

**Věra Thořová, Jiří Traxler,
Zdeněk Vejvoda: LIDOVÉ
PÍSNĚ Z PRAHY ve sbírce
Františka Homolky. I. díl
[Folk Songs from Prague in
the Collection of František
Homolka, 1st Volume.]**

Prague: Institute of Ethnology
of the Academy of Sciences
of the Czech Republic, 2011,
508 pp. Studies, critical edition,
photographs, appendices.

Intellectual interest in urban, concretely Prague, songs of the last quarter of the 19th and first quarter of the 20th centuries appears and reappears at the latest in 1925 with the extensive article by Karel Čapek, “Songs of the Prague People.” In the ’30s Emil František Burian collects them and writes a bit about them; in the ’60s a thin book of the Club of Friends of Poetry, *Songs of the Prague People* (Václav Pletka – Vladimír Karbusický, 1966) follows this interest with the reprinted (rather abbreviated) Čapek text, a selection of 34 songs and a brief commentary. Two years later Karbusický elaborates this in a monograph *Between Folk Songs and Hits* (1968); Josef Kotek (1994) also includes this topic in his two-volume *History of Czech Popular Music and Singing of the 19th and 20th Centuries*. However, interest focuses on a relatively small part of the urban song repertoire, which Kotek aptly characterizes as satiric to lascivious “*Songs of the Prague People*,” which *constantly resist esthetic regulation and, in the humorous singing of joyful society, represent some sort of panoptically interesting museum of bygone days* (p. 130). Let’s emphasize that

exactly such an esthetically (and ethically) distinctive image is and was strengthened by the use of “old Prague songs” in today’s and recent public space, e.g., at the turn of the millennium by the popular group Šlapeto, who cheerfully also sang (along with some mentioned by Čapek) “Little hands, don’t worry. You are not going to work,” or “People, I love beeeer.”

In the introduction of his text, Čapek complains about the absence of academic publication of a hundred pages of Prague songs and that the book will be from the pen of “an associate professor of folklore at Charles University.” This reviewed publication is (after nearly 90 years), to a certain extent, the fulfillment of Čapek’s wish. All three authors are experienced folklore scholars from an academic institution – and their experience (and thoroughness) is apparent here.

What they submit is, on one hand, an edition of 490 songs, collected in Prague in the first third of the 20th century by the teacher František Homolka (1885–1933) in the framework of the initiative “Folk-songs in Austria.” Besides, there are six thematically connected studies and gradually thorough indices (incipit, indices of performers, localities, melodies), photo documentations and notes.

The introductory study, “Singing of Urbanized Society” (pp. 10–19), attempts to bring some systemization to extremely complex stratified material. The author (I consider the anonymousness of the studies a certain defect; from my own experience I judge that even if co-authors consult a text, basically only one formulates it) attempts to systematize it, on one hand, by means of the limitation of existing and implementation of new terms, some of

which seem to me conceptually incompatible. An example would be the pair “song – singing,” (píseň – zpěvnost) where the former is understood as a subset of the latter (p. 16). In the absolute majority of the literature the term song until now, however, is understood as structural, thus as a certain musical form (which understandably has its own social context), while the term singing aims toward an activity, that is, a process – whose result can but need not be a song. In my opinion it is about the consequence of a mixture of discourses: of older folkloristics – with its need for fixation and categorization (whose classic example is the index of tune incipits), with newer ethnomusicological discourse aiming to describe phenomena – including the musical ones – in their synchronic and diachronic changeability. Some formulations also correspond to this, e.g., when the authors write in the introduction that Homolka recorded *a traditional repertoire in a state of contamination (!) by semi-folk and urban folkloric elements* (p. 6). Anthropology, including anthropology of music, starting from cultural relativism, does not have room for contamination as a concept, while folklore studies, mainly if they consider the folk song as canonically cut and dried, understands every non-canonical influence as contamination.

As a second means of systematization of material some categories – functional, according to the social context, genre – are used here. From this systematization, then, come the next three chapters: “Song Repertoire of a “University Realm” (pp. 20–29), “Songs as Goods” (pp. 30–45), and “Czech Social Song of the 19th Century” (pp. 46–55). The next two chapters – “The Initiative of Folk Song in Austria”

(pp. 56–73) and “The Collector František Homolka” (pp. 74–84) – closely relate to the edition of songs itself.

As far as the edition is concerned, it is actually only about a part of Homolka’s collection: the whole thing contains about 3,000 transcriptions. The greatest part is transcriptions from Libeň (incorporated into Prague in 1901), collected from roughly 260 singers in all age categories and thus representing the broadest repertoire spectrum. Further transcriptions are from Kobylisy and other peripheral parts of Prague. This volume contains four categories: love songs, comic and dance songs, military songs, and sung trumpet tunes. In the planning is the publication of a second volume that is to contain ballads, legends and shop songs; folk-like songs; ritual songs and children’s folklore (p. 6)

It is understood that, for a similarly extensive publication, it would be possible to write a review of almost any imaginable length. We limit ourselves here only to the question of how much published material corresponds to the cheerful, or even lascivious image of “old Prague songs,” in whose creation a whole list of people from Čapek to Šlapeto and beyond participated. According to the part of the Homolka collection published until today it is possible to judge that there is only a little. A great part of the songs are similar to those that can be found in a rural environment or their variants, including textual motifs referring to places outside of Prague (“Why does this Jizera river hum so sadly” – p. 170, etc.). To what extent is that fact influenced by auto-censorship and/or the interior criteria of the collector and to what extent by field reality is now difficult to judge. In any case, the world of

Homolka's singers is much more common, full of unfulfilled (and rarely fulfilled) loves, streams, potatoes and sheep... and is far from our imaginary world where "Little hands, don't worry. You are not going to work" holds good.

Zuzana Jurková

**Marta Kolářová (ed.):
REVOLTA STYLEM. Hudební
subkultura mládeže v České
republice. [Revolt in Style.
Music Youth Subcultures in the
Czech Republic.]**

Praha: Slon 2012, 264 pp.
+ photographs.

Revolt in Style is a much awaited contribution bridging the gap in the literature on subcultures from an insider's perspective, an occasion to celebrate and comment on its achievements. Marta Kolářová, a researcher at the Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, known for her studies on the alter-globalization movement and radical women's activism, set up a team of four significant scholars/active participants in musical and social movements.

The book opens with the editor's goal being to question the specificity of subcultures in post-socialist society in the era of globalization and the usefulness of traditional approaches. After defining subcultures via Jenks, Gelder, Thornton, Bennett, Williams, etc., Kolářová discusses the Chicago School studies of Bohemians and delinquents, Talcott Parsons, and the Birmingham school of

cultural studies' romantic approach to subcultures as resistance to hegemony, with the milestone Hebdige's essay on the symbolic destruction of the social order. Because of Kolářová's interest in gender issues it does not come as a surprise to have the volume enriched by a feminist critique of subcultures as subversive towards society, but not so to the gender regime. The legacy of the Birmingham School and its armchair class approach is dealt with by the leaders of post-subculture studies such as Muggleton. The rave subculture of the 1990s required a new theoretical paradigm of resistance and thus researchers switched their terminology to youth lifestyles, scenes, neo-tribes and Maffesoli's discourse on nomadism. Kolářová follows the developments in the field up to the re-emerged politicization of Reclaim the Streets! EarthFirst! or political anarcho-punk. The former Soviet block subcultures are seen as a life-style choice, not a class issue. Czech writings on subcultures include Vaněk's study of pre-1989 punk of 2002 and Smolík's Youth Subcultures of 2010, which, however, fails to connect Czech subcultures with theory. Kolářová's team focuses on classic subcultures in the contemporary Czech Republic with the aim to interpret their values, politics, structure, lifestyle and relationship to the mainstream and commodification, using "views from the inside," thick description and memory work. In-depth interviews, participant observation in clubs and concerts, lyrics and internet debates, symbols, values, drugs, politics, religions, ideologies, and hierarchies were processed through Atlas coding with the aim to describe and interpret data on the background of existing theories.

A question remains whether the works of the Frankfurt school, especially Adorno (commodification, culture industry, etc.) should not be a part of the subcultural theory scheme.

Michaela Pixová, a doctoral student at Charles University's Faculty of Science (researching alternative spaces in Prague) and a member of Guma Guar political art collective, presents in her chapter *Czech Punk outside and behind the Curtain* two eras of punk's three decades' history: the authentic punk of pre-1898 and two decades of globalized, "contaminated" punk. While British punk of the 1980s was a reaction to economics, the Czechs responded to politics: here Pixová makes a good point – this proves the failure of the universality of the Birmingham School class theories: punk in the Czechoslovakia of the 1980s, allegedly a classless society, was a position against establishment, not a class statement. The lack of goods on the socialist market led to DIY flourishing and precluded commodification from happening in the West. Pre-1989 bands have gained a cult folkloric status attracting otherwise conformist fans. The globalized era punks connect with other subcultures in their fight for social change, squatters, travelers, freetekno, and skinheads. Today's punks combine their lifestyle with study, career, or family, shun the skinny, dirty unhealthy look of the first era and fragment into subgroups such as music punk and opinion punk (critical, less lyrical and commercial).

Ondřej Slačálek of Charles University's Faculty of Arts penned a chapter *Czech Freetekno – Moving Space of Autonomy*, which is truly groundbreaking, x-raying the secrets of sound systems and collective

hedonism. Slačálek disagrees with Keller in the diagnosis of the subculture as consumer culture pointing out its autonomous, alternative and oppositional form and is also critical of Smolík as a "good policeman" with his armchair benevolence. After Britain banned raves, a radical part of the scene left for Europe and in 1994 Spiral Tribe and Mutoid Waste Company systems played in the Czech Republic at the Freetekno festival near Hostomice. After that, local sound systems, e.g., Ladronka, Cirkus Alien, etc., formed and parties thrived in squats, pubs, clubs and former military grounds, attracting up to 12,000 visitors by 2001. Slačálek uses the concept of Hakim Bey's autonomous zone and nomadic heterotopies freedom. Technology connected with nature create liminal egalitarian (with the exception of the scorned youngsters, "ještěři," those under 23 years of age) experience, spiritual in the energy and ethos of a tribal community. Freetekno means no money (legal renting of meadows for a fee is a problem) as well as an elite freedom lifestyle. Slačálek's informers from sound systems, fire show, organizers, etc., describe their rituals, connecting people of all walks of life (they would put their hand into fire for me, p. 95) as adventures of summer camps and romanticism of White Gypsies (some organize workshops for Romani children), the radicality of hedonism – loudness of music, disrespect for private property, drugs. Tekno met punk in squats like Ladronka and Milada. Girls sell drinks and take care of visuals; boys carry heavy amps. As for politics, the paradox is the anarchism of the scene while voting ODS – all because of Paroubek's crushing 2005 Czechtech. It would be interesting

to include descriptions of how the trance effects in tekno work, e.g., graphs of brain waves alteration in connection to music frequencies and the effects of mind-altering chemical substances.

Anna Oravcová, a doctoral student of Charles University's Faculty of Humanities, bases her chapter *Underground of Czech Hip Hop* on the data from the Internet portal xchat.cz/hiphop, Hip Hop Foundation events and concerts around the Czech Republic, especially in the Prague club Pantheon. She presents hip hop as a global phenomenon and industry. The effects of the genre's commodification include cultural translation, adoption and adaptation of racially homogenous countries, where identification with the oppressed recharge hip hop's spiritual integrity. Czech hip hop dates from 1984 and Lesík Hajdovský's Jižák and continues with WWW, PSH, Indy and Wich, Bbarak magazine in 2001 and its Hip Hop Kemp festival with 20,000 in attendance. Rough masculinity and honest community are the main allures, not as leisure, but as a stable identity. Performers connect the right voice color, intonation and linguistic mastery with patriotism. Marihuana use is a defining element, marking many of the lyrical odes to the substance. The subculture gained its political dimension with entering public spaces as in the Hip Hop Subway Series in NYC and Prague. Oravcová's conclusion of "only time will show if the Czech Republic has its own, distinctive hip hop culture" seems a bit evasive.

Petra Stejskalová, a graduate of Charles University's Faculty of Social Sciences, describes skinheads in her chapter *Skinhead Subculture – where the Heavy Boots Got to*. Her study of this 50-year-old

subculture is most illuminating because it unravels the myth of the skinheads' exclusive right wing extremism. Stejskalová distinguishes three branches of skinheads: the small and diminishing national socialist (racist), the antifascist (antiracist), and the apolitical, which is the most frequent type. Her conclusion suggests a slow dissolution of the subculture under the pressure of the wide array of leisure time options.

Marta Kolářová's concluding chapter *Values, Structure and Lifestyle of Post-socialist Music Youth Subcultures* makes numerous original points, e.g., the absence of generational revolt, the conservative skinheads being the most authentic subculture with the weakest position of women (acquisition of subcultural identity through boyfriends), a scarcity of active women in all subcultures, descriptions of otherworldly sacred experience of music, aversion of skinheads to marihuana because of its non-European roots and postmodern individualism interpreted as intensified continuation of original Bohemian values.

The book is a complete success: fully equipped with bibliographies, authors' CVs, names and subject indexes. I found only one typo (p. 98: proto se); women's surnames without -ová endings are progressive (one exception – a misprint? on page 42: Corbinová); the relatively large typography makes the book pleasantly easy on the eye.

In the next edition I would love more music analysis – the focus on sociology and politics possibly explains the absence of major writers on the topic such as Simon Reynolds among the sources.

Pavla Jonssonová

Tomie Hahn: SENSATIONAL KNOWLEDGE. Embodying culture through Japanese dance.

Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2007, 197 pp., figures, photographs, DVD examples.¹

Tomie Hahn characterizes herself as a performer and ethnologist whose activities span a wide range of topics from Japanese traditional performing arts to Monster Truck rallies. She received her PhD in ethnomusicology from Wesleyan University and is currently an associate professor in the Department of the Arts at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY. Her ethnography *Sensational Knowledge* was the 2008 recipient of the Society for Ethnomusicology's Allan P. Merriam Prize, which recognizes the most distinguished English-language monograph published in the field of ethnomusicology.

Hahn has studied Japanese dance since the age of four in New York and Tokyo for more than thirty years. She explains that this book is her attempt to comprehend how her body has come to *know* this movement. Therefore, a sentence told her by her teacher in Tokyo: "Know with your body" becomes a crucial opening statement of the book: "*Know with you body,*" *headmaster Tachibana Hiroyo said during my dance lesson, as she gently drew her hand to her chest. In this fleeting moment she succinctly imparted a cultural sensibility, a Japanese way of knowing, that moved beyond these few words and gesture. Curious about my own understanding of such moments,*

¹ I thank my colleague Vít Zdrálek, who introduced this book to me.

and the embodiment of such sensibilities conveyed during lessons, I was drawn to research how culture is passed down, or embodied through dance." (p. 1).

Hahn's book is an ethnography of dance transmission focusing on how cultural knowledge is embodied, using lessons of Japanese dance *nihon buyo* in the Tachibana School in Tokyo as a case study. Based not only on her long-term experiences as a student but also on thorough systematic fieldwork, her participant observation of how dance is taught reveals a great deal about Japanese culture. She explains her focus on behind-the-scenes activities of dance training as a unique way to observe a process when "culture flows" (p. 1), on the contrary to "finished" performances on the stage presented to the general public by most performing arts traditions around the world. Therefore, although she sheds light on the genre of *nihon buyo*, which remains relatively unknown outside Japan in comparison to *kabuki*, *noh* and *bunraku*, her aim is not to mediate a comprehensive history of the genre or records of the specific dances, but to concentrate on the elusive and fascinating process of how culture becomes inscribed in the body.

Hahn reflects that her own experiences have both enriched and problematized her ethnographic research. There was no "concrete" object to grasp other than her growing proficiency. Drawing on the anthropological approaches to body as both *subject* and *object* of culture (e.g., Csordas 1990), she writes: "*Ironically, the very 'data' I sought were deeply entrenched in my very body [...] a puzzle for me to excavate. [...] My body became one of my primary field sites [...], beyond Hatchobori*

[the dance studio] *the dancers moving around me were in fact my field sites, and my own body a terrain to survey.*" (p. xiv). This approach of using a scholar's body as a research tool also reminds one of the "carnal sociology" concept of Loïc Wacquant, who puts in practice and examines a theory of his teacher Pierre Bourdieu about reflexive sociology, habitus and its embodiment. Wacquant develops a method of knowing through body and of reflection of this process based on data from his fieldwork of becoming a boxer in an Afro-American ghetto in Chicago.² Although Hahn does not refer to this concept, she has drawn from a number of disciplines for theoretical and methodological inspiration, mostly from ethnomusicology (where a similar concept of the bimusicality of a researcher has been practised for a long time), dance studies, anthropology, performance studies (e.g., Richard Schechner's emphasis on the scholar as a practising artist), and Asian philosophy of the body. Her mentors have been two world-famous ethnomusicologists, Marc Slobin and Kay Kaufman Shelemay, Professor of Music at Harvard University, who "infected" Hahn with her fascination with transmission systems.³ Finally, Hahn has been inspired by the work of Cynthia Bull (Novack) in her conceptualization of the socially, sensually situated body in dance.

² Wacquant, Loïc. 2004. *Body and Soul: Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

³ Kay Shelemay visited the Faculty of Humanities of Charles University in Prague last year, and her paper presented at the Roundtable for Theory and Method in the Urban Ethnomusicology is part of this issue of the journal⁴.

Since dance is a multisensory process, Tomie Hahn finds that the academic discipline of ethnography often privileges one sense (mostly the eyesight) over the other senses, limiting the ethnographer's experience of the lush sensory environment (p. 4). To overcome this limitation, she finds inspiration in the relatively newly established anthropology of the senses, mainly in the work of David Howes (1991, 2005), Constance Classen (1993) and Anthony Synott (1993). The fundamental premise underlying the approach of anthropology of the senses is that "*sensory perception is a cultural as well as a physical act: sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell are not only means of apprehending physical phenomena but are also avenues for the transmission of cultural values. [...] smell, for example, creates social boundaries, not because some smells are naturally bad, but because they are culturally constituted as such. [...] smell is as culturally relative as aesthetic judgement.*" (Herzfeld 2001: 240–241)⁴.

Considering the senses as the vehicles of dance transmission and the connection to embodied cultural expression, Tomie Hahn asks (among other questions): How does culture shape our attendance to various sensoria, and how does our interpretation of sensory information shape our individual realities? In her book, she reveals "*how a culture's transmission processes prioritize practitioner's attendance to certain sensoria (even particular qualities of sensory experience), and how the transmission of sensory knowledge can*

⁴ Herzfeld, Michael. 2001. *Anthropology. Theoretical Practice in Culture and Society*. Malden – Oxford – Carlton: Blackwell Publishing.

shape dancer's experiential orientation. Through practice, systems of transmission structure experience so that, within the social group, the world appears similarly constructed and members know how to interact within it" (p. 5). Hahn illustrates how entire setting and ritual of dance lessons conveys something that she calls a Japanese sensibility – from bowing, to where one stands during a lesson, to attire, interactions, voice, gaze, spatial negotiations, and even touching.

In chapter 4, the core of the book, the author presents a careful and detailed analysis of the transmission process of this Japanese sensibility. Referring to many video examples, subchapters divided according to the modes of transmission as visual, tactile, oral/aural and media (notation and video) give an exhaustive

but captivating ethnographic insight into the extremely personal process of learning Japanese dance. I would personally mainly highlight the subchapters on learning through touch and through practising music as the most methodologically inspiring.

Tomie Hahn's skillfull interweaving of theory and empiric data from long-term ethnographic fieldwork makes this book an important reading not only for all who are interested in the anthropology of dance and music, but also for those interested in qualitative research in general. Moreover, it is accessible to readership with limited knowledge of Japanese arts and her gentle, modest but absorbing style of writing makes it a pleasure to read.

Veronika Seidlová