Musical Ethnography and Transformative Learning in the Greek University

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Abstract

This article offers an autobiographical account of teaching musical ethnography in an ethnomusicology classroom. I explore ethnography's pedagogical potential to engender transformative moments and new cultural understandings through a series of ethnographic vignettes. The questions raised situate the discussion at the intersections between critical theory on ethnography and performance on the one hand and pedagogy as social action on the other. They draw their specifics from the current Greek educational and sociopolitical context. Nevertheless, they address the broader theme of the pedagogical and political value of (musical) ethnography and knowledge production in academia.

Keywords

Ethnographic research, ethnomusicology pedagogy, transformative learning, musical ethnography, tertiary education

Introduction

In the following autobiographical account of teaching musical ethnography in an ethnomusicology classroom, I explore ethnography's pedagogical potential for affective encounters, for engendering new cultural understandings and an "openness to different ways of being, knowing and doing" (Spencer and Mills 2011). Responding to Deborah Wong's call for education as cultural work (1998), I am especially interested in a critical pedagogy of ethnography that affords opportunities for transformative learning (Mezirow 1997, McIlwairth 2016).

Why is this important at the particular juncture of place and time? The article comes at a moment when Greece is struggling to recover from the severe debt crisis that, over the last decade, has put an enormous strain on its economy and society[1]. The reforms and austerity measures have brought about unemployment, social exclusion and impoverishment to large sections of the middle and lower classes. They have caused thousands of young people to leave the country. Coupled with the 'refugee crisis', which put Greece at the frontier line of migrational flows from the Middle East and South-Central Asia towards Europe, these conditions tested Greek society's intercultural tolerance and, at the same time, rendered both citizen and immigrant lives precarious. These developments are also implicated in the recent rise of neo-fascism in Greece, as in Europe. At a popular level, neo-fascism has manifested in Greece in different forms and degrees, from parents' opposition to the admittance of refugee children in Greek public schools to criminal action by ultra-right assault battalions against immigrants and anti-fascist activists. It has also played a part in the refuelling of age-old debates. For instance, over the place of Orthodox Christianity as the official religion of Greece, and the 'Macedonian question', a dispute over ethnic origins and belongings which has been igniting competing nationalisms in our corner of Southeastern Europe, discussed further down. Despite recent post-identity theorizing and the proliferation of discourses on cultural diversity and multiculturalism on the national and European levels, these circumstances bring about an essentialization of identities. Moreover, they test religious, ethnic and cultural tolerance.

Against this backdrop, ethnomusicological teaching in tertiary education has demonstrated its potential for transformative learning or, in this context, for equipping students with critical tools to resist processes and practices of reification and essentialization. Krüger, among others, reports on how an ethnomusicology pedagogy can promote among students deeply shared emotional experiences, compassion, tolerance and a heightened appreciation of other people and their musics (Krüger 2009).

However, this transformative potential of ethnomusicology is not always easy to strike home. This is not only due to the marginal role generally reserved for disciplines such as it in Greek, or European, tertiary education. In the specific case study recounted in this article, several reasons further limit the transformative influence that ethnomusicological teaching may have on students. The first derives from the specific trajectories of the institutionalization of ethnomusicology at the national level. In the Greek case, the ethnomusicological practice has generated "a field for the confrontation and interaction between competing local disciplinary paradigms and ideologies of identity and knowledge" (Kallimopoulou 2009: 111). The associations forged between ethnomusicology and Greek folklore studies, in particular, have sponsored notions of Greek ethnomusicology – the 'ethno' here readily conjuring up the *ethnos*, i.e. the nation in modern Greek. In addition, they have been committed to the study and safeguarding of Greek folk music understood as a reified object invested with authenticity and antiquity. Such associations prove quite resilient and challenging to shake from ethnomusicology students, especially in a conventional classroom setting that employs the staples of lecturing combined with discussion, audiovisual material, reading lists and written assignments.

A second reason relates to the specific departmental context[2]. My home music department at the University of Macedonia strongly emphasises musical practice and performance. Its programme matches well-established Western European music universities, academies, and conservatories in structure and content. It has four majors in Western classical music, Byzantine music, Greek traditional music, and Contemporary music. All students are music practitioners, and musical instruction forms an essential component in the curriculum. Musical performance is highly prized at the symbolic and discursive level at the expense of musicology. At the same time, a prevailing ideology of music as autonomous art sometimes comes together with a relative discredit surrounding the social implications of music. Ethnomusicology forms a small part of the musicology courses of the curriculum. Most courses cover Western musicology and music education. Partly due to the abovementioned association of ethnomusicology in Greece with Greek music, but also due to limited departmental resources, practice-oriented world music courses and ensembles are not part of the curriculum[3].

A third reason relates to the student population. The vast majority of prospective music students at the national level select this particular department as their first choice, possibly due to its applied, performance-oriented curriculum on the one hand and to expectations regarding employability, thereby, of its graduates on the other. Setting aside this unifying element, the student population is from the outset greatly varied in terms of societal, economic, geographical and cultural background. Diversity in skills and outlook is further developed during the different programmes of the four majors. The ensuing discussion is particularly attentive to those students majoring in Greek traditional music who come from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds and are on their way to becoming professional musicians in the Greek music market. Among such student groups, ethnocentric and essentializing attitudes are most readily absorbed. Here, the value of critical pedagogies for intercultural understanding is vividly manifested.

Given the broader social challenges outlined above, can ethnography-based disciplines such as ethnomusicology be of import in this particular educational environment? An ethnographic model of research-based learning, I argue, encourages students to employ and enrich the social skills that they acquire in the intricate webs of cross-cultural musical encounters to develop reflexive standpoints and rethink their positionality concerning others. The performative contexts that ethnographic research creates in the field and the classroom can engender intercultural empathy and 'in-between' spaces where cultural identifications can be unsettled and even, at times, transcended. Musical ethnography[4], particularly with its incorporation of musical performance both as a subject of study and as a research practice, further augments the possibilities for embodied, affective knowledge and transformative learning.

The following ethnographic vignettes focus on the learning experiences of students who undertook small ethnographic projects within their undergraduate courses. The projects combined an ethnomusicology fieldwork component with a theoretical introduction to the cultural study of music and, to some extent, with a hands-on musical performance. I draw upon a variety of collected materials. These include ethnographic data produced by the students in the field (interviews, transcriptions, photographic material, video and music recordings), student coursework (field diaries, ethnographic reports, course assessment forms), and my notes from our informal discussions with students during fieldwork and in class. The questions raised situate the discussion at the intersections between critical theory on ethnography and performance on the one hand and pedagogy as social

action on the other. They draw their specifics from the current Greek educational and sociopolitical context. They address the broader theme of the pedagogical and political value of (musical) ethnography and knowledge production in academia.

Inside Out: Rehearsing Musical Intimacy through Ethnographic Practice

Nikos[5] took a course on research methods in ethnomusicology. It is a hands-on introduction to ethnographic research focusing on music where students carry out a mini fieldwork project. Their assignments include formulating a research question and submitting a research proposal; engaging in fieldwork through participant observation, interviewing, musical performance, keeping a field diary, filming or recording a musical event, and submitting an ethnographic report. Brief lectures on the principles, techniques, and ethics of ethnographic research are followed by a seminar-textured part in which students present their assignments, receive feedback, and discuss their findings and progress so far. In this second part, my role is a facilitator (Mezirow 1997: 11), encouraging reflexivity on the students' part. An introductory course in ethnomusicology is a prerequisite in order for students to have an acquaintance with ethnomusicological themes and theories.

For his fieldwork project, Nikos chose to look into the musical world of the Sarakatsani, a Greek-speaking ethnic-cultural group of mainland Greece. Up until the mid-20th century, the music of the Sarakatsani was mainly vocal: their social gatherings and festivities were marked by communal singing and dance[6]. Musical instruments, except for shepherd's flutes, mainly entered this musical world when they started to settle and thus to form more sustained bonds with the settled populations. Mixed marriages between members of the Sarakatsani and these populations, in particular, offered spaces of inter-communal interaction. The Sarakatsani started to participate in the music of others and experiment with the use of musical instruments for accompanying their songs and dances[7]. Nikos identifies himself as a member of the Sarakatsani. He was born into a Sarakatsani family and, like his father, is a singer and clarinet player of Sarakatsani music. Nikos wanted to explore this history of musical transformation over the second half of the 20th century by focusing on the growing role of the clarinet in the musical world of the Sarakatsani. He was thus exceptionally well placed for such an undertaking, notwithstanding the pitfalls and political limitations of doing research at or 'of home' (Coleman and Simpson 2004: 28-30).

Nikos conducted participant observation, interviewed his grandmother and father, sang with his grand-mother, and participated in musical performances with his fathe"s band. I also encouraged Nikos to actively think about his place and role in the transmission, reception and transformation of the music of Sarakatsani. His research also revolved around oral histories: Nikos belonged to the third generation among his extant relatives. Like his late grandfather, his grandmother had spent much of her life as a nomad pastoralist in Northern Greece. She belonged to what Ong would call a world of secondary orality (Ong 2002) and communal singing and could sing many of the old Sarakatsanika songs of the table (*tis tavlas*) and dance songs. She was an important agent in Nikos's broader musical acculturation.

On the other hand, Nikos's father had grown up in the years of the community's settlement. Enculturated in the vocal tradition of the community, he had learned to play the clarinet empirically and had gradually worked out instrumental versions of the vocal repertoire. Nikos himself represented yet another passage, namely to the world of musical literacy. He had received formal training in the music conservatoire and, at the time, was studying for his BA in music with Greek folk singing as his major. I was thus keen to see how Nikos would reflect upon the changing perceptions and experiences of communal music-making in the lives of the Sarakatsani people. Especially, to find out whether the autobiographical fieldwork experience would encourage him to "work through the specificity of [his own] self to contextualise and transcend it" (Okely 1992: 2).

However, none of Nikos's ventures into ethnography and oral history made it into his report. Although his research tapped into the life stories of three generations, his own included, their experiences and narratives were utterly absent from his end-of-term ethnographic report. Instead, his report was a pastiche of scholarly and popular online texts that spoke stereotypically about the Sarakatsani, their origins and culture. In line with these, Nikos expanded on their name's etymology and ancient Greek and national credentials before offering an ahistorical presentation of their culture and dance, described with 'simple' and 'primaeval', and 'age-old'. Even when he eventually came to music, he did not draw on his ethnographic data. He chose to quote the words cited online of a well-known musician of the Greek Macedonian region. Furthermore, this was despite all the fieldwork tasks and reports in class that he had meticulously produced. Why did Nikos find it hard to report on

his ethnographic findings and turn them into reflexive writing? What was stopping him from writing his father's and grandmother's and his own autobiographical experience as a legitimate way to talk about the Sarakatsani?

To someone conversant with the history and poetics of Greek cultural politics, this may come as no surprise. The origins and transhumant way of life of the Sarakatsani have formed an enduring topic of interest among folklorists, historians, linguists and anthropologists alike. Over the 20th century, a genealogy of scholarly writings produced stereotypical and romanticized images of these populations both as primordial Greeks and as indigenous "noble savages" (Herzfeld 1999: 33)[8]. The treatment of Sarakatsani is evocative of that of folk culture at large in Greek scholarly literature. For quite a long time, the study of Greek folk culture revolved around questions of cultural continuity and (ancient Greek) origins. It sponsored notions of the Greek folk as pure Hellenes whose remote lives and culture, preferably located somewhere in Greece's mountainous and isolated regions, had been arrested in time. Folklore studies in particular, through text-centred analyses, a search for antecedents, and a focus on music as a product rather than process, played a crucial role in forging a canon of 'Greek folk music' that relied on strict typologies of inclusion and exclusion (Herzfeld 1982, Nitsiakos 2008). Music was reified and essentialized. Processes steeped in orality, performativity, community and locality were approached through the use of top-down and etic conceptions. In the last decades, interest has instead shifted to ethnographically pertinent questions, to the experience of people making music, to the meanings and feelings generated in performance, and the role of music in forging ties and erecting boundaries[9]. Despite this more recent work, popular attitudes shaped based on origins and continuities are enduring and hard to dismiss. Various culture brokers, including local cultural societies, folk dance companies, teachers of folk music and dance, and, not least, university professors, have played a role in the proliferation of stereotypical notions through their discourses and practices, which constitute, to use Herzfeld's words, "little acts of essentializing" (Herzfeld 1997: 2). These acts of essentializing are multiplied on TV culture programmes and online, through uncritical reproduction of texts and ideas, further conferring stereotypical representations of the status of 'truth'.

Where does this leave music students, some of whom will pursue, or already follow, careers as professional folk musicians? As already mentioned, undergraduate students in music departments are a mixed lot. Not all come from privileged, affluent or ethnically homogeneous positions (Coleman 2011: 4), especially since Greek higher education is public and without fees. Especially those who major in Greek traditional music often come from economically or culturally deprived backgrounds or the rural peripheries. Many, like Nikos, are already professional musicians or on their way to becoming professionals, who pursue a degree because of its symbolic/social capital and increase their career prospects, notably as teachers at public Music Schools. This post promises stability in terms of tenure and a steady wage. Such students, in particular, are keenly aware of the performative politics of being a 'Greek folk musician' and are quick to reproduce and capitalize on the rhetorics of origins and authenticity when they feel that there is an audience for them. The stakes of turning critical attention to such attitudes in the university classroom are high if one sees these students as prospective "public intellectuals", as "sophisticated self-producers" who are "self-consciously engaged in culture-making" (Wong 2004: 302, 305) and are actively present (visible and audible) in the public sphere. My work as a pedagogue seems to necessitate a double task: on the one hand, not to wrest away agency from them (Wong 2004: 307), while, on the other, to engender critical reflexivity on their part and provoke them to contextualize their assumptions and act from a position of accountability[10]. In this case, this entails a critical reappraisal of public representations in ways that also encourage them to rethink their discourses and practices.

Nikos's assignment in at-home ethnography invited a rehearsal in cultural intimacy (Herzfeld 1997): to turn the inside out, or, in symbolic terms, to move from the official rhetorics of 'Greek traditional music' on which stock descriptions of the Sarakatsani rest, to an engagement with his music history as lived histories. This would entail mediating two narratives, an official/external/written narrative and the intimate/internal/oral narratives told across his family's generations about the experience of Sarakatsani lives. In the end, Nikos redrafted his report, keeping the old version but this time preceding it with a more personalized account of his family. Both were present, but no resolution or synthesis was achieved. Having internalized the former narrative, Nikos was 'arrested' between the two, unable to move beyond their juxtaposition to some dialogical reconciliation or synthesis. His ethnographic practice had generated a space between the intimacy of life stories and the objective 'truths' of written representations, and between the roles of 'insider' practitioner and 'outsider' scholar, one affective the other supposedly dispassionate.

Despite not being able to reconcile the contradictions that arose from his ethnographic practise, Nikos may have become aware and self-reflexive of his identifications in new ways. This example then highlights the potential

and possible limits of teaching ethnographic practice as a form of critical pedagogy that can engender self-knowledge and transformative moments of displacement, re-allocation and repositioning.

The Music Social: Ethnomusicology Basics

The main challenge for ethnomusicologists employed in Music Departments is to effectively communicate ethnomusicology's call for understanding the musical and the social as integrally related and mutually construed. Lecturing about the importance of music in/as social life, no matter how many or vivid the illustrative examples used seems not always to come through. Students may nod in agreement and even engage in passionate discussions when examples are brought closer to home, metaphorically and literally speaking. However, they instinctively switch back to notions of music as a self-contained entity as soon as we are out of an ethnomusicology frame. Such notions seem to have been instilled into them during years of tuition in music conservatories and, for that matter, in many undergraduate courses where the focus is on the formal and structural features of music and the musical score – transformative moments of displacement, re-allocation and repositioning.

Ethnographic encounters in the field make a powerful point of the music social[11]. Due to geographical proximity and our existing network of interlocutors, our fieldwork destinations are often in the area of Macedonia in Northern Greece. In this region, 'ethnicity has been simultaneously fundamentalised and pathologised' (Cowan 2000: 2, Manos 2003), and the need arises for situational approaches that highlight 'identity' and 'difference' as dynamic social processes[12]. Local communities of Northern Greece seem very awake to the political implications of cultural representation and take the task of self-ascription seriously. Our university affiliation often seems to add further urgency to this task.

The town of Lokario[13] is a regular destination for our ethnographic training. It is located in an area where the debate over Macedonian identities has recently re-intensified due to an ethnographic monograph on culture and politics in Central and Eastern Macedonia and has brought contending sides, both within the scholarly and local communities, in sharp confrontation. Our fieldwork in villages around the town of Lokario usually involves informal meetings, musical performances, and semi-structured interviews, often combined with participant observation during the carnival rituals of the Christmas period. As concerns interviews, students are instructed to ask open questions, to leave space and time to their interlocutors, and to aim for musical life narratives, i.e. ones that help us to understand not only musical form and repertoire but also musical experience (Finnegan 2003) and music culture as 'a group's total involvement with music' (Titon 2018: 4). Each year we seek to meet and interact with different musicians, singers and instrument makers, and these encounters yield different, sometimes radically different, representations and identifications both from one village to the next and within villages. Students become aware that our interlocutors are not an undifferentiated group who speak with one voice, a point also raised in class.

A few years ago, a group of students visiting one of the villages faced an unexpected incident. In an interview with one particular musician, the head of the local cultural association also turned up. He insisted on commenting on the monograph mentioned above, which he said contained serious misinformation and historically inaccurate facts that misrepresented the area and were causing uproar among its inhabitants. What he mainly took issue with was the purported practices of speaking *dopia* (the 'local' [language], a Slavic dialect spoken in local variations in areas of Northern Greece[14]) in the wider region. He said such information was incorrect and dangerous given the propaganda of the neighbouring countries, and it was disturbing that the book was being used in Greek universities. Though disconcerted at first, the students reacted responsively by listening to what the head had to say, asking for more information, and communicating his words in the classroom, as he had requested.

In a neighbouring village, the interlocutors of another student group told a different story of ethnolinguistic and cultural belongings. They articulated a more open and tolerant vision of the past and future. Language and song were important in their self-designation as slav-speaking Greeks who felt strongly about their credentials and loyalties as Greeks and about preserving their local dialect and culture. Not long after the digital recorder had stopped, one interlocutor said, "Now let us play the banned songs!" Those present started playing songs in *dopia*. This generated on the part of specific local communities in areas of Northern Greece practices of self-

censorship, in the form of singing songs without words or translating lyrics in Greek. Such songs had been the target of sustained censorship by the state throughout much of the twentieth century[15].

During their preparation for fieldwork, students had been instructed not to touch on such sensitive issues, which had been critically discussed in class. Students were surprised to find themselves at the centre of a dispute that may have appeared to them as rather academic and about the past but seemed to profoundly affect the lives of their interlocutors in the present.y. The dispute thoroughly exposed music as a politicized field where meanings are policed and contested. Through the ensuing reflection and contextualization in class – processes whose importance cannot be overstated (Kallimopoulou 2013: 21) – it became clear that language and song are central in asserting communal identity and erasing boundaries. Students became alert to this fact by experiencing it first-hand. I was surprised to see how many attuned students became to language and culture politics issues in the following semesters, when our musical focus shifted to other ethnolinguistic groups such as the Pomaks in Xanthi, Thrace or the Grecanici of southern Italy. For students majoring in Greek traditional music, this is important. They move to a position where they can probe similar disjunctions in producing musical meaning in their musical field. Sometimes, being members of marginal communities (e.g. Roma), students can reflect critically on the Self and/as the Other and on the contradictions that their role as both 'carriers of Greek tradition' (a concept to which I will return) marginalized Others entails.

Transformative Performances in Musical Ethnography

The teaching and doing of ethnography involve performance in several ways. Firstly, ethnography most often entails the study of performance, whether in the narrow sense of ritual or the performing arts or the broader sense of social action in everyday life. In the wake of the performative turn, the study of social action "as performance" (Schechner 2006) brings attention to the constructedness, relationality and positionality of subjects, communities and identities. Through an ethnographic focus on the performative aspects of culture, whether in the narrow or the broader sense, students see how a community is construed as such and how it erects and polices its borders with the Other. These processes are multilayered and often contested. For instance, to the inhabitants of the villages around Lokario, talking about music and making music offered occasions for the performance of different, even oppositional, senses of locality, community, and ethnicity. Laying bare such processes through participant observation and critical discussions in class helps students to shake away notions of identity as a fixed attribute of people, and highlights that "all associations of place, people, and culture are social and historical creations to be explained, not given natural facts" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 4).

Secondly, ethnography is a particular type of cultural performance that brings together researchers and interlocutors in meaningful interaction. Ethnographic assignments make students aware of the dynamic process of the ethnographic encounter, one that positions them 'as social actors within the very cultural phenomena they study' (Cooley and Barz 2008: 4). According to Cooley and Barz, "Doing fieldwork, we weave ourselves (or are woven by others) into the communities we study, becoming cultural actors in the very dramas of society we endeavour to understand, and vice versa" (2008: 23). Such a position of entanglement and interdependency affords possibilities for disrupting certainties, attaching and detaching oneself, and new identifications and constructions of the Self are thus open to contingency and new meaning articulations.

Some of the students' comments on the ethnographic experience illuminate its transformative potential. The aspect of meeting face to face with people is one of the most extraordinary parts of the whole experience for many students:

> [Student report]: ...many meaningful and important things get said off-camera when the informant unwinds and treats you to some nice wine. I think this is the part that will stay with me more than anything.

Comparing an interview conducted via Skype with previous ethnographic experiences, another student stressed the importance of first-hand, in-situ interaction:

> [Student report]: …the lack of proper technical means, the difficulties of video storage, having to converse via a camera-screen, and being far away from the interviewee's surroundings made the interview more difficult but also, in my opinion, incomplete. Because one always communicates, feels, learns and operates with all five senses. In previous interviews, we were given the opportunity to get literally in touch, in direct contact with places, sounds, smells, and everything else directly related to the person we were interacting with. A warm atmosphere formed that both sides - researchers and interviewees - cherished. And the interview was preceded and followed by other conversations, [which were] equally useful as sources of information.

Ethnography is an encounter between people, and in many cases, the fact that the students are musicians helped establish rapport and warmth. Their shared capacity also generated mutual respect: interviewees often addressed interviewers with the phrase 'being a musician yourself', appealing to a shared understanding to explain something that may otherwise have needed further clarification.

> [Student report]: Mr K remembered P [a fellow student] from one occasion they had played together. This, and in particular the fact that Mr K had marked him out as a talented musician and an expert, created an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect from the outset.

In class, we stress that the testimony of young musicians is equally valid and 'authentic' as that of the more elderly if the aim is not, or not only, to inquire into a musical idiom, its history and form. Many of our musician-interlocutors are relatively young also plays a part in establishing a peer-to-peer rapport with students. Asking questions about the experience of musicians making music makes young musicians more eager to talk about and reflect on current practices that, under other circumstances, they may not have acknowledged and that are rarely discussed in scholarly literature. The use of the harmonium in contemporary *paniyiri* (outdoors feast), a practice routinely deplored by music critics and scholars, is a case in point:

> Interviewee: But [in such musical practices too] we can find aspects of tradition. We will find in folk music orchestras the harmonium, as in all areas of Greece, guys you too know this from your places.
> Interviewer: You too have the harmonium at your *paniyiri*?
> Interviewee: Well, of course, we do. But there are some things ... now we have put the harmonium on target and shoot it. Okay, it is a healthy transformation for me, as healthy as it can be. We have our friend George [who plays the harmonium] here too.

Another young musician reflected on how he approaches a rural musical idiom, himself having come from an urban environment:

> Interviewee: ...You guys know well how this happens. And you A [student], you are from Trikala [a town in Thessaly], for example. Your musical engagement, too, will surely be more 'global'. You may come from a mountain village, let us say, but we are lads who have come in contact with urbanization. We are not 100% traditional people, I mean, we do not wear fustanella and vraka[16]. The same holds for B [student-interviewer], you know what I mean? Our engagement with traditional music came by chance so to speak. And this is also a very nice thing because we are given the opportunity to see other things besides that and to be able to interact with it.

Ethnography is about getting to know the Other and getting to know ourselves in our interaction with the Other. This dimension is possibly the most important in terms of the transformative potential of ethnography. The interviewees' accounts often spark discussions in class and help students reflect on their own ways of engaging with 'tradition'. Students majoring in Greek traditional music, in particular, are often seen as the 'carriers of tradition', a role they either take upon themselves or is bestowed upon them. Prestigious as it may be, this role comes together with strict prescriptions regarding the content and preservation of 'our musical heritage' at the expense of musicians' creativity and experimentation. Seeing things from the interviewees' perspective can make students review their positions and notions of 'authenticity' and open them to new understandings of the Self. Students often had notions about 'traditional music' being 'authentic'. However, the experience in the field and our ensuing discussions in class suggested that all musics, when placed in context, are equally 'authentic'. This, in turn, made them reflect on and question their own musical beliefs and practices:

> [Course evaluation form]: [Fieldwork was] particularly useful for my personal research, for sure in musical terms and in terms of posing questions and gaining insights at the socio-anthropological level. Particularly valuable was evaluating information and inquiring into 'authenticity' issues, a process that affects my musical path.

> [Course evaluation form]: My goal is to gather the information that will take me forward in my understanding and approach of different cultures, which also entails distancing myself from stereotypical notions that often prevail. In addition, all this will help me in my search and artistic expression.

Musical performance yields affective embodied insights. When these are translated on the Self, on the researcher's own body, this is perhaps one of the most extraordinary occasions of transformative learning:

> [Course evaluation form]: Fieldwork is an unforgettable, moving, fatiguing and transformative experience. During my undergraduate studies, I started to feel severe stress because of the exposure that singing involves, I felt that

> due to my disposition, I could not cope with such exposure, with being the centre of attention and all. Ethnomusicology studies and fieldwork helped me a lot in this respect too. My focus changed, it is no longer myself but the entire musical and social context of a live performance. I realized that even this concern of mine was culturally and historically determined and could be easily overcome.

The ethnographic experience also raised awareness of the power imbalances between researcher and researched. Occasionally, interviewees felt intimidated by the interviewing process and saw an impersonation of institutional power in students. Reflecting on the difficulties of fieldwork, one student wrote:

> [Student report]: The fact that the research was taking place as part of a university course played a part in the interviewees' greeting us in goodwill, as young lads with inquisitive minds. But then again stressed some informants who were not familiar with the [interview] process. And although we asked questions in a simple language, they were trying to conceal their accent or the colloquial idiom that they normally use and speaking in a more concocted way that would befit, or so they thought the university context.

This serves to problematise romantic notions that students often have about music being universal and able to unite everyone in relationships of equality and empowerment. It may also enact interesting status reversals in the case of students who come from poor social backgrounds.

Thirdly, musical ethnography entails musical performance as a research practice. Described by ethnomusicologists variously as "musical participant observation" (Krüger 2008), "truly participatory participant-observation" (Shelemay 2008), "performative ethnography" (Wong 2008), musical ethnography is viewed as "a privileged means of access to embodied knowledge and fellow feeling, which can also lead to performative outcomes" (Krüger 2008: 75)[17]. In my teaching, musical ethnography often engenders occasions for music-making. Sometimes the interviews also include sections that demand exposition on the musical instrument so that the interviewee combines talking with playing music. When meetings are scheduled in local cultural houses, interviews may end with music-making among local musicians, with students often joining in. In one course, fieldwork in a particular musical community is combined with learning to perform its music throughout the semester[18]. This affords wonderful opportunities for musical participant observation, and our interlocutors usually feel proud and intrigued that a university class devoted time to learning their music.

Musical performance in an ethnographic context epitomizes the affective dimension of the students' experience. Especially in courses with assignments in which student groups work collaboratively, the 'field expedition' creates sensorial assemblages of fun, travel, and music-making, heightened experiences that "bring the group into a deeper level of mutual understanding" (Turner and Turner 1982: 40). In some cases, musical performance's experiential and non-representational aspects offered students who had difficulties with readings and texts an alternative research mode. In evaluating the whole experience, other students reported that they found the interview stressful because they did not know what to expect or felt they were not in control. This was compensated through music-making. Music-making is the part that breaks the ice, that makes students feel connected, and that impresses them the most:

> [Student report]: The most important part of all was when we played with them some of the songs that we had been preparing during the semester.

> [Student report]: The interview ended with C [the interviewee] playing on the lute Kasos carol songs for us and composition of his own, while at the same time he encouraged us to play something together. Which happened in the end, and I think it was the best moment of the interview since we got a little taste of Kasos's *glenti* (feast).

Feelings of anxiety, reservations or lack of confidence are overcome once music making starts. The same is often the case for narrators. According to one report:

> [Student report]: …at times, our informant was disoriented, and consequently, we did not get the answers we wanted. Other times, we posed the same question again because we understood from the answer that the question was not understood. But when he played us, everything changed. We came immediately closer. The duration of our visit at his place was six hours, while the interview was about an hour-long, and if we had no things to attend to the next day, we would probably have stayed until dawn.

Performing the music of a community in the field or the classroom is one way of enacting the community's performative events, often together with community members. In this sense, musical ethnography can make a valuable contribution to the field of performance ethnography[19], Which "in some cases takes performance *per*

se as an object of study [while] in others it uses performance to tease apart phenomena not thought of in these terms" (Hamera 2011: 318). Despite the field's heterogeneity in terms of disciplinary belongings and theoretical outlooks, what seems to be shared is a commitment to the pedagogical and political potential of performative approaches to ethnography. This commitment to "a performative politics that leads the way to radical social change" (Denzin 2003: 225) is based on the belief in the transformative possibilities of performance. Commenting on performance ethnography, Madison evokes a "performance of possibilities", in which "the possible suggests a movement culminating in creation and change" (Madison 2012: 190-191).

Concluding Remarks

My explorations into teaching ethnographic research began when I was faced with the on-the-ground realization that the transformative potential of ethnomusicological teaching, as I understood it and the literature proclaimed it, was not (or not enough) coming into effect. This suggests a need to empirically test and refine our assumptions in historical and sociopolitical educational contexts. In my particular institutional context, the key barriers were found in a prioritization of students as music practitioners and a general student unresponsiveness to reading and writing; enduring stereotypical notions about music, culture, tradition and the folk; the predicaments of a 'native' ethnomusicology understood as the gatekeeper of 'Greek folk music'; and the absence in the curriculum of practice-oriented ethnomusicological courses and ensembles of world music.

These limitations have led me to embrace the teaching of ethnographic research as a way of learning that can foster reflexivity and intercultural empathy by being participatory, affective and immersive. As Titon observes about musical ethnography,

> our most satisfying knowledge is often acquired through the experience of music-making and the relationships that arise during fieldwork; in our ways of being musical, and in our ways of doing fieldwork, we, like the subjects (people) of our study, are open to transformations through experience (Titon 2008: 36).

 In the case study recounted in this article, our multiple subjectivities – as musicians, researchers, students, teachers, interlocutors, 'natives', or non-natives, 'observers' and 'observed' – variously interlocked and intersected. It is this aspect of the ethnographic encounter, the temporarily suspending of belongings and making way for becomingsthat enable more inclusive positionalities and social action, that I find the most meaningful.

My reflexive path as an ethnographer/ethnomusicologist and pedagogue has, in this case, entailed a move from an absolute position of dissociation from ethnocentric and xenophobic attitudes to a commitment to an engaged pedagogy that performs, to paraphrase Herzfeld, little "counter-essentializing" acts. Banal or trivial as these may seem at first glance, I side with Shelemay's belief in the "power of small interventions" (2020: 15), which take on new urgency in the current sociopolitical moment of increasing precarity and intolerance in Greece, and Europe, as outlined at the beginning of this article.

Reflexivity is equally essential when the short duration of the ethnographic endeavour does not suffice to create the sort of intimacy and deep immersion needed for transformative learning. In such cases, students' stereotypical notions of Others may persist, or even further consolidate, during and after the course (cf. Jones 1999, Turner and Turner 1982: 48, Markula 2006: 361). However, if combined with reflexivity and critical discussion in the classroom, cultural encounters can also create porous thresholds. Difference can then be historicized and seen in relational ways instead of reified and fortified. This, in turn, may engender critical understandings of Self and/or Other. The teaching of musical ethnography, more than training students in the methods of ethnomusicology or informing them about musical cultures, can, in such cases, offer tools for everyday life. This is a valuable contribution to ethnomusicology "of and through the quotidian" (Coleman 2011: 5) and critical pedagogy of social action.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes

[1] The article was written shortly before the Covid pandemic broke out and university teaching switched to synchronous distance learning. My current methodological emphasis on digital ethnography as a result of the pandemic poses its challenges for a transformative pedagogy – and also brings into relief the whole question of the spatiality of ethnographic teaching and practice. Nevertheless, this article deals with the precedent period, when traditional fieldwork in situ was a central component in my ethnomusicological teaching.

[2] For a critical discussion about the place and challenges of ethnomusicology in Greek universities in general and in the Department of Music Science and Art of the University of Macedonia in particular, see Kallimopoulou 2009.

[3] By contrast, in the USA – and, less so, in Europe – ethnomusicology and world music have a long history of institutional entanglement (see Solís 2004 and Krüger 2009).

[4] For my present purposes, ethnography can be defined as 'the observation of and the description (or representation) of cultural practices—in ethnomusicologists' case, the focus is on musical practices' (Cooley and Barz 2008: 4). My discussion resonates with the recent ethnomusicological call, triggered by the anthropological crisis in representation and outlined in the seminal volume *Shadows in the Field* (Barz and Cooley 2008 [1997]), towards a 'New Fieldwork' (Cooley and Barz 2008: 4) which has the following defining elements: it brings a renewed emphasis on experience, on 'the lived experience of people making music (ourselves included)' rather than on collecting information (Titon 2008: 30; cf. Finnegan 2003); it is reflexive and attends to questions of power imbalance in the field and writing; it focuses on performative aspects of culture, which increases its value for cultural understanding (Cooley and Barz 2008: 5). Thus defined, musical ethnography is especially alert to insights into performance attained through (participation in) performance, a point to which I return further down.

[5] The names of people and places described in the ethnographic examples have been changed to secure their anonymity.

[6] Until this period, the Sarakatsani lived mainly as nomadic pastoralists, which entailed seasonal movement of their livestock between higher pastures in the summer and lower regions in the winter. This also meant a communal life in proximity and separation from other, more permanently settled populations of central and northern Greece.

[7] In his ethnographic monograph entitled 'The pen and the crock. Ethnic and ethnolocal identity in Zagori during the 20th Century' (2005), Dalkavoukis traces the history of settlement and cultural interactions of Sarakatsani in the area of Zagori, Epirus (65-69, 102-106).

[8] For an overview of the ethnographic literature on the Sarakatsani see Dalkavoukis 2005: 184-193.

[9] For a brief historical survey of research on Greek music in the fields of folklore studies, ethnomusicology and anthropology, see Kallimopoulou 2009, 116-118.

[10] The need to 'undo authenticity' as a means towards more inclusive and democratic pedagogies arises also in the ethnomusicological teaching of world music (see Krüger 2013).

[11] I am paraphrasing here Anthony Synnott's phrase, 'the body social' (Synnott 2002), in order to underscore that music is something people do and, therefore, a socially construed activity.

[12] Greek Macedonia forms part of a broader region, an area of contention between competing nationalisms that intensified with the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. Although the dispute was settled in 1913, when Macedonia was partitioned between Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria, the 'Macedonian Question' lay dormant (Cowan 2000: 1) only to acquire renewed resonance in the 1990s with the breakup of Yugoslavia and the bid of the former Macedonian Republic for sovereignty under its constitutional name (Cowan 2000; Danforth 2000). The dispute reemerged recently and was settled with the latter's international recognition under the name Republic of North Macedonia, which came in effect in 2019 (see Karpozilos and Christopoulos 2018 for a critical discussion of the foundational myths of the Greek nation that have played into the Macedonian dispute). Throughout this period, nationalist claims on both sides intensified, and essentialist notions gained ground that equated identity 'with the possession of some natural or spiritual essence, or even the possession of certain cultural traits' (Danforth 2000: 87).

[13] A pseudonym has been used to anonymise the town.

[14] Embirikos et al (2001: 141-280) offer rich historical and anthropological perspectives on the Slavic dialects in Greece.

[15] See Embirikos 2008 for a broad review of the politics of slavophone singing in northern Greece, and Gourani 2014 and Robou-Levidi 2016 for case-studies of particular regions.

[16] Vraka: baggy breeches worn traditionally in Greece.

[17] Musical performance as a research technique has a long history in ethnomusicological practice and, relatively less so, theoretical literature (see especially Baily 2001, Feintuch 1995, Krüger 2008, Witzleben 2010, Rice 1995, and on the ethnography of/as performance Wong 2008, Kisliuk 1998 and 2008).

[18] The teaching and performance of a community's music in the university classroom raises challenging questions of representation, pedagogy and the 'cultural distance between us, our students, and these cultures' (Solís 2004), which are however not the focus of this article (see various contributions in Solís 2004 and Ramnarine 2004).

[19] The term 'performance ethnography' is currently used in relation to various practices, notably but not exclusively in anthropology, theatre studies, performance studies, ethnomusicology, and folklore (see Madison 2012, Hamera 2011). Such practices include forms of autoethnography, playing out scripted forms of rituals and events, and performative writing techniques that the researcher variously acts out. They foreground the non-cognitive and the non-representational as a critique or a "way to compensate the dominant cognitive model of explanation (words, representations), in favour of an emphasis on 'how another culture's members "experience" one another" (Turner and Turner 1982:33), and often these performances have a strong pedagogical and political dimension.

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