



TRANS 27 (2023)

DOSSIER: REIMAGINING AUDIOVISUAL ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

An introduction to the special issue “Reimagining Audiovisual Ethnomusicology”

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This special issue compiles contributions that were initially presented at the 2nd Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Audiovisual Ethnomusicology, held in Lisbon from June 27th to 30th 2018. It has been a long time since then, and we can safely say that “the world has changed”: a pandemic, too many wars, and a general feeling of disorientation and uncertainty now permeate our societies. However, we believe that the second meeting of the study group marked a pivotal moment in the evolution of the interdisciplinary field of Audiovisual Ethnomusicology. This is particularly noticeable in the launch of at least two new journals: the Italian-based *Sound Ethnographies*, edited by NeoClassica with the collaboration of the Museo Antonio Pasqualino in 2018, and the USA-based *Journal of Audiovisual Ethnomusicology*, sponsored by SEM. We are confident that these journals will soon become indispensable references in the discipline. Furthermore, since 2018 several significant books have been published by our members, including *American Music Documentary: Five Case Studies of Cine-Ethnomusicology* (Harbert 2018), *Audiovisual Ethnomusicology: Filming Musical Cultures* (D’Amico 2020), and *CineWorlding: Scenes of Cinematic Research-Creation* (MacDonald 2023). The third symposium, held at the University of Cork in September 2023, confirmed the importance of making available to the community of scholars a large selection of theoretical reflections and case studies that can help the development of this young (sub)discipline. Hence, we decided to bring you this publication despite delays.

As editors and former Chair of the Program Committee and Secretary of the Study Group, we are pleased to introduce this special issue, which serves as a testament to some of the considerations and insights shared in Lisbon. Within it, you will find five thought-provoking articles that delve into different facets of the audiovisual approach to ethnomusicology, accompanied by a collaborative essay synthesizing the dynamic discussions from the symposium’s roundtable. The volume concludes with an afterword about a selection of films screened during the event.

The first contribution, by ethnomusicologist Jaime Bofill and filmmaker Michael Brims

(2023), offers a reflection on their short film *Sounds of the Street Vendors* (2015), which portrays the socio-cultural intricacies that underlie the *pregón*, the sonic cry produced by Havana's street vendors. As the authors explain, this distinctive sound is progressively reintegrating the city's soundscape after decades of restrictions on this informal economic activity. The film explores this re-emerging cultural phenomenon, encompassing its traditional, popular, and tourism-oriented versions, as well as its commercial manifestation, providing a personal perspective on the dynamic and diverse street vending culture of Havana. The collaboration between Bofill and Brims embodies the authors' interdisciplinary approach: their reflections encompass the creative process behind the making of the film and shed light on the synergistic relationship between ethnomusicology and documentary filmmaking, a well-discussed topic within academic literature. Here, the focus is on how such collaborations can transcend traditional academic boundaries, allowing for a move beyond documentation-oriented filming.

The following text, by Nicola Mangifesta (2023), explores another dimension of the audiovisual in ethnomusicology by delving into the relationships between the traditional Balinese method of musical instruction (*meguru panggul*) and contemporary e-learning strategies. Despite the existence of a local music notation system, the prevalence of the *meguru panggul*, which relies on face-to-face teaching, has firmly established Balinese gamelan music within the realm of orally transmitted traditions. With the advent of web technologies, Balinese musicians have harnessed platforms such as YouTube and Vimeo to create gamelan music e-learning videos that emulate the pedagogical structure of the traditional methodology, offering digital renditions of it. By integrating virtual and traditional ethnography and navigating between global and local experiences, Mangifesta presents an investigation into the audiovisual characteristics of a small corpus of tutorials available on the web. The goal is to highlight specific technical issues that arise in the *meguru panggul* pedagogic method when applied to e-learning, with a focus on the use of filming perspectives and the arrangement of instruments for the shot.

In *Co-utility and transmodality* (2023), Dario Ranocchiari pushes traditional disciplinary boundaries even further by presenting a narrative around the intersection of ethnographic fieldwork and music video production on the Caribbean island of San Andrés (Colombia). The author's collaboration with a local media company resulted in the creation of four "urban music" videos. This experience served as a catalyst for the author's introspection on the significance of participation in collaborative ethnography, prompting a proposition regarding the utilization of ethnographically-grounded music videos as shared research outcomes. The key concepts of "co-utility" and "transmodality" emerge as foundational pillars in this research proposition, advocating for a more inclusive, collaborative, and impactful approach to academic inquiry. By leveraging ethnographically-grounded music videos as conduits for shared research outcomes, the author emphasizes the potential for academic research to bridge gaps between academia and society, fostering a more nuanced understanding of cultural phenomena while enriching scholarly and public dialogues.

Focusing on the musical performance of *Encomendação das Almas*, a midnight practice during Lent in the villages of Idanha-a-Nova, Antonio Ventura's article (2023) delves into the

multifaceted dynamics that emerge from the creation of a documentary film centered around this cultural tradition. It seeks to elucidate the impact of visual storytelling on the studied field, shedding light on the transformative influence that visual representations hold. Moreover, Ventura's contribution probes into the intricacies of dialogues between "bottom-up" practices, representative of local cultural agents, and "top-down" actions, emphasizing the interplay between academic perspectives and grassroots cultural dynamics. Central to the article's inquiry are several pivotal questions that, although recurrent, remain unavoidable in our discipline. These encompass the ethnomusicologist's role in the film's creation, its impact on the field of study, and the potential of visual discourse in fostering stronger connections with both the studied and academic communities.

In one way or another, all these contributions point to specific issues in audiovisual ethnomusicology that extend beyond its traditional —or most easily conceivable— limits. In "One or Many Cine-Ethnomusicologies?: Four Plateaus of Possession/Bodying" Michael MacDonald (2023) explores how it is possible to move beyond what has been called the documentation paradigm by examining the intersection of ethnomusicology, cinema, and a variety of socio-cultural paradigms shaping them. In what could be understood as an attempt of synthesis between contemporary theoretical frames and classic disciplinary contributions, MacDonald guides the reader through four different plateaus, following Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Inspired by Rouch's ideas and films, the author engages with the concept of ethno-fiction, distinguishing it from observational-participation to advocate for an audiovisual ethnomusicology that transcends established frameworks to embrace multiple cinematic-becomings and diverse conceptual registers. Ultimately, the essay promotes a relational practice that fosters community support and a conception of films as worlding projects, not mere documents. In doing so, MacDonald underscores the potential transformative power and openness of cine-ethnomusicologies.

Finally, in "Doing, discussing, and teaching audiovisual ethnomusicology", Jennie Gubner, Nico Staiti and Matías Isolabella (2023) actualize the personal debate they developed over various meetings, presenting it as a roundtable. By examining a range of (trans)disciplinary issues, they reproduce various perspectives and approaches that are recurrent in our community, grappling with the importance of reclaiming the ethnomusicological legacy and, simultaneously, the need to explore new problematics. The article is organized into three parts, as announced in the title, although the author's approach is broad enough to engage in more general considerations. The nuanced articulation of different views of the discipline that emerges through the dialogic structure of the text makes it a useful roadmap for developing critical discussions. Among other issues, it is worth highlighting the critical review of existing publishing platforms, emphasizing their characteristics or accessibility; a keen critique of ethnomusicological film productions concerning ethnography and specific research questions; and a series of proposals to further develop and consolidate our study group.

Last, but not least, the special issue concludes with a collage of short texts by the creators of six ethnographic films screened at the Symposium (Belišová *et al.* 2023). Each filmmaker's narrative offers a glimpse on their audiovisual approach to their subjects. Horacio Curti writes about *Eolssigu!* (2019), a film that serves as a bridge, connecting European audiences to South Korean musical

traditions and fostering a sensory experience that transcends academic boundaries. Jana Belišová's *Ťažká duša/Heavy Heart* (2017) intertwines narratives within Romani communities, emphasizing intergenerational transmission through mourning melodies. Benjamin J. Harbert, the director of *Follow Me Down* (2013), writes about the challenges of creating a film that avoids the typical portrayal of prison musicians. Instead, he opts for a concert film structure to showcase diverse musical expressions. Miranda van der Spek's *Worth Repeating!* (2012) focuses on the music of the Ouldémé people in Cameroon, embodying their worldview and cyclical thinking. In *We're Too Loud* (2018) Michael B. MacDonald delves into CineWorlding, an approach that challenges conventional ethnographic methods. Finally, incorporating excerpts from his Ph.D. web-thesis, Robbie Campbell introduces *Estevão: A Sensory Ethnomusicology of Learning* (2016), providing a sensorial approach to the daily life of a master timbila xylophone maker in rural Mozambique.

Reimagining audiovisual ethnomusicology is, we believe, a marvelous challenge and an opportunity to engage in an ongoing and collaborative enterprise. It leaves open many possible scenarios where, we like to think, there is enough space to reconcile various concerns and sensibilities. We hope this Special Issue can serve as inspiration for further explorations.

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Cita recomendada

Ranocchiarì, Dario y Matías Isolabella. 2023. "An introduction to the special issue "Reimagining Audiovisual Ethnomusicology". *TRANS-Revista Transcultural de Música/Transcultural Music Review* 27 [Fecha de consulta: dd/mm/aa]



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