of striking and the expression of the voices are subordinate to a common driving force (in rowing, fishing, striking various materials associated with individual and/or group singing) and probably the 'reduction' of the rhythmic complexity was determined by the obvious difficulty in effectively 'orchestrating' – on the evening stage or dance floor, rather than during the day in the sunny Salentine countryside – such 'crackling' hammering. But the appeal of that historic type of work song was nonetheless irresistible to the young Salentine musicians' imagination!¹⁵

Another experiment, which we might be tempted to describe as 'philological' – taking as an example musicians involved in studying and performing so-called 'early music'¹⁶ – consists in considering the sound documents as 'texts' to be reproduced on the stage as faithfully as possible both in stylistic terms (timbre and manner of vocal and instrumental parts) and in the staging aspects (how to perform the musical material in the time and space of the event). The choice to 'revive' music involves a careful study of the sound documentation to achieve a satisfactory reproduction, at times with features

15 See Canzoniere Greco Salentino, *Pizzica indíavolata*, Ponderosamusicart CD 101, 2012: track 6.

16 'Early music' is obviously a very ambiguous definition: it is meant to indicate those historical repertoires, documented by a musical notation, at times problematic and often 'shorthand', which require long studies of sources other than music manuscripts to understand what that very remote music sounded like and how to recreate an historically accurate musical rendering of the written documents: this embraces, therefore a very wide production, from middle-mediaeval polyphonies and rare dance music to 15th-century profane songs and late Baroque music, considering how far and in what way the period performing procedures could substantially supplement the written signs; this kind of performing can only be 're-created' today through conjectural criteria and practical clues.

reflecting a deep empathy with the people and the actions (the ‘big’ voices, or the drum playing on historic recordings) and places (for example, those ‘narrated’ in de Martino’s ethnographic study and critical interpretation). Moreover, considering that the sound documents preserved expressions of practices no longer pursued – therefore consigned to history and marked by a considerable gap with the present – these Salentine musicians’ activities are therefore not unlike that of those who study and perform Medieval, Renaissance or Baroque music, also consigned to history, which has to be re-imagined in a convincing way for stage performances or recordings. But there is a very significant and favourable difference: performers of early music cannot rely on sound documents, whereas the musicians playing *neo-folk* or *neo-pizzicato* can and – for their good fortune – with more plausible results that can easily be checked. Moreover, the consolidated distance of this music from the historical events and the original ritual contexts enables us to reduce some of the controversial effects which in the past were severely criticised:¹⁷ now the music and practices of the past which may attract performers through emotional bonds and multiform memories are revived in the awareness that there is a clearly established time gap.¹⁸

For other musicians, historic documentation is a kind of ‘inventory of credits’ (or perhaps a book of credentials) to be drawn on when writing multiform original compositions of diverse tendencies: even very different musical choices can be aggregated and we note from this point of view how musicians experiment with ‘citations’ of some local features (the romance dialect or Salentine Griko linguistic register, metric-rhythmic sequences on drums, melodies and symbolically connoted verse repetitions, places and personages, etc.) as a way of gaining recognition and legitimisation both locally (the Salentine region),

17 The close relationship between still active ritual or ceremonial experiences in rural areas and ‘collecting’ by mainly urban musicians and political militants was criticised in a hostile and intolerant way: those intellectuals and artists were accused of ‘wanting to act like the peasants’, or to ‘dress up as peasants’. I am referring to events that took place during the first Italian folk revival in the 1960s and ‘70s, so now forty and fifty years ago.

18 Here it is worth mentioning the voice and instrumental quartet Suoni rurali, made up of Anna Cinzia Villani (voice and drum), Giovanni Amati (voice and drum), Annamaria Bagorda (*organetto*) and Maria Mazzotta (voice), whom I believe are fully representative of this trend; in September–October 2009 I had the chance to devise the programme *Il Paese senza memoria. Incursioni antropologiche: corpi e memorie nella musica*, at the 53rd Venice Biennale International Festival of Contemporary Music, directed by Luca Francesconi, at the Teatro Piccolo Arsenale. In this venue the quartet gave a marvellously moving concert focused on the repertoires of the southern Salento and the Murgia Salentina (love and work songs, with and without instrumental accompaniment, *stornelli* and *pizziche*). The concert aroused great interest from a sophisticated, demanding audience, accustomed to much more complex music.

and further afield (in places where the Salentine 'brand' currently attracts a good deal of attention). Knowledge of the historical documentation associated with this 'trend' can often be rather vague and superficial: recordings of the past, moreover, may be a kind of emotional store, a music 'village of memory' enabling musicians to be 'migrants' in Europe and the world, cosmopolitan without ignoring their origins, or indeed very proud of themselves and their provenance.¹⁹

In any case, all the experiments mentioned are characterised by the irreversible choice of the stage (and the attendant media developments – CD recordings, videos, the web, etc.) as the favoured and possibly unique setting for their performances. However, we are dealing with musicians who adopt professional procedures and target an audience who listens, at times dances, and may purchase some of the products offered. There is a clear-cut separation of roles and we also find a growth in the claims of individuals and groups aspiring to be recognised as having authorial skills and offering original products.²⁰

Some musicians' choice to 're-enact' ceremonial practices on the relevant occasions, especially the *questue* (performing for alms) around New Year and at Easter seem to be a departure from the permanent transfer to the stage. At times musicians otherwise active solely on the stage make an effort to set up performances of greetings in several places in towns, with the involvement of socio-cultural agents who are not strictly involved as musicians. This noble and generous motivation reflects the aim to preserve the memory of places and the criteria with which shared spaces are animated by periodic ceremonial 'crossings' coordinated with calendar cycles (religious and agrarian) to encourage the population to socialise rather than stay cooped up at home, even in the winter months, and once more give their nocturnal hours a sense of shared perception and activities. In some places *questue* of greetings are still

19 For the above-mentioned Biennale programme (*Il Paese senza memoria. Incursioni antropologiche: corpi e memorie nella musica*, Venice, 2009), I was also able to invite the celebrated Salentine group Mascarimiri, well-known for their great commitment to hybrid experiments based on the 'pizzica' and electronic music. Fifty years on from De Martino's enquiry into Salentine tarantism (1959-2009), the basic concept was to stage in Venice two extreme examples of the 'new-wave' Salentine music; the well-informed but small audience reacted rather lukewarmly to the experiments of this group, but were more openly interested in the music of the 'philological' group (see note 19). Clearly audiences used to more complex electro-acoustic music, loop elaborations and drum and bass sequences might be less attracted to the singing of archaic melodies supplemented with metric-rhythmic formulas beaten out on the drum.

20 This preference for performing on stage has also been caustically described as a kind of 'stage syndrome', almost a narcissistic obsession. Moreover, if those musicians wish to make claims to being professionals, they must inevitably act in this way; but the critical assessment of their musical products is a completely different matter.

habitual and the actions of the young musicians and social workers is grafted directly onto the last practices of the older *questuanti*. In these activities, too, an offer of greetings is usually made during the ‘official’ stops in enclosed spaces (small piazzas, church squares, etc.) equipped with microphones and simple amplification systems, which make it more difficult, however, if not impossible, for the *questuanti* to move around the environs of the towns.

It is also worth noting the not very widespread but appreciable trend to create small occasions for meeting and celebrations, at times extempore, in family settings, local quarters or peer networks, motivated by multiple decisions and intentions, but on the whole oriented by an interest in socialising in groups. In this kind of circumstance, the music from the sound documentation of the past can be interpreted in varied ways and alternated with music of very different origin.

Clearly everything I have described so far can only have a meaning within sets of people and groups that remain, however, very small, or town communities implying sensibilities, relations, behaviour and movements which are not ‘felt’ in the same way and may even seem a little strange in different environments.²¹

Charismatic personalities found in the sound documentation of historical interest and a brief historical reconstruction of personages and events from the past

Sound documentation of historic interest safely preserves the work of some performers, who have enjoyed – also for having been present – a favourable showing on various occasions and over several decades.

Arguably the most charismatic figure to emerge from the recordings of 1959 and 1960 is Luigi Stifani, the *violinista barbiere* (‘fiddling barber’) of Nardò, but also the ‘doctor of the tarantulees [women affected by tarantism]’.

Ernesto de Martino described his *orchestrina* rather drily:

In 1876 some famous musicians for tarantulees still lived in the Salento, and the local scholar De Simone met and interviewed Donata Dell’Anna from Arnesano, a tambourine player, and Francesco Mazzotta of Nòvoli, a violinist ... In the person of Mazzotta, only just sketched by De Simone, we can catch unawares the still living, slow decline

21 For a few years now there has been an awareness and interest in *paesologia* (a way of visiting and narrating villages and small towns) providing different insights and thinking on the ways rural areas are settled. It has inspired a rather complex form of entertainment that also involves critical reflection: see Arminio (2008; 2013).

of tarantism at the height of the 20th century, i.e. the impoverishment of the choreutic-musical repertory and the shrinking of the effective response to a certain number of traditional melodies: in the summer of 1959 we witnessed the terminal stage of this decline, when the *orchestrina di Nardò*, with its limited repertory, was the best of what could still be found alive and active (de Martino 2008: 169 [1st ed., 1961]).

In Diego Carpitella's recordings, Luigi Stifani was certainly an authoritative presence and representative of rather complex music making: he appeared as a therapy musician and organiser of the so-called 'orchestrina di Nardò', according to Ernesto de Martino's survey, but he also featured as a dance-hall musician as in fact one might expect from a 'fiddling barber'.²² Stifani was fully aware of his ability and his representative role. At the end of a *pizzica tarantata*, played solo on 3 July 1959, he brusquely asked Carpitella if he could listen to the recording he just made (Stifani's voice is clearly audible on the tape), possibly out of self satisfaction but also to personally check the quality.²³

Only a few years later, in December 1966, Diego Carpitella and Roberto Leydi went back to Nardò to prepare for an episode of the show *Sentite buona gente* ('Here this good people') due to be staged at the Teatro Lirico, Milan, from 2 February to 5 March 1967, with numerous replicas. On 11 December they met all the members of the orchestra of therapist-musicians in the house of the *organetto* player Pasquale Zizzari. Each musician introduced himself with very few details. When it came to Stifani's turn, questioned last by Roberto Leydi – who as with all the other musicians asked him to briefly describe himself – the 'fiddling barber' spoke over the scholar's voice, proudly introducing himself as 'Maestro Stifani, great violinist of popular [folk] music'. In a jesting reply, Leydi added, 'and also of non-popular music', which Stifani immediately confirmed with great confidence, clearly flattered: 'and also non-popular music'. In his reply to Diego Carpitella, during the same brief conversation in Zizzari's house, when presenting some pieces that were to be played at the Milanese show, Stifani never used the usual expressions (*pizzica pizzica*, *pizzica tarantata*) to describe the local dances and never mentioned the therapeutic practice, but defined both the recorded pieces as *tarantelle neretine* (i.e. typical Nardò tarantellas), adding that they were pieces of his own composition and had 'again come from our

22 See Agamennone (2005); for *pizziche tarantate* and therapy music: CD 1, tracks 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19 CD 2; for dances: CD 1, tracks 16 (first and second polkas), 17 (waltz), 20 (waltz), 21 (polka), 22 (schottische).

23 See Agamennone (2005): CD 1, track 14.

group'. Therefore the music that they would play was presented as original pieces, the result of the work of members of 'that' group from 'that' town.²⁴ In some later television appearances,²⁵ Stifani once more described the events in his life as a therapy musician and mentioned that he was self-taught ('Mi sono imparato da sòlo, da sòlo'). He had started with the mandolin, a typical instrument in a barber's shop and by listening to the work of other therapist musicians. He stressed that he did not consider himself to be an orchestral musician and that he played by ear,²⁶ since he was accustomed to making *svisa-ture*, that is extempore variations of existing melodies. Aged fifty-two in 1966, the youngest of the Salentine quartet involved in the brief conversation with Carpitella and Leydi, Luigi Stifani preserved and defended until his death this role as a mystical expert of the evils woven by the 'maleficent spider' that afflicted Salentine women. As such, he gradually became an indispensable source for dozens of outside observers and a lively consultant for just as many scholars and students doing dissertations. Locally he is still remembered as the *lu mesciu Stifani*, a typical expression of respect that could be translated as 'master Stifani', directly related to his skill as an artisan, rather than *Maestro Stifani*, which, on the other hand, would have stressed his musical skills. His work as testified by the sound documentation is also interesting from the historiographical point of view: Ernesto de Martino considered the activities of the *orchestrina di Nardò* as an opaque vestige of the practice carried out in the past by long genealogies of therapist musicians (especially violinists), which had died out in the late 19th century. In fact Stifani, when talking about himself, always stressed that he began from nothing, with no kind of direct descent from music therapists of the previous generations. Rather than the last pale epigone of a dying tradition, Stifani seems to have been an ingenious assembler of therapeutic methods and stratagems acquired since his adolescence (at the time of his first therapy in 1928 he was only fourteen) and implemented in the decades of his 'honourable career'. Moreover, in the sound documentation of 1959 and 1960 there are many accounts of the various approaches to music for therapy, often led by female tambourine

24 The sound documentation is currently available in Ferraro (2015): audio CD, tracks 5 and 6.

25 Gianfranco Mingozzi, *Sulla terra del rimorso*, documentary film, 16 mm., col., 58 min., Italy, 1982 (written and directed by Gianfranco Mingozzi; photography by Beppe Lanci; film editing by Antonio Fusco; music by Egisto Macchi; text by Claudio Barbati and Annabella Rossi; production: RAI TV2 Ciak Film).

26 Stifani actually tried out some unusual forms of notation, especially in the structure of a numerical 'intabulation' for plucked string instruments (guitar and mandolin); on Stifani's compositions and musical repertoire, see Inchingolo (2003).

players, who created a 'minimum degree' of music for tarantism, consisting of the simple combination of a voice and instrument (drum) played by the singer. This was a widespread combination, although more frequently associated with a diatonic button accordion (*organetto*) or another voice and drum, and thus very different from the 'unique model' – found and described by Ernesto de Martino, even though in decline or extinct – of a small band consolidated by the guidance of a semi-professional musician, often itinerant and ready to intervene quickly. In parallel to this music for therapy, which easily moved round the local area, the historic sound documentation reveals the presence of other local procedures, more deeply rooted in the towns, performed by 'village therapists', but no less effective. Indeed they were perhaps more familiar with the life experience of the suffering individuals and therefore probably more effective in terms of the proposed therapy.

The work of *mesciu* Stifani has for some years now been the subject of a project to celebrate the man and his world, entitled *Memorial Maestro Luigi Stifani*. Now into its 14th edition (August 2014), events in the project are held at Santa Maria al Bagno, Nardò's seaside resort, and consist of a competition for young musicians, conferences and concerts.

Surprisingly, in addition to the usual offering of music on stage there is also a kind of short 'pageant' of tarantism:

- a. a cart (*trainu*) is brought onto the stage by some rather agitated girls dressed in white;
- b. an elderly but agile and fit man, dressed in black, brings onto the stage a screaming girl, who is held and calmed down by the man who plays the role of a caring, consolatory father: the girl's screaming and the man's reassurances are amplified;
- c. some musicians stage the re-enactment of therapy at home: the same girl, also dressed in white with long dark knickers, flails about and twists furiously, while the musicians gather around the raging body and play close to her face, as described in the 'classic' narrative of the therapy.

Although short, and despite recalling people, practices and contexts that only ended historically a few decades ago, this performance is akin to the many pageants periodically recalling more or less glorious historic episodes in towns throughout Italy. These events are staged for the obvious purpose of building a strong micro-identity and attracting tourists, and these aspects also character-

ise the show associated with the name of *mesciu* Stifani.²⁷ The proud driving force behind the project is Giovanna Stifani, 'la figgja te lu mesciu', Stifani's daughter, who for years has been passionately pursuing the work of preserving the paternal memory.

The same sound recordings of 1959 and 1960 also contain eloquent traces of the practice of another leading figure, Salvatora Marzo, or Za Tora Marzo 'te Nucera', as she was called locally because of her close links to the wealthy family of the Nocera of Nardò. In the recordings, with a bandaged forearm, Za Tora energetically plays the drum in Stifani's *orchestrina*. She was also present in Zizzari's house at Nardò during the conversation mentioned above. When asked about her role by Leydi, Za Tora replied confidently in a stentorian voice that she played '*lu tamburrieddhu*' (a large frame drum with jingles, the key instrument in the therapy for tarantism, and also at dances on feast days). She added that she bandaged her arm 'pe' nun mi fazzu le piaghe',²⁸ to avoid having sores on her wrist, the back and first phalange of the thumb on the hand used to energetically beat the drum membrane, a typical problem for tambourine players performing in long sessions. But she also did more than this and the same sound recordings enable us to reconstruct her very pervasive role in the social life of the rural community: Za Tora not only took part in the therapy of tarantism, but also in death rituals and elaborating mourning through the practice of funerary lamentations. She was also involved in favouring births, protecting health, the treatment of complaints concerning joints and bones, and assisted at childbirths. All of these activities confirm Za Tora's locally assigned role as one of those leading female personage who celebrated rituals in the practices of life and death in traditional local societies. Together with Anna Cinzia Villani, I conducted a long complex study on her, entitled *Su Za Tora e le altre: storie e memorie di una curatòra con il tamburo* ('On Za Tora and the others: stories and memories of a healer with a tambourine'). Starting from the sound documentation and digging into the

27 Although tarantism as a psychic phenomenon has been extinct for several decades, there are quite a few people who still have painful memories of it in families, networks of women friends and local relations: they may not look favourably on spectacular shows of experiences that covertly allude to still acute memories.

28 Here, too, the relevant sound documentation is in Ferraro (2015): audio CD, track 5. The practice of Luigi Stifani, Za Tora 'and the others' is featured in several documentaries: in de Martino 2008 there is a prototype film *Meloterapia del tarantismo*, made by Diego Carpitella in 1960; the following year Gianfranco Mingozzi made the film entitled *La taranta*, with a comment by Salvatore Quasimodo, who had just been awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, now in Mingozzi (2009); the show at the Teatro Lirico, Milan is included in Ferraro (2015): DVD.

memory of Za Tora's children and grandchildren, and the daughters of her neighbours and friends, and many other witnesses, and by exploring places and itineraries, and searching in archives and houses, we now have the material for a potential written account encompassing the following fields: a) the family; b) herbal cures; c) cures for bone disorders and muscular contractures; d) the drum and therapy for tarantism; e) childbirth; f) funerary lamentations.

Cultural history, musical philology and ethnomusicology: studies on tarantism

Lastly, although tarantism is a very powerful and seductive theme for many scholars in various disciplines, musicians and dancers, politicians and administrators, tourist agencies, social workers and many others,²⁹ it must be said that the analysis of that world and its events is still unsatisfactory from a strictly musicological point of view. Diego Carpitella's now remote essay included in de Martino's book (2008: 344-379; or. ed., 1961), basically conceived as report on what had just been collected in the field and the initial description of some socio-cultural references, is to my mind still the most effective account of the music of Salentine tarantism. Drafted by combining sound and written sources almost 70 years ago, despite some incongruities, it is much more useful than the plethora of journalistic-type writings on the Salento produced especially in the last two decades.

In fact after the 'legendary' enquiries of 1959 and 1960, a very useful research line was not pursued further. To do so would have required a kind of permanent census with a periodic updating of information and data carried out in the towns of the Salento, by drawing on memories and accounts of therapy and its protagonists (places of worship and local festivities, times and modes of the recurrence of suffering, therapist musicians, musical instruments and groups involved, memories of the protagonists, diaries, images, etc). When the long-term effects of preserving these memories made an impact in the early 1990s, therefore over twenty years ago, many of the leading players were still alive and very knowledgeable, but the opportunity was irremediably missed and there was a failure to identify and create a net-

29 For an extensive bibliography of tarantism, see Mina and Torsello (2006).

work of institutions, organisations, scholars and collectors who would have been able to implement a regular, updated programme of collecting. Moreover, this would also have been a possible vehicle for patrimonization, and although its results for the local population cannot be assessed *in absentia*, they arguably might have made a qualitative contribution to the vertiginous ferment shrouding ‘tarantistic’ themes in the contemporary Salento. The most significant contribution has come from the world of university research and namely the study conducted by Francesco Attanasi as his degree dissertation presented in July 2003 in the then Faculty of Musicology at the University of Pavia-Cremona, two years before his tragic, premature death. This study was published (Attanasi 2007) and is the broadest and most systematic survey currently available of the historic sources for the various manifestations of music associated with Apulian tarantism for a period of time that begins from the earliest accounts in the 14th Century. His classifications, descriptions and critical assessments of the sources are even more valuable because of the extremely heterogeneous nature of the overall documentary material. The enormous quantity of sources analysed enabled Attanasi to highlight the many transformations in the choreutic-musical repertory over the centuries, with the emergence and decline of specific iatric-musical applications and the adoption for therapeutic uses of an extraordinary set of instruments, organised in groups of various sizes, they too having changed greatly over time, and unimaginable if we only consider the sound documentation and literary accounts in the last two centuries. The identification of the places in which there are still traces of the phenomenon is also effective and surprising: we can surmise that there was a much wider area going far beyond those circumscribed by the historic ‘feud of Galatina’, considered the principal area of the phenomenon and the small local cult focused on the chapel of San Paolo, where Carpitella collected the dramatic and desperate sounds of the tarantulees’ suffering in June 1959. The identification of the places is accompanied by valuable descriptions of the modes and times of therapy, and the age of the participants,³⁰ gleaned from the accounts in the examined sources. Francesco Attanasi’s complex enquiry cannot even be summarily described

30 With some astonishing, almost incredible results: ‘The young Franco, aged seven months... danced for three hours’ (Attanasi 2007: 161); this was an account of the first domestic therapy conducted by *mesciu* Stifani on 15 July 1928 (Di Lecce 1994: 168-169).

here, because of the host of suggestions, stimuli and critical issues that it raises. This very rich picture offers great potential for further studies and may also fire the imagination of musicians – both those engaged in ‘early music’ and those who prefer ‘ethnic music.’³¹

31 I am fully aware that these and other terms are ambiguous and tenuous and I have written elsewhere on the subject (Agamennone 2010), but we must remember that many musicians when describing the musical sphere in which they are active, resort to this nomenclature, even though rather weak and vague for a rigorous modern classification of music making.

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