Institutions

Institutions in the Field of Ethnomusicology Introduce Themselves (XXX)

The Department of Musicology of the Institution Milà i Fontanals, C.S.I.C., Barcelona

The Department of Musicology of the Institution Milà i Fontanals was founded in Barcelona in the year 1943 by Higinio Anglés within the state’s organism High Council for Scientific Research (C.S.I.C.). The Department, which at that time carried the name “Instituto Español de Musicología,” was created with the primary aim of impelling the study, inventory and critical edition of historical works of Spanish music. But since its very beginning, a certain attention has been also devoted to the research of traditional music and a Folklore Section was also established. The German ethnomusicologist Martin Schneider was the first director of this Section. While in this position until 1955, he developed some of his theories about musical symbolism.

But the main objective of the Section of Folklore was the urgent gathering of Spanish traditional music. Between 1944 and 1966, the Institute carried out 68 field studies in most Spanish provinces. These field studies were undertaken by several researchers such as M. García Matos, Arcaído de Larrea, Bonifacio Gil among many others. In this way were collected a certain amount of musical documents. However, all this material was not obtained by mechanical procedures and so the Institute missed the opportunity to create a sound archive. The transcribed music consisted almost exclusively of folk songs, giving little importance to the sociocultural context. This material is today conserved in the Department and can be consulted by researchers. A small part of this material is already published below.

The ethnomusicological archive of the Department was also enriched through the organization, from 1945 until 1952, of public competitions, rewarding the best collections received. The musical transcriptions obtained in this way belong to several Spanish provinces.

In the 1960s, the ethnomusicological activity of the Department declined progressively. In the year 1970, Josep Crivillé joined the staff of the Department as the only ethnomusicologist. During his tenure, the research centered above all on the study of previously collected materials, nevertheless, at the same time some field studies in Catalonia were also being conducted. As of 1985, J. Crivillé left the Department; thus, ethnomusicological research was totally interrupted. In 1989, the Musicology Department, already under the current director J. V. González Valle, undertook again its ethnomusicological activities as J. Martí entered the research staff.

Regarding ethnomusicology, the main problem of the Department is little investment in human resources. Traditionally, the Department’s activities have been more inclined toward historical musicology. Currently, only one permanent staff member in the Department is conducting ethnomusicological research. The only solutions for this shortcoming seem to be the temporary collaboration with research fellows or the contracting of other researchers on a temporary basis. It would appear that both of the above are always subject to economic conjuncture. According to these policies, the ethnomusicologist R. Pelinski from the University of Montreal (Québec) worked in the Department during the years 1993–1995. The Department also accommodates researchers of other institutions for a limited period of time. This opportunity applies especially to foreign researchers who desire to spend a sabbatical year in Spain.

From the reopening of the Ethnomusicological Section until now, the prevalent research approach lies in understanding the object of study—music—as a sociocultural phenomenon, with all the important theoretical and methodological implications, which this perspective means. We understand interdisciplinarity also as a basic strategy for our work. Specific historical aspects of Spanish ethnomusicological research and questions of folklorist have been explored. But other interests within the line of Anthropology of Music have crystallized in the two ethnomusicological research projects which now are being conducted in the Department. The first, financed by the Spanish Public Administration (DGICYT), dealt with the function of music by the articulation of social identities. The principal objective of this research project is to study the power of popular music to articulate social groups. The field of research is centered on the musical practices of Barcelona’s metropolitan area. The second project, founded by the Catalan Government, is very close to the first but with more emphasis to immigrant groups. With the title “Cultures in Contact in the Present Catalan Society: Strategies of Affirmation and Negotiation of Collective Identities through Urban Popular Music,” the aim of this research—always regarding music as a factor of social articulation and expression of collective identity—was to relate the uses of urban popular music to the dynamics of ethnic pluralism in present Catalan society.

Within the activities of the Department, we also encourage doctoral theses which are oriented toward the treatment of music as a sociocultural phenomenon and which can be relevant for the development of Spanish Ethnomusicology. Currently, the fellow Silvia Martínez is finishing her study on the heavy musical scene in the metropolitan area of Barcelona and Susana Ausero is also working on the music of the Maghreb immigrants of Barcelona. Owing to the youth of ethnomusicology in Spanish universities, our department also gives a certain importance to collaborating regularly with universities offering lectures and seminars in ethnomusicology. In 1995, the Department organized, in Barcelona, the “I Congress of the Sociedad Ibérica de Etnomusicología,” whose legal site is in the Department, and in the same year also organized the “II Meeting of Iberoamerican Ethnomusicologists,” dealing with “Music and Ethnicity: Globalization and Diversification Processes,” with participants from Iberoamerica, Portugal and Spain.

The Department of Musicology has a relatively good library, especially interesting for all which concerns Spanish music. Since 1946, the Department has edited the periodical publication “Anuario Musical,” which contains research articles regarding historical musicology as much as ethnomusicology. Concerning the materials of the archive, the Department has until now published the following collections:


J. Crivillé & M. García Matos, Cancionero popular de la provincia de Cáceres. Barcelona: CSIC, 1982

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