

Blau, Dick, Agapi Amanatidis, Panayotis Panopoulos, and Steven Feld. *Skyros Carnival*. [Santa Fe]: VoxLox, 2010. 85 pp., photographs, CD, DVD, bibliography. ISBN 0-945401-46-9.

Carnival as a ritual event, as a *rite de passage*, and as a source for musical creativity has been the topic of a wide range of publications inside and outside of ethnomusicology—but none has ever reached the surprising experimental character of the multimedia publication *Skyros Carnival*, guided and inspired by the acoustemology of Steven Feld. The original and exemplary character of this publication is due less to its subject than to its experimental methodology: it actively promotes cross-fertilization between the disciplines of ethnomusicology, media studies, anthropology, and visual studies. The interdisciplinarity of this endeavour makes this publication worth reading, listening to, and experiencing—and in this case, all three are very pleasant activities. At the same time, the dialogue between the poetic and aesthetic properties of the carnival on the Aegean island of Skyros (particularly the synesthetic dimensions of colours, sounds, and smells) and the scientific analysis make the book a groundbreaking example for a new way of writing sensual ethnography in the twenty-first century. Indeed the most conventional part of this publication—if there is any—is the ethnographic text written by the Greek-Australian scholar Agapi Amanatidis and the Greek anthropologist Panayotis Panopoulos. Nevertheless, the text also documents the sensitive way through which the researchers joined forces in a common project, using their different disciplinary backgrounds as a fertile soil for their encounters with the ethnographic field.

In terms of ethnomusicology, the publication constitutes a major contribution to the sub-field of soundscape studies: two scholars involved in the project (Panopoulos and Feld) are renowned specialists in “bellscapes.” Through its enhanced visual aspects, the volume thus complements already existing studies and recordings on the symbolic, aesthetic, and economic properties of bells in different cultural contexts, such as the exemplary *The Time of Bells* series or *Bells and Winter Festivals in Greek Macedonia*, both produced by Feld and issued by Smithsonian Folkways. The subject of the publication is in this case not so much the *materiality* of bells but their *sounds*: sounds that menace, festive sounds, sounds on the move, metallic sounds which evoke the soundscape of nature. Feld is responsible for both the accompanying CD and DVD in this publication as well. The audio CD follows these sound transformations closely, guided by the most up-to-date technical equipment, like a DSM surround microphone. Indeed, the CD is anything but simple sound documentation: it is an intriguing, charming, and, overall, a participatory sound recording: it gives the listener the sense of being present. It is a sensitive way of writing a sound diary, of approaching and delimiting the ethnographic field through intensive listening. While reading, we listen to the idyllic music of a *kafeneion*, or local café, which is complemented and interrupted by the massive sounds of hammered bells.

The DVD intends to follow the rhythm and the interplay of colours, sounds, and movements with the help of film sequences and black-and-white photographs, which serve as snapshots of a vanishing experience. It is remarkable that the

condensed ten-minute film sequence consciously lacks any didactic message: it includes neither an explanatory voiceover nor subtitles. The rituality of the event and the theatrical aspects help the performance to explain itself through gestures, mimicry, and other behaviours.

It is highly exciting to see the complementary interplay between the four dimensions of sound, text, photography, and video in this publication. The photography by Dick Blau takes a highlighted role in this interplay, as it is employed not as a mere illustration, but as an aesthetic foundation for the issues dealt with in the text. Photography is present also in the video: some of the images are frozen, but they are still accompanied by impressive soundscapes. They move and become alive through sound in the same way as the text becomes animated through the photographs.

This work does not exclude the “heritagization” and “folklorization” of carnival, processes which can be witnessed all over the world. Indeed it was tourists who contributed to the “mediatization” of the event, and it was their expectations that contributed to the preservation of several carnival practices such as the Mardi Gras carnival in New Orleans. Even transnational actors such as UNESCO have intervened, as in the case of the Barranquilla Carnival in Colombia, which was declared a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2003. The publication considers tourists as an essential part of the event and not as a disturbing factor. The publication also takes into account that ethnographers may even share the same gaze with tourists in portraying ethnographic reality.

Skyros Carnival is not only an exemplary model of how to do ethnography with twenty-first-century methods, but also a fascinating experiment in how to bring the poetics of fieldwork in scientific work into the foreground.

It bears repeating that the experimental, multimedia character of this publication cannot be valued highly enough. Published in the VoxLox series directed by Feld, the book may serve as a model to other more conventional publishing houses to become more open towards methodologically enriching multimedia publications, despite the higher production costs.

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