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Folkloristica 27

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Expressions and Impressions

Personal and Communal Aspects of Traditional
Singing

Edited by
Mari Väina and Taive Särg



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From Folk Songs to Singing, Singer and Community

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Preface: some personal words before the introduction

Traditional vocal music exists as a living, communicative and evolving practice, rather than as a fixed collection of songs. Within the present book, we focus on the rich variety of forms and styles of traditional singing and its diverse functions and importance in people's lives. The emphasis is on the personal and participatory aspects of singing which allow people to express themselves in direct interaction in various contexts. Finally, the book discusses the multiplicity of ways in which traditional singing can be approached within research, working both in the field and with archive material.

While we were preparing the manuscript, the world began to change in unexpected ways that dramatically affected all of us. Although the plan was to start this book with a strictly scientific introduction and definition, life made some corrections and it now feels more important to reflect on some of the personal and moving experiences of joint singing. In 2019 the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic spread across Europe. We were able to follow online Italian people singing together on their balconies during the first quarantine. This communication, created through song and eye contact, expressed solidarity, an affirmation of the wish to continue living. Due to the restrictions on in-person communication, the COVID pandemic made people invent online options to support each other with music: they gathered behind computers to sing in choirs or ensembles, inviting others to join them, and artists gave online concerts and uploaded podcasts. The folk musician Jon Wilks writes: "Folk music in 2020 may have been battered by the devastating effects of the COVID pandemic, but there were great things to be heard, and fascinating changes to the traditional landscape that will prove well worth holding onto." (Wilks 2020)

Another event, although it primarily concerned the Estonian editors and researchers, points to a more general situation within the humanities, as well as demonstrating once again the power of singing as a means of protest and resistance, this time expressed by the Estonian folk music community¹. During the preparation of this book, the funding for Estonian humanities had decreased to such an extent

1. The concept of a folk music community is used for a group of people who are engaged in different activities related to folk music and who self-reflexively form a community, such as musicians, dancers, audiences, organisers, etc. (Johansson & Berge 2014: 31).

that the sustainability of the Estonian Folklore Archives (EFA) at the Estonian Literary Museum was in question. In this difficult situation, Estonian musicians who are using the archival materials as a source for their music compositions spontaneously organised a support concert in 2020 to draw attention to the importance of the research work performed at the archives in the development of contemporary culture. The work of researchers is necessary to turn the piles of material in the archives into common knowledge, for example people could own communally sung or artistically elaborated and performed repertoires as part of the world's music treasures as well as a mark of their cultural identity. Whether solely because of this concert – which later became known as the EFA Song Festival – or other fortunate circumstances, we at the archives are now able to continue our activities. Above all, the event clearly highlighted the importance of the study of traditional culture to wider society.

We hardly had time to rejoice about this, when a terrible tragedy began with the war in Ukraine. In addition to giving humanitarian and military aid, people of various nations started learning and singing Ukrainian folk songs and sharing Ukrainian scores and recordings on social media to show their support for Ukrainians and to add hope and fighting spirit.

These dramatic events are not directly reflected in this book, the compiling of which began in 2018–2019. But for our ideas about the essential role of traditional singing, the events that followed were a reality check.

This book was compiled and edited at the Estonian Literary Museum, and published by the Finnish Literature Society. The writers are mainly associated with Northern and Eastern Europe, and the topics extend to such far-flung peoples as the Ainu. However, overall the volume is somewhat biased towards the Baltic States because the initial impetus came from a conference on traditional singing held in Tartu in 2018. Michele Tita from Italy and Savannah-Rivka Powell from the US were studying at the University of Tartu at the time.

We are thankful to editor Karina Lukin for her constant support and help. We also thank our English language editor, Daniel Edward Allen, for his diligent and patient proofreading. The compilation and editing of the publication were supported by research projects IUT 22-4 and PRG1288 (funded by the Estonian Research Agency), the Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies (TK 145, funded by the European Union through the European Regional Development Fund), and the Estonian Roots Centre of Excellence (TK 215, funded by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research).

What is traditional singing?

By 'traditional singing' we mean the practice of vocal music that takes place in a specific community, group or network, where skill is at least partly transmitted through participation, listening and memorising via directly sung communication. Traditional singing denotes a type of communication that genuinely belongs to pre-modern society, defined in its mutual interdependence with modern (e.g. Giddens 1991; Anttonen 2005). It is perceived as having continuity with the past. However, we use the term to encompass colloquial singing as a habit and participatory practice in various societies and music systems, including those of revival and post-revival contexts. It is also possible to sing alone in the traditional style, and outside the

original context, while maintaining a relationship with the community through this singing. In the continuum of music and its discourse, traditional singing is broadly outlined by the terms ‘traditional music’, ‘folk music’ and ‘folk song’, while ‘traditional song’ is less commonly used. Traditional and folk music have been variously defined and used synonymously, separately, and overlapping each other. The consensus of music researchers as represented in the Grove dictionary has not seen the necessity for an entry on ‘traditional music’, but rather on ‘folk music’ (Pegg 2001). The collective opinion as reflected in Wikipedia, uses ‘traditional music’ synonymously with ‘traditional folk music’ (Folk Music 2024). Both the fields of folk and traditional music were constructed through an opposition to Western art music culture, highlighting distinctive features such as oral transmission, autonomous aesthetics, and its use in more activities and functions than just listening and pleasure.

The editors chose the term ‘traditional singing’ to combine the experiences of folklorists and ethnomusicologists, and to focus on basic vocal communication. The word ‘traditional’ was preferred to ‘folk’ to avoid firm associations with rural ethnic groups or various political groups,² emphasizing ‘singing’ as a process and practice rather than the objectified result of it. Like spoken communication, sung communication can take place in any era and place, it can have different purposes but always with more or less artistic ambitions and aesthetic qualities. This book proceeds from the context-based concept of traditional singing, which, in addition to the words and melody considers the communicative, performative and behavioural aspects of singing.

The researchers have discussed the ambiguous meaning of ‘traditional’ and the static and dynamic perceptions of tradition³ (e.g. Hobsbawm 1983; Hall 1996; Bronner 2000; Ó Giolláin 2000; Schippers 2006; Strohm 2018; Morgenstern 2021). In the present book, ‘tradition(al)’ as it relates to singing is not used with an emphasis on immutability, but rather in connection with the community, as well transmission through direct communication, which imparts the skills of vocalising, behaving and performing in a way that makes singing native to a group. Tradition is seen as the ongoing process of constructing intersubjectivity in a community through shared experience acquired from predecessors (authorities) combined with the experiences and expectations of other community members in a contemporary live singing context. (On intersubjectivity, see Chandler & Munday 2011.)

A glimpse into the history of the terms ‘folk song’ and ‘traditional music’

Singing-related terms are the musical, linguistic and social agreements of various social groups, which change together with circumstances while retaining something

2. Theoretical literature on folklore has established that ‘folk’ can denote any group of people (Dundes 1980), but in the terms ‘folk song’ and ‘folk music’ it still has a strong connotation of a rural ethnic group or nation. As mentioned above, these terms, propagating in time and space, become loaded with certain ideas.
3. ‘Tradition’ comes from Latin *tradere* (*trans* + *dare*), ‘hand over’. Ó Giolláin, discussing historical meanings of the ‘traditional’, concludes that in English the initial meaning of ‘delivered teaching’, ‘instruction’ strongly implies ‘respect’, ‘obligation’, with the general meaning inclined towards ‘primeval’, ‘pristine’, ‘ceremony’ (Ó Giolláin 2000: 8).

of their previous associations. Discussions of musical terms have often been value-laden and ideological as music is primarily defined through its aesthetic qualities, a culture-specific category. Along with music, the categories for analysing and describing it are at least partly culture-specific. Aesthetic preferences and theoretical ideas develop in specific sociopolitical contexts, which means that the ideas and values of more powerful groups tend to have greater influence on these processes. In Western discourse, the aesthetic value of music was associated with the developmental level of society. This is expressed, for example, in Johan Gottfried Herder's viewpoint that all peoples have the capability to develop valuable folk song culture, but only those living in such beneficial natural conditions as some European nations have achieved it (Duchesne 2017–2018). Consequently, discussions about music often intertwine social circumstances and aesthetic conceptions, relating the value of music to the developmental level of its community in terms of human cultural evolution. Group ideologies and power relations have contributed to ideas about music as well as terms, definitions, values and theoretical constructs.

The study of traditional singing falls primarily within the scope of folkloristics and ethnomusicology. However, because traditional singing itself is an interdisciplinary phenomenon, it can be approached from various research perspectives and using various methods, such as linguistics and poetics, ethnography and anthropology, psychology, religion studies, and more.

European folk song (the term *Volkslied* was used in German scholarly literature) became valued by the intelligentsia (e.g. Rousseau, Herder) in the 18th century as a prospective source of native cultures that wanted to develop an artistic, but not too narrow or elitist, music and literature. The focus was on the musical and word texts of folk songs, through which the 'essence' of an idealised folk would have transmitted to written culture in order to add national and ethnic originality, natural vitality, ethics and the aesthetics of rural people, who were imagined to live in harmony with the world. Although the idealised folk and its oral tradition were valued, it was considered a lower stage of biological-social evolutionary development, a culture that had to develop into a literary culture in order to perpetuate. Therefore, in folk music, the features specific to oral culture, for example methods of oral transmission, (re)creation, performance style, were not of special interest to literary composers or poets, who adapted folk songs to written culture during the first folklore revival.

In scholarly discourse, folk song and folk music were initially defined as firstly the products of oral tradition of European country people. At the root of defining folk music were questions "about the identity and identification of the 'folk', the delimitation of musical repertoires, how these repertoires are transmitted and the assessment of sounds". (Pegg 2001) However, the meaning of folk music expanded in the 20th century, firstly due to the broadening of the forms of re-use of this music in Europe and America, and secondly because it was used interchangeably with the close term 'traditional music' and covered its content as well.

In 1955, the International Folk Music Council (est. 1947; from 2023 the International Council for Traditional Music and Dance) defined folk music as "the product of a musical tradition that has been evolved through the process of oral transmission", and is considered uninfluenced by other musical styles (Pegg 2001). Such a definition may have helped to promote and protect older folk music styles during changing times. The definition of folklore established by leading specialists of

that time in Bergen in 1986 includes “even written and mass media forms of folklore to the extent that variations occur” (NIF 1986: 21).

The notion of folk song highlights singing tradition beyond the mainstream of a literary culture, and seeks to join past and present, rural and urban, in order to recreate cultural identity. Folk songs are crucial for supporting the continuation of language and culture, especially of minority groups and small nations, because of the link to group identity.

In many Northern and Eastern European contexts, such connections between song traditions and group identity are linked to what is locally called national consciousness (cf. Est. *rahvustus*, Fin. *kansallistunto*, Lat. *nacionālā apziņa*), a concept that often carries positive associations with cultural heritage, language preservation, and community continuity. This usage differs from the English term nationalism, which in international academic discourse frequently has strongly political or negative connotations.

The term ‘traditional music’ was developed in Britain in the mid-19th century to refer to the music of various peoples of the world which had broadly the same characteristics as folk music (Morgenstern 2021). By the end of the 19th century the study of musical expressions and practices of non-Western cultures emerged as a subfield of comparative musicology in Austria and Germany, as well as of anthropological studies in North America. These studies constructed their subject through opposition to Western music, including folk music and folk songs. Researchers of non-Western music began paying attention to the singing context, related activities, and the insider’s point of view, as they were essential to the understanding of alien musical cultures.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the term ‘traditional music’ for non-Western music was more widely adopted after the exclusion of previously used terms because of their connection with various shades of inferiority (for example ‘primitive music’) or overly specific social features (for example ‘tribal music’)⁴ (Nettl 1964). At the same time, discussions on what kind of music should be covered by this term emerged.

In 1950 the Dutch researcher Jaap Kunst introduced the new term ‘ethnomusicology’ (cf. Ger. *Musikethnologie*) for earlier ‘comparative musicology’ and defined its study object as “traditional music”, including “tribal and folk music, and every kind of non-Western art music” (Kunst 1969 [1950]: 1). The Archives of Folk and Primitive Music at Indiana University was renamed the Archives of Traditional Music in 1965. However, dispute over the term’s appropriateness and the music it should refer to persist (Morgenstern 2021).

During the 20th century the boundaries between various kinds of music, and the research disciplines of folk and traditional music, diminished as on the one hand

4. The developments in anthropology in the 1950s and especially postcolonial discourse that emerged in the 1980s made people seriously think about the loaded nature of scholarly language (see for example Bourdieu 1989; Ashcroft et al. 2007 [2000]). Helen Myers admitted that ‘conscientious ethnomusicologists’ have lost their working vocabulary over the last several decades. “In the kingdom of exiled words live the labels condemned as pejorative: the old-timers, ‘savage’, ‘primitive’, ‘exotic’, ‘Oriental’, ‘Far Eastern’; some newcomers, ‘folk’, ‘non-Western’, ‘non-literate’, ‘pre-literate’; and recently ‘world’. ‘Traditional’ survived the trial of the 1970s, leaving ethnomusicologists with an important concept that refers, in the world of music, to everything and therefore nothing.” (Myers 1992: 11)

more information on archaic European folk song styles not much influenced by modern music entered scholarly discussion, and on the other hand most singing cultures had interacted with various forms of global modernity. The discourses of folk and traditional music became globalised and international scholarly cooperation expanded, largely through the work of the International Council for Traditional Music.

Several older singing traditions faded with modernisation and globalisation, but endured longer in the peripheries of the global West (and the modern lifestyle promoted by it), while the songs, once collected and stored in archives, reappeared in institutional as well as informal revivals. Vernacular singing practices persisted in various groups, modernising the old styles and acquiring new ones from other nations and popular culture. The previous situation – in which features of ‘folk music’ such as rural group traditions, aural learning, historical styles – no longer exist together, causing theoretical confusion. Various conceptions of authenticity emerged to delimit what counted as a legitimate tradition, such as the authenticity of the result (i.e. the degree to which the style corresponded to the original), of the community (the singers as legitimate representatives of the tradition), or of the process (whether it was correctly learned and followed). (For more detail see Ronström 2014: 46–47.)

In addition to the terms ‘folk music’ and ‘traditional music’, which have been useful to distinguish their subject from ‘art music’ and ‘popular music’ from the Western perspective, since the 1980s and 1990s the new terms ‘world music’ and ‘roots music’ have come into usage and an acceptance of various music traditions and points of views developed.

Terms related to traditional singing depend on local disciplinary traditions and are not directly translatable across languages or cultures (Pegg 2001). Many languages lacked a native general term for ‘music’, but had words for song, singing and instrumental music, as with Baltic, Slavic and Finnic languages. The terms ‘folk song’ or ‘traditional song’ have also been adopted in most languages along with modern culture, though nuances in meaning differ. In English, ‘old’ or ‘traditional folk music’ distinguishes oral tradition from revival, called ‘new folk music’, while in Finnish and Estonian the terms ‘old folk song’ and ‘new folk song’ designate older and newer styles of oral tradition.

Acceptance of various points of view in the discourse of music

According to the principles of ethnomusicology as an intercultural and comparative discipline, developed during the 19th and 20th centuries in the Western scholarly context, many world music cultures were represented through outsiders to the culture (see for example Nettl 1983: 3–15, 149–160; Myers 1992; Witzleben 1997; Rice 2013). Rice has admitted that: “Today’s ethnomusicology, at least that branch of it that has ethnomusicologists from North America, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan traveling the globe to study the music of other people, has some of its roots in colonialism and imperialism.” (Rice 2013)

The paradigm change in the humanities and social sciences during the second half of the 20th century from the predominant Western researcher’s viewpoints and methodologies in forming ‘objective’ knowledge on the world, to a multitude of

viewpoints and ontologies, was marked by several 'turns', such as the postmodernist, post-structural, reflexive, ontological and posthuman.⁵ Questions arose about the validity of global, universalising perspectives and attention turned to the truths embedded in the local, everyday, variable, and contingent aspects of music, as well to the role of the individual. (Duckles et al. 2001)

Scepticism about the supremacy of Western music, which had for a long time been taken for granted, evolved during the 20th century and influenced several musical cultures, including those of the European folk singers whose style did not conform to its aesthetic criteria. If all music was valued, at least in theory, there was justification for keeping various native traditions alive without feeling ashamed that its difference from the mainstream might reflect a community's 'underdevelopment'.

The study of traditional music has significantly contributed to the acceptance of diverse viewpoints within anthropology. Researchers aspiring to understand the music and musical perception of the human race had to acknowledge alternative aesthetics as a foundational aspect of their field. Theorists of comparative musicology in the late 1890s introduced the ideas of cultural relativism, positing that the musics of various cultures cannot be treated according to common aesthetic values or ranked objectively. Erich M. von Hornbostel wrote that music can evolve in different directions, for example while in Western art music was complex polyphony, in much non-Western music a "superiority in rhythmic capability" was found: "...in music comprised of one-voice song, on the other hand, rhythm was able to develop freely to a level of complication which is totally unknown to us: rhythmic constructions which can not be fitted into a system of beats; polyrhythm, which means several contrasting rhythms working together or rather against each other" (Hornbostel 2000 [1911]: 93).

Acceptance of manifold viewpoints, developed along with research into how cultures conceptualise themselves from within, was strongly influenced by American anthropologist Franz Boas' works, who also wrote about traditional music (for example *The Central Eskimo*, 2013 [1888], *On Certain Songs and Dances of the Kwakiutl of British Columbia*, 1888, see also Boas 1989 [1974]), and theoretically conceptualised by American ethnomusicologist Alan Merriam, summarised in his *Anthropology of Music* (1964). Boas' attempt to understand American culture "as it appears to the Indian himself" and analyse it as commensurable with Western cultures, has been interpreted as an early form of "symmetrical anthropology" and precursor to the later reflexive (or ontological) turn in anthropology in the late 20th century. From the perspective of ontological anthropology, the goal is not to establish a common truth about all people, but to uncover how people from different cultures interpret and represent the world. (Rodseth 2015; Kim 2019; Latour 1993) Jeffers Engelhardt, a researcher of religious music, has paralleled the researchers' advances and "epistemological limits" on both sides: secular outsiders lack authentic religious experience and strive to empathise with the community's views, while the inside researchers adapt the language and paradigms of secular critique (Engelhardt 2012: 302–303).

5. Anthropological research gradually became conscious of its epistemological limits. Inherent to Western science was the structured division of the world, as part of which Other cultures were seen as generally outside and inferior. The 'truth' about them was based on, and transmitted through, subjective mediums, to which were attributed objectivity in the framework of a positivist rational worldview and power relations.

Singing as community tradition: Impressions and expressions

Singing as a shared tradition belongs primarily to smaller communities or face-to-face groups, where close communication and immediate sensory perception are possible. The smaller group with its tradition can be part of a larger real or imagined community (network), or it might represent a different, alternative, song community. Singing and music are intertwined with other group attributes, such as identity, ideology, lifestyle, language and customs.

The concept of traditional culture in folkloristics and anthropology was initially formed on the basis of relatively compact, socio-economically similar groups, although when the scope of anthropological studies expanded, the social structure that was involved in folk/traditional music began to encompass a wider range of groups (Elbourne 1976: 23; Dundes 1980; Ben-Amos 1983; Slobin 1993; Ó Giolláin 2000: 9). We prefer to use the term ‘community’ because it is not strictly defined as relating to any social structure, in English it primarily means a group of people more closely related to each other, the possible characteristics of which are the spatial proximity of people and the existence of similar interests, values and dynamic relationships (Cobigo et al. 2016).

Sociobiologists consider the communal way of living of humans to be very ancient and trace its origin back to the group living of primates, therefore they also assume that the structure of the human brain and the fundamentals of social behaviour and communication, such as dominance, leadership, submission, courtship, evolved long ago, and speech and songs play an additional role among other earlier forms of communication (e.g. Mazur 1985; Gladwell 2002: 177–181). The group has been a primary human social environment that has fulfilled communication and cultural needs, shaped identity and relationships with society, and provided necessary wellbeing through positive relationships (e.g. Tajfel & Turner 1986; Hall 1996; Umberson & Karas Montez 2010; Turner & Reynolds 2012).

Traditional singing, as far as it developed in the course of joint social activities, and functioned as an instrument of group communication, might embody in its structure and style merits that facilitate members’ interaction, building and maintaining a group. Leea Virtanen has written that many folk songs, dances and circle games develop a way to offer joy primarily to participants through the enjoyment of one’s own voice, creativity in melodic variation, and the joint feeling of the power of the performance. As contemporary modern music is meant for listening it demands from singers a special effort to capture the audience’s attention. (Virtanen 1991: 22) Ethnomusicologists have demonstrated in numerous works that singing contributes to community life because it helps to create a social cohesion by connecting with important phenomena, shared by group members, such as interests, values, representations, past events, ethnic and social background. (Merriam 1964; Bartleet & Higgins 2018, etc.) For example, Anthony Seeger (2010) demonstrates how Suyá singing (re)creates society, repositions the individuals within it, and (re)structures their cosmos in specific and significant ways. People also express their feelings through traditional song, such as unspoken sadness, anger, joy, etc. (ibid.).

The study of singing – as part of musicology – has dealt with a lot of aesthetic, value and stylistic aspects, while singing as self-expression and communication has received less attention. The perspective of musicology expresses the needs and values

of society, where the experience of the listener or consumer is of primary importance. From a similar point of view, in the case of traditional singing, aesthetics and style have primarily received attention, for example, in the effort to prove to someone that a certain musical tradition and the group carrying it are valuable.

In this collection, we focus on traditional singing as a social activity in the past and present in various cultural contexts. We highlight some characteristic features of traditional communal singing that are also evident today, such as 1) recurring singing situations; 2) roles in group singing and intersubjectivity; 3) oral tradition, at least partially; 4) connection with a distinct tradition and style.

1. Traditional communal singing developed according to recurrent patterns based on the cycles of the year and human life, each with its own rituals. Any way of life without abrupt changes will give rise to recurrent typical situations. Accordingly, traditional, and at the same time flexible expressions in word and melody, were suitable for use through the generations preserving relevance in the community. Through the creative re-application of traditional songs, people could find an outlet for their personal experiences with, at the same time, the song tradition providing a framework that guided people on how to feel, act, and express themselves in specific situations. In modernising society, with more rapid changes, people have sometimes found a way to express themselves in traditional singing. In this collection, Särög and Kömmös, and Tita, analyse the function of song and dance in traditional activities of the group.

2. The collective experience of singing materialises and renews in every instance of joint singing, which benefits from good collaboration and an appropriate division of roles. The consonance between individual and collective in traditional singing can be achieved through intersubjectivity, that is, fellow singers adjusting to each other, relying on mutual perception and mental representation. Intersubjectivity, defined as “the process and product of sharing experiences, knowledge, understandings, and expectations with others” (Chandler & Munday 2011), helps us understand how singers’ emotions and impressions transform into traditional vocal expressions in communal singing practice. Ian Cross, and numerous other studies of group singing, highlight how music gives people a collective intuition and understanding of each other: “Music at the supracultural level appears as a communicative medium optimal for mobilising shared intentionality *per se*” (Cross 2012: 96).

According to Thomas Turino’s classification of the social organisation of music, traditional singing often belongs to participatory music, where there is no strict distinction between artist and audience, and the musicians of widely varying skills have a freedom – depending on the character of the tradition – to produce various sounds in a game-like practice. (Turino 2008) In a historical community-based culture, a large part of singing was joint activity in which, according to situation and habit, the people sang together or in turns, for example by changing the role of the soloist, lead singers, choir and emotionally supportive listeners.

Popular music and art music have evolved towards ever greater distance between the performer(s) and audience: where once choral singing or rhythm and blues were participatory music, today the composer and interpreter often differ according to their specialisation. The interpreter performs in front of an audience or in the studio, alienated in space (or in both space and time); voices and instruments are amplified, while larger ensembles, music and sound recording are also utilised. Developments

in capacity and size have also taken place, on the one hand with larger and larger audiences and concert venues, and on the other with the wish to increase the influence of music, using volume and the effect of massed voices, which can also demonstrate power. At today's major music events, such as Estonian or Latvian song festivals or rock concerts, there is, however, also the tendency to create 'communality' by initiating consolidating activities, for example when performer and audience sing well-known songs together, or when the audience dances or 'throws fingers' in front of the stage, in effect forming a smaller community that is physically cohesive and closer to the band.

Today, when several traditional cultures with their participatory music traditions have decayed under modernisation and urbanisation, a 'community music' movement has arisen that identifies itself through the practical goal of contributing to community life with joint music making. (Bartleet & Higgins 2018; Cottrell & Impey 2018; Yi & Kim 2023) In this book, the chapters by Saarlo, Oras et al., Powell, and Žičkienė explore the creative singer's relationship with the community and with tradition, touching on the boundary between individual and social.

3. Traditional singing, rooted in oral tradition, is strongly based on memory and creativity, and is realised in the interaction between individuals and the community. There is often a lead singer (or singers) and a re-creator who restores a song from a mental state to a physical state of sounds. The whole group can contribute to the creative performance through repetition, textual or melodic variations, adding verses and comments, etc. This kind of singing often took place in the context of ordinary activities and events, was situational, and presupposed a shared cultural knowledge (a 'store' of means of expression). Developments in human and social sciences indicate a growing awareness of the role of the individual in the community's creative processes, in the relationship between individual and society, and between past and present. (Nettl 1983; Rice 1987, 2017; Nooshin 1996, 2016)

Oral tradition causes variation at all the levels of expression, leading to gradual changes in folk song style and repertoire. This regional variation is studied in Finnic runosong by Väina in this collection.

4. In today's modern society, various forms of traditional or participatory singing are continued or (re)invented. Several religions still use traditional singing as part of their rites (see Jovanović's chapter in the current volume). Traditional singing also continues to be practiced by many ethnic communities and families. Traditional music is not distinguished from other types of music by a rigid boundary for two reasons: firstly, all music is based on a tradition, and secondly, different types of music come into contact and influence each other. (Cf. Morgenstern 2021)

Traditional singing is today often considered specific to ethnic communities and is differentiated on the basis of an established historical style. For the singers' communities, traditional singing meets their needs and skills, and is often associated with a pleasant group atmosphere and group-related memories. There has been a de- and recontextualisation of songs when they moved from their immediate local community (directly or through records) to modern contexts, where they were used for professional stage performance and institutionalised participatory activities, taught in music schools, or used as inspiration for new music, the singing style serving as the identity marker (see Rosenberg in this volume). Newer styles can adapt to community singing; sound and video recordings and/or written sources can be used as auxiliary means. New contexts can develop, but singing might still be considered traditional if