

Maurizio Agamennone (ed.). *Polifonie. Procedimenti, tassonomie e forme: una riflessione “a più voci”*. Venezia: il Cardo, 1996, 283 pp., figures, bibliography, index of names

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### 1. Agamennone historical overview

This book edited by Maurizio Agamennone in 1996 contains the results of the seminar “Classificazione e analisi dei procedimenti polifonici” held in Venice in 1995 regarding the possibilities of classifying polyphonic procedures in the realm of oral tradition. The seminar was organized by the Scuola Interculturale de Musica and the Università degli Studi di Venezia. Although it has been 20 years since its publication, it is worth summarizing here its contents as they relate to problems that are still being discussed with regard to the study of the polyphony of oral tradition (a subject that occupies a dossier in this volume of *Res Musica*). Agamennone’s first chapter is dedicated to developing a broad historical and conceptual overview of the proposals and theories concerning polyphony that have appeared in the field of musicological studies since the establishment of the *vergleichende Musikwissenschaft*. He begins by introducing the following definitions:

Polyphony can be defined as a mode of expression based on the simultaneous combination of separate parts (vocal, instrumental, and with voices and instruments together), perceived and produced intentionally in their mutual differentiation, in a given formal order. The “living polyphonies”, then, are the manifestations of this mode of expression, detectable in our time, especially in traditional cultures.<sup>1</sup> (Agamennone 1996: 3)

After this first statement, the author takes a look at the main studies on oral traditional polyphony, to which I would like briefly to refer here, quoting some commentaries made by him on each one.

Carl Stumpf (1901) and Guido Adler (1908) used the term heterophony in the early twentieth cen-

tury. Even though Adler interpreted this term as a simultaneous performance of melodic lines without structure or organization – that is to say: the overlapping of different voices without organization –, the term heterophony began to be used, in a general way, to indicate what we could call today the simultaneous variation of a melody.

Viktor Beliaev (1929 [together with S. W. Pring], 1930, 1933) wrote about the influence of Georgian songs on European polyphony. He used the terms ‘organum’, ‘diaphony’, ‘discanto’, and ‘false bor-done’, taken from musicology.

Vasil Stoin (1925) studied the Bulgarian origin of European diaphony.

Marius Schneider (1934) considered heterophony as a progressive stabilization of occasional variants.

Curt Sachs (1943) made a classification of procedures: heterophony (overlapping of variants of a melody); bourdon; ostinato; parallel movement; imitation and canon.

Cvjetko Rihtman (1952) categorized the polyphonic chant in Bosnia. He recognized that oral tradition polyphony always has a system. Besides defining roles for diaphony as an expansion of monody, he studied the emic terminology (he documented nineteen names for the functions of the first singer and eighteen names for the functions of the second).

Paul Collaer (1981) identified successive phases of the practice of polyphony in Sicily (where he had carried out research in 1955): pre-polyphonic, embryonic polyphony, bourdon (in the instrument called *scacciapensieri*, a metal musical arc with mouth resonator), and polyphonic procedures. Based on the similarities found in different cultures, he ascribed these phases to pluri-gensis.

<sup>1</sup> All the translations have been made by myself. At some points in the present review, I interpolate some critical comments.

Nikolaj Kaufman (1958, 1959, 1963) studied the procedures in diaphony. He used the expression 'part-singing'.

Joseph Hanson Kwabena Nketia (1962) studied the musical and the social roles of some procedures – like the *hochetus* – in Ghana. He avoided proposing historical links between distant areas that have similar procedures, something that Agamennone calls “descontestualizzazione culturale e rifondazione tassonomica” (“cultural decontextualization and taxonomic refounding”). Since Nketia uses both the expressions ‘multi-part organization’ and ‘polyphony’, Agamennone recalls some criticism made by scholars on the adoption of the terms of classical music, such as ‘polyphony’.

In his studies of folk polyphony in Europe, Ernst Emsheimer (1964) noted differences between instrumental polyphony (characterized by a kind of secrecy in the transmission of knowledge of competences and greater specialization) and vocal polyphony (where greater social participation occurs). He defined polyphony as the “simultaneous flow of two or more voices characterized by greater or lesser individuality.” (Emsheimer 1964: 44; quoted by Agamennone on p. 17.) In addition to identifying ten geographical areas in which polyphonic procedures are used, he described the Lithuanian *sutartinės*, differentiating between polyphonic parts and performative roles.

It is well known that Alan Lomax belongs to the anthropologist-musical trend that suggests a homology between music and society. He defined heterophony as performing simultaneous variations of a melody, and polyphony as the simultaneous production of intervals different from unison and octave. In his *cantometrics* records (Lomax 1968) he ranks polyphony based on type and length of overlaps in a piece of music. In line 4 of his *cantometric* coding book (“Basic musical organization of the voice part”) he uses the words ‘monophony’ (“Only one voice is heard at a time”), ‘unison’, ‘heterophony’ (“Each voice sings the same melody in a slightly different manner”), and ‘polyphony’ (Lomax 1968: 44). In line 7 (“The basic musical organization of the orchestra”), the categories ‘monophony’, ‘unison’ (three different possibilities), ‘heterophony’, and ‘polyphony’ or ‘polyrhythm’ are established (Lomax 1968: 46). In line 12 (“Rhythmic relationship within the singing group”) he mentions: ‘rhythmic unison’ (“All voices

move together with little or no rhythmic independence”), ‘rhythmic heterophony’ (“[...] one or more singers consistently deviates from the others in some way”), ‘accompanying rhythm’ (“The singing group is divided into two or more parts, one of which accompanies the other”), ‘simple polyrhythm’ (“All the parts basically conform to a single pulse. However, there are moments when one of the parts will *temporary* deviate from the basic pulse to create a new pulse in conflict with it”), ‘complex polyrhythm’ (“Two or more conflicting pulses are heard *simultaneously and more or less continually* throughout the song”), and ‘rhythmic counterpoint’ (“Two or more rhythmic patterns, equal to and distinct from one another, occur simultaneously within the same rhythmic framework, but *without* conflict of pulse. A Bach fugue is an example of this trait, although it can be found in primitive music”; Lomax 1968: 52). These categories are repeated in line 14 (“Rhythmic relationship within the accompanying group”). As well as ‘no polyphony’, in line 22 (Polyphonic type) Lomax uses: ‘drone polyphony’ (“One or more tones are held or repeated while the melody follows its own course”), ‘isolated chords’ (“Chords occur in a texture which is basically unison”), ‘parallel chords’ (“Two or more parts moving parallel to one another at intervals other than the octave or unison”), ‘harmony’ (“Contrary motion occurs”), and ‘counterpoint’ (“Two or more parts which are rhythmically and melodically independent”; Lomax 1968: 65). Agamennone quotes only these line 22 categories.

During the second half of the Twentieth Century, scholars expressed a growing tendency to replace the word ‘polyphony’ by the expression ‘multipart technique’, since it was considered a historically more neutral definition, more descriptive and more general. Other terminology proposals were ‘part-singing’, ‘multi-part music’, and ‘chord-technique’.

In 1972, William Malm proposed a tripartite subdivision of polyphony: ‘homophony’, ‘heterophony’, and ‘disphony’ (a word indicating the overlapping of parts with rhythmic independence, something he considered as an equivalent to the term ‘counterpoint’). The following year, Kolinski (1973) used the term ‘multisonance’ and classified its types as homophony, heterophony and polyphony. In these last two proposals, we see the contemporary use of the same term (‘po-

lyphony') with two opposing connotations: as a general category (in Malm's statement) and as part category (in the case of Kolinski, who uses it to indicate the overlapping of rhythmically independent parts, a type of multisonance).

André Schaeffner (1966) stated that the term 'polyphony' had begun to be used in musicology in 1877 (before that it had been used in physics and linguistics) and that, consequently, it was possible to use it, since it was not very historically conditioned (or at least not so much as was claimed by other ethnomusicologists).

Simha Arom (1985) distinguished between 'multi-linearity' (a term used as a catch-all category for overlapping musical parts) and 'polyphony' (a word used as a specific category indicating overlapping parts with rhythmic independence between them). The author defined a set of multi-linear non-polyphonic procedures: 'heterophony', *tuillage*, 'bourdon', 'parallelism', 'homophony' (he took this last term from Willi Apel to indicate monody accompanied by chords). Besides explaining that the Pygmies of Central Africa sing in a simultaneous, parallel heterorhythmic way, Arom identified the use of ostinato, imitation, melodic counterpoint (vocal or instrumental, produced by several instruments or by both hands, on a polyphonic instrument), rhythmic counterpoint (superposition of ostinati with different amplitude and different rhythmic settings, something we could interpret as bichrony, as I will discuss later),<sup>2</sup> *hoquetus* (for horns, for example). He stated that, generally, the pygmies produce a combination of several different procedures.

The same scholar (Simha Arom), talking about West Africa in the above-mentioned seminar held in Venice, specified cases in which the singer is accompanied by a fiddle constantly producing different variations of the vocal melody. In addition, he defined heterophony as the production of many microvariations of the melodic line: "The

harp is blowing us what to do" (he says, referring to counterpoint between the two hands). He proposed a definition of polyphony: All vocal or instrumental music, multi-linear, whose parts, heterorhythmics, are culturally considered by traditional users as specific elements that constitute a single musical entity.<sup>3</sup>

In 1975 Irene Markoff identified several types of diaphony: bourdon on an intermittent sound, bourdon on two intermittent sounds (separated by intervals of major second or minor third), intermediate combinations between bourdon and heterophony (zonal drone), heterophony, and the combination of imitation and bourdon.

Hugo Zemp (1972, 1973 [with J. Schwarz], 1979, 1981) analyzed the polyphonic performance in a solo Panflute of the Are'Are' people living in the Salomon islands. He transcribed the literal meaning of Are'Are' words. For example, he translated the emic terminology of the Are'Are' relating to interval (*ahoa*), equiheptaphonic (*rapi'au*), neutral third (*hoa ni'ai*), major second (*hari'au*), octave (*suri'au*), melodic segment (*ro'u mani'au*), ostinato (*uhi ta'a po'o*), sequence and transposition (*haim-aaniha*); he also considered the links and main direction of the segments, the number of parts in the polyphonic music (polyphony in two, three, and four parts), and the hierarchy of voices.

Jean-Jacques Nattiez (1983) studied the Inuit vocal game *katajjait*, always performed by pairs of Inuit women.<sup>4</sup> This kind of competition, explained Nattiez, has a social and relational functionality and it could be perceived externally as polyphonic music.

Jane Sugarman (1989) studied jointly the production of polyphony and the place occupied by musicians in the social order, according to sex, age and kinship. She also paid attention to posture and proxemics. It should be recalled that the tendency to observe not specifically musical features connected with organized sound prac-

<sup>2</sup> Maybe the use of the word 'counterpoint' to identify instances of overlapping parts with rhythmic independence should be reviewed, since the counterpoint can be either homorhythmic or heterorhythmic. The use of the terms 'harmonic polyphony' and 'contrapuntal polyphony' might be suggested, to indicate, respectively, the predominance of homorhythm and heterorhythm between the parts.

<sup>3</sup> At this point in his article, Agamennone recalls that musicologists have reflected on the space occupied by the polyphony of oral tradition in the history of Western music. During an international conference on "primitive polyphonies" celebrated in Cividale del Friuli in August 1980, the Italian musicologist Pierluigi Petrobelli affirmed that written polyphony was an exception in the history of European music, while orality was usual.

<sup>4</sup> Agamennone uses the expression "confronto agonistico incalzante" ("pressing agonistic confrontation") for characterizing this performance practice.

tice brought a new challenge for scholars: to relate different aspects of performance. This raises questions that we might still consider today: Is it possible or relevant to introduce elements not belonging to musical language in the musical terminology and taxonomies related to the practice of polyphony? How do we do it? Can some similar initiatives undertaken in other areas of music research serve as a model here, such as that of Regula Qureshi (1987) when she includes public feedback in her analysis of *qawwali* – Sufi devotional music – performances?

During a colloquium held in Royaumont in 1990 (proceedings published in 1993), Annie Goffre spoke about “neo-polyfonization” (i.e., the creation of new expressions of “polyphonization” of monodic traditions) producing a certain “dignification” of traditional music (see Goffre 1993). Regarding this point of Agamennone’s article, I remember that we can find examples of such processes in different places and times: in the USA during the Forties, in Latin America (for example, the process of “polyphonization” in the folk music revival of Argentina during the second half of the 20th century), and in other places – in Italy, for example, from the Trio Lescano<sup>5</sup> to Giovanna Marini’s quartets. This phenomenon is still happening, as we can see in different regions of the world (the process of the “polyphonization” of a monodic musical tradition which is happening today in the Spanish province of Soria, for example). Goffre reminds us that this phenomenon of “neo-polyphonization” is related to the resemantization phenomenon.<sup>6</sup> She considers, too, the social and symbolic implications of polyphony.

Roberto Leydi (1991) refers to the polyphonic arrangements carried out in Italy during the process called by him the *revival interno* (internal revival), characterized by the task of musical reconstruction by insiders from their memories. This proposal reminds me that the diachronic perspective, which was present from the Forties in the work of ethnomusicologists like the Argentine Carlos Vega, was abandoned by currents such as functionalism and structuralism

and was again rescued by Timothy Rice (1987) in his famous tripartite perspective, drawn from a previous taxonomy published by Alan Merriam and Clifford Geertz: historical construction, social maintenance, and individual adaptation and experience. The diachronic perspective was also present among several Italian ethnomusicologists and covered other areas of musical experience, as I was informed by a number of scholars (Tullia Magrini, Roberto Leydi, Diego Carpitella) during interviews I conducted with them early in the Eighties.<sup>7</sup> In a text published in 1995, Ignazio Macchiarella addressed the diachronic perspective in the field of relations between classic and popular areas in matters of polyphony, and he did this again in the book we are dealing with, as I will mention later. Macchiarella further expanded the scope of the features to be considered under this topic at the First Symposium of the ICTM (International Council for Traditional Music) Study Group on Multipart Singing held in Cagliari in 2010 (Macchiarella 2012).

In the specific field of terminology, Agamennone recalls that Macchiarella referred to the use of the term *polivocalità* – poly-vocalism – among Italian scholars and that Serena Facci (1991) identified and analyzed the features of polyphony in Italian ethnomusicological literature. Earlier, in 1978, Pietro Sassu had observed the symbolic values and interpersonal relationships in the polyphony performed in the Italian village of Premana, considered by him as a “pratica totalizzante” – “totalizing practice” – in which everyone can participate. He noted that singing normally allows censored behaviours (for example, promiscuity).<sup>8</sup>

Bernard Lortat-Jacob (1993) studied different musical and social aspects of polyphonic singing in Central Sardinia. He devised the image of a prism (in which each voice provides a partial acoustic image, because only the combination of all voices gives rise to the prism). The maximum tonal fusion produces a new voice (known locally as *quintina*), which is an enhanced harmonic and it is a sound ideal for the singers, that means, an indicator of perfect performance, as Agamennone

<sup>5</sup> They were not Italian, but Italian Mussolini granted them citizenship.

<sup>6</sup> We could affirm that the opposite can happen: polyphonization without major semantic transformations.

<sup>7</sup> See Cámara de Landa 2003.

<sup>8</sup> We should remember that this is a feature of musical performance in many cultures, regardless of texture and procedures.

none reports: “icona sonora dell’ineffabile e del trascendente” (“sound icon of the ineffable and transcendent”).<sup>9</sup>

The 1990 Royaumont Colloques (coordinated by Marcel Peres and Michel Huglo) addressed the issue of orality and improvisation in medieval European music. In that symposium, Frieder Zaminer and Susanne Ziegler (see Zaminer, Ziegler 1993) compared Caucasian expressions with *organa* from the Notre Dame School and provided a list of traits of the observed polyphony. On that occasion, Simha Arom (see Arom 1993) highlighted the relationships between features of Central African – ostinato with variations – and Ars Nova – isorhythm – polyphony. He stresses the operational efficiency of the model, considered as a “mental representation of the musical entity that is ‘embodied’ in the moment of execution”, as reported by Agamennone in his article in this book (1996: 54).

During the 1991 European Seminar in Ethnomusicology (ESEM) meeting in Geneva, devoted to the ethnomusicological approaches to the study of polyphony, Ki Mantle Hood (1993) discussed polyphonic stratification in the instrumental music of Southeast Asia. The gamelan of Bali, says Hood, presents interdependent levels of reference and organization of the degrees of density, but it is not a case of polyphony.

Igor Bogdanov (1993) mentioned the simultaneous execution of different personal melodies over a drum beat between the Koryak-Chavchuvan and the Chukchi-Chavchuvan in Northeast Russia (he mentioned the superposition of up to twenty different parts on two layers of sound: voice and percussion, respectively). These overlappings are apparently casual, but they actually operate according to aesthetic and musical-prosodic-choreographic norms that balance the individualistic instances and the group needs. I want here to point out that we can observe a phenomenon of this type in the Andes of South America (Cámara de Landa 1999 [1994]): the overlapping of individual singing of the vocal traditional genres *baguala* and *copla* singers and performers of the idioglotic clarinet called *erkencho* – all accompanied by frame drums during Carnival in north-

western Argentina, produce a casual polyphony that is apparently unintentional, mobile, and inorganic. However, this reflects an Andean aesthetic sound ideal: the overlay of different musical expressions during a festive occasion. There are many examples of this phenomenon (see Rappoport 2013).

Izaly Zemtsovsky (1993) coined the expression *dialogie musicale* – an expression that could be translated as ‘musical dialogue’ or ‘musical dialogy’ – for the dialogic songs considered as early examples of music practised in group; echoes, repetitions, antiphonal singing, *tuillage*, poetry sung in contrast. He established three performative modes in verbal expression, depending on the degree of integration between the vocal parts.

Agamennone included in his introductory article the seminar study on the classification and analysis of polyphonic procedures organized in 1995 by the Intercultural School of Music and the University Ca’ Foscari, where the texts published in the book I am reviewing here were originally presented.<sup>10</sup> One of the aspects considered by the scholars was the concept of procedure, defined as a sequence of operations that produce musical expression (“how to”), or as the same performative behaviour (“do”), in a context of the emic-etic dialogue. They reviewed some exclusive procedures (such as ostinato and *hoquetus* in Central Africa) which order the sound material and generate repertoires. In other areas – they reminded us – a variety of procedures exist, and polyphonic intention is manifested in various musical expressions. They considered that one person alone can produce monody or polyphony (on an instrument or even by the voice alone, as in the Mongolian diaphonic chant called *xöömij*, in which one person produces a melody by isolating the harmonics of a fundamental sound issued by her/him). This also happens when several people produce music. When people intend to produce monody, heterophony can be generated.

During the Ca’ Foscari seminar, scholars considered different possibilities of the occurrence of heterophony as an initial degree of polyphony (or as a texture oscillating between monody and polyphony): with or without “monodic intention”;

<sup>9</sup> The idea of considering the image made by Lortat-Jacob as an example of metaphor to describe a phenomenon of polyphony in its technical and aesthetic aspects could contribute to enriching the taxonomic task.

<sup>10</sup> One of the goals of that meeting was the search for taxonomic categories of general application.

as unison with small differences (when “monodic intention” exists); as an alternative to real polyphony; as simultaneous and systematic variation of a melodic motif reference (something that we could call ‘polyphonic intent’); as a constitution of complex polyphony (simultaneity); as a “refuge-category” in cases of difficult evaluation, or even as a “border region” between monody and polyphony.

They also considered intentionality and consciousness as features which validate the systematics of polyphony (or other phenomena). For this reason, they stated, it is important to consider the verbalization given by those interviewed (a methodological aspect to be respected). They also rescued the use of the word ‘polyphony’, distinguished between physical lines (etic) and structural lines (emic), and considered the case of unintentional heterophony produced in a structural line (they advised noting how many people are producing a structural line, especially if heterophony occurs). Such cognitive economy – they considered – balances two opposing and dangerous trends: the existence of as many categories as objects, and the case in which the categories are too broad and do not help to discriminate differences (weak relevance).<sup>11</sup>

Finally, the group gathered in Venice, Agamennone recalls, stated that prototypes should be established as general references to separate different procedures (bourdon, parallelism, accompanied melody, counterpoint, etc.). In each category, they noted, the specimens are placed on a continuum ranging from minimum to maximum belonging. The boundaries between the categories are “unfocused” and may lead to new subordinate categories. In Agamennone’s article (1996: 69) an “archipelago”-type model is provided, branching in all directions according to different criteria, creating subcategories in some of them. The author concludes his historic journey with this workshop held in Venice and quotes a phrase of Zemtsovsky (1993: 27) which invites us to seek “in all types of plurivocal tissue, the qualitative differences, the characteristics related to the interpretation, and, in general, the signs that reveal a particular form of musical thought” (Agamennone 1996: 75).

## 2. Other proposals of *Polifonie*

In the other articles of the book, we find some affirmations from scholars that could induce us to reflect on terminology and other issues related to the study of multipart singing:

Jean Molino (“Sistemi inerti e sistemi ‘pericolosi’” / “Inert and ‘dangerous’ systems”) asks about the consciousness of polyphony in the Aboriginal mind. He also clarifies that “Human categories are not given once and for all, they are built and can always be extended or revised” (Molino 1996: 109). In addition, he explains, the categories do not work as a totalizing perspective (all or nothing), but they are based on more flexible processes, that specialists in cognitive psychology try to disarticulate. These two properties are closely linked: “It is precisely because the categories are not fully defined, that they change at any time and, moreover, are not defined because they arise from the interaction between the world and the cognitive system of the individual.” (Molino 1996: 109)

Might this invitation to taxonomic flexibility save us from looking for words and categories of universal and univocal application? The author writes:

There is no universal classification as a general value. The ideal would undoubtedly be a database through which to obtain classifications according to different parameters, in order to proceed systematically, from the bottom to the top, to the construction of some classes more natural than others. The study of oral polyphony can lead to important advances in the fields of theoretical and practical classification of human works: these unstable and undefined systems are “dangerous”, both for the preconceived theories and over-simple theories and for the researchers who study them; but it is precisely in the danger that it appeals to all their energies to deal with them. (Molino 1996: 112)

Mario Baroni (“La percezione delle strutture contrappuntistiche” / “The perception of contrapuntal structures”) writes:

According to Huron and Fantini (1989) homorhythm makes the distinction between parts

<sup>11</sup> These are the dangers of every taxonomy (excessive particularism versus overgeneralization).

less noticeable. The perception of several parts in homorhythm can lead to the overall perception of a group [...] According to Huron (1991), the perfect consonances favour the perception of the group and impede the distinction of the parts (“except the imperfect consonances”). The perception of the parts is favoured by the intervallic spaces between them. In tight spaces the parts tend to merge into a single body (Dowling 1973) [...] The perception of multiplicity increases with successive entries (Huron 1990). The more similar the melodic contours of the parts, the more they tend to merge (Huron 1991) and produce the perception of unity (rather than separate parts). (Baroni 1996: 119–120)

Baroni proposes other features of perception influenced by musical parameters, and he recalls that Erickson (1975), studying Edgard Varèse, notes that similar timbres tend to merge and distant timbres tend to remain distinct; and that Zenatti (1969) shows that the upper voice is perceptually dominant, to the extent that the ability to perceive the lower voices is not present in young children.

Serena Facci (“*Akazehe* del Burundi: saluti a incastro polifonico e cerimonialità femminile” / “The *Akazehe* of Burundi: polyphonic interlocking greetings and female ceremonial”) emphasizes the social dimension and the relevance of the circumstances of the production of polyphony. The formulas of greeting she studies, which are very long and stereotyped, indicate the beginning of an interaction and occur in a suspension of real time. “A characteristic of the sung greetings is also the obligation of the alternation of the two roles”, she writes (Facci 1996: 136), also mentioning the existence of “heterorhythmic and polytextual superposition” (Facci 1996: 151). She also affirms that these greetings, which reflect social roles, are not socially considered as games or music: instead of competition, there is understanding and parity among the participants.

In his text comparing repertoires of medieval Europe and Central Africa (“Su alcune impreviste parentele fra le polifonie medievali e africane” / “On some unexpected relationships between medieval and African polyphony”), Arom identifies procedures already described in other texts (such as parallel movement, *hoquetus*, or coun-

terpoint) and proposes the category ‘polyphony of consonances’: within the musical period, there are points of obliged combination – mainly in fifth and octave positions – that make possible the development of a huge number of dissonances in all other positions of the polyphonic structure.

Giovanni Giuriati (“Le orchestre del Sud-est asiatico: eterofonia o polifonia?” / “The orchestras of South-East Asia: heterophony or polyphony?”) criticizes the strict dichotomous approach and advocates a network qualification system. He observes

the inadequacy of the classification systems based on mutually exclusive binary oppositions. A classification system that relates a network of characteristics and relationships between different multi-linear musical processes could perhaps place the peculiar processes of the heterophonic polyphony of South-East Asia in a better position than other processes. (Giuriati 1996: 200–201) One can perhaps speak, as a paradox, of heterophonic polyphony when the variations of the same melody are already melodically and rhythmically independent. (Giuriati 1996: 191)

The author mentions successive definitions of heterophony and polyphony in the history of ethnomusicology. Regarding the gamelan of Indonesia, he writes, “[t]he special feature of the multi-linear music of this area is that a comprehensive and elaborate polyphonic layering is built starting from a common reference model of melody.” (Giuriati 1996: 184) I wonder if this feature is unique to the Indonesian gamelan or if it appears in different types of polyphonic procedures. Very often Western classical music is based on one theme – the fugue – or two – the sonata –, even if in these cases the ways in which they are elaborated are very different to what happens with gamelan. Giuriati (1996: 196) explains that “[t]he fixed melody (*balungan* in Java, Bali’s *pokok*) [...] is a reference for the improvisation of individual parts with different rhythmic density that deviate melodically very much from it.” It may be pertinent to ask whether it is necessary to consider these aspects – the number of themes or patterns present in a musical piece, for example – when we propose a taxonomic or terminological revision, or if these are traits or parallel phenomena which

should not be considered, in order to avoid conceptual dispersion.

Giuriati also considers the degrees of density in the texture of gamelan, and he proposes three distinct forms of heterophony to be considered in the three traditions studied: polyphonic stratification with different simultaneous degrees of rhythmic density (Java), less elaborated polyphonic stratification (Cambodia, intermediate case), no stratification (the parts vary heterophonically a recognizable melodic skeleton, which is the case of *sizhu* ensembles in China). "I think it is operationally useful to restrict the definition of heterophony to the processes of variation in which the common reference melody remains recognizable." (Giuriati 1996: 200)<sup>12</sup>

In his text "Polivocalità di tradizione orale nel Rinascimento italiano: ipotesi e prospettive di ricerca" ("The multivoice oral tradition in the Italian Renaissance: hypotheses and research perspectives") Ignazio Macchiarella studies the derivation of fauxbordon from practices of oral tradition. He reminds us that

No direct relationship should be assumed between today's oral tradition and the sound world of the past. Interest in the repertoires of the groups and performers of today doesn't derive from the fact that they are a continuation or a thing of the past, but from their presentation *in vivo* of processes of musical formalization that, *mutatis mutandi*, can be extended to other situations in other historical periods. (Macchiarella 1996: 228–229)<sup>13</sup>

The book ends with a proposal of a general taxonomy regarding the polyphonic procedures of Italian traditional music. Maurizio Agamenone, Serena Facci, and Francesco Giannattasio ("I procedimenti polifonici nella musica tradizionale italiana. Proposta di tassonomia generale" / "Polyphonic procedures in Italian traditional music. Proposal for a general taxonomy") take a proposal elaborated by Simha Arom in 1985 and they adapt it to the Italian situation. They use the following names for the categories of polyphony:

- Two-part polyphony / Several-part polyphony
- Parallelism (without or with cadence in unison)

- Bourdon (one pitch / two successive sounds)
- Vocal / instrumental (homorhythmic parts / heterorhythmic parts)
- Chordal movement
- Counterpoint-accompanied melody
- Combination of procedures

As explained by the three authors, they began to develop this taxonomy in the field of research initiatives promoted by Simha Arom in an international working group on oral polyphony called *polyphonies vivantes* ('living polyphonies'). The proposal was presented at the 1995 Venetian seminar (whose proceedings gave rise to this volume) and discussed by the participants (whose comments and suggestions were taken into account by the authors). While this is only one of the results of the seminar (and not the only one, as has been seen in the synthesis of the contents of the chapters), it is an interesting taxonomic proposal, which joins others that have been developed in the field of musicological studies regarding types of polyphony.

### 3. Concluding remarks

Having reviewed the proposals for musical texture expressed by the authors of *Polifonie* it is possible to affirm that this term – 'polyphony' – has experienced periods of crisis because of its association with Western classical music. This, however, has not prevented the use of other terminology belonging to this tradition to characterize and name musical features from different cultures (from the use of the pentagram to the terminology taken from imitative counterpoint or the fugue to characterize a song performed by two pygmy women by Pierre Sallée 1981, for example). The consideration expressed by Rudolf Brandl in *European voices I* (2008: 283) should be noted here: "Musical ethnology has adopted the basic Occidental musical concepts of melody, rhythm, harmony, multipart style (*Mehrstimmigkeit*) and polyphony (*Polyphonie*) without checking their cognitive structure *on the principle of their cultural dependence*." He calls us to consider the intercultural differences ("different cognitive interconnections of psychoacoustic patterns as archetypes of music")

<sup>12</sup> However, recognizability is relative to the culture and, I suppose, to the competence of individual people.

<sup>13</sup> This consideration belongs to calls for caution in intercultural and inter-temporal comparisons.

and reminds us that “each music needs a communicable basis of precious *knowledge*” (Brandl 2008: 284), a position that would seem to invalidate the possibility of proposing universal taxonomies in this domain.

Questions arise when considering the main terminology treated in this volume: ‘polyphony’ or ‘multipart music’? Why ‘multipart’ instead of ‘polyphony’? Moreover, if we consider for a moment the second element of the current definition used by the ICTM Study Group on Multipart Music<sup>14</sup> – expressive behaviour – we conclude that ethnomusicologists should include this in their discussions on terminology and classification, since it is deeply connected to the concepts people have about music and polyphony (concepts which vary in different cultures). Again, we cannot avoid the dialogue between etic and emic perspectives. Is it still part of our task to translate the local terminologies to a universal one? Is it our challenge to find a terminological background to be applied to any musical phenomenon? Would it be a kind of multi-translator tool? Should we always consider the individual and social perspectives?

Some other questions could be related to the opposition ‘monophony’ vs ‘polyphony’: Sometimes, these two words are used as antonyms (i.e., indicating two opposing musical textures); however, some scholars use ‘monody’ instead of ‘monophony’, and they accept the opposition ‘monody vs polyphony’, especially if serving the historicist connotations that both terms have acquired (when applied to two textures associated with creative and interpretive procedures in the history of Western music). Should we accept the terms ‘monody’ and ‘polydy’ as antonyms? This would involve extending the meaning proposed for this term by Christoph Nichelmann in 1755 (music determined by harmony), as quoted by Wolf Frobenius in the article “Polyphony” of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (Frobenius et al. 2001: 75).

For those who think that the term ‘monody’ is contaminated with the use it has received in historical musicology, its replacement by ‘monophony’ seems relevant (thereby they claim to resolve the inconsistency raised by the synonymy ‘mono-

dy’/‘monophony’). However, the term ‘monophony’ is polysemic in the field of musical description, and can also be used to indicate a melody formed by a single pitch, while ‘biphony’ indicates tunes using two pitches, ‘threephony’ three pitches, and so on. Taking into account the writings of “[...] an author named ‘Johannes’ [who] described polyphony as *dyaphonia*, *triphonia*, *tetraphonia*, according to the number of parts” (Frobenius et al. 2001: 75), should we use these terms to indicate the number of parts of polyphony, or the number of sounds of a melody? Some Spanish-speaking musicologists have adopted this terminology with the second meaning, while some others have criticized it and prefer to speak of ‘bitony’, ‘threetony’, ‘tetratonny’, ‘pentatonny’, ‘hexatonny’ and ‘heptatonny’. Still, no one seems to have used the term ‘monotony’ for melodies of a single sound (instead, in the fourteenth century the word ‘monophonia’ was used for music for one voice).

We could continue questioning ourselves about the terminological ambiguities that populate the field of the study of musical texture: are ‘homophony’ and ‘heterophony’ antonyms (as the prefix indicates)? Certainly not. Since the word ‘homophony’ is used as a synonym of ‘homorhythm’ (coincidence in the articulation of sounds by different musical parts, i.e. the same rhythm in different parts), shall we use the word ‘heterorhythm’ to indicate different rhythm in one part? Is it preferable to use the term ‘homophony’ as a synonym of ‘harmonic polyphony’, or as a ‘melody accompanied by chords’? One last question: shall we have to continue to accept the terminological inconsistencies of our discipline as something unavoidable? Maybe we need to rethink all these problems, searching for a useful balance between universality and relativity.

Since the publication of the volume reviewed here there have been numerous discussions on oral tradition polyphony, including those of the International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony held in Tbilisi from 2002 to 2014 or those of the Study Group on Multipart Music established by the ICTM in 2009 (and one of whose activities was the seminar in Tallinn which provides the ba-

<sup>14</sup> “Multipart music is a specific mode of music making and expressive behaviour based on the intentionally distinct and coordinated participation in the performing act by sharing knowledge and shaping values.” <http://www.ictmusic.org/group/multipart-music> (last accessed 13/09/2016).

sis for this volume of *Res Musica*, as I have already pointed out). Many texts have been published on this topic. This, however, does not detract from the contents of the book edited by Agamennone,

many of which deserve to be taken into consideration in current discussions around the study of polyphony in oral tradition.

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