

Performing the Past by Singing? Workshops of Countryside Singing in Poland

Kaja Maćko-Gieszcz

Abstract: *Countryside songs which passed from generation to generation are regarded as a relict among rural communities, but the phenomenon of singing such songs in the form of workshops is becoming more popular among citizens in Poland. Remembering the past is still reproduced during workshops and the impression of continuity of tradition is being constructed. Thus, the workshop movement may be analyzed in the context of the music revivals theory. Furthermore, being and singing together may lead to creating the notion of community, not only in the physical, but also in the symbolical sense. The workshop movement is a very contemporary practice which sustains strong links to the past.*

Singing workshops are organized in Poland as regular meetings or occasionally, for example during different festivals, not only in the cities, but also in the country. Every instructor has his or her own methods and techniques of voice training (also called “white voice,” “archaic,” “traditional” or “singing-shouting”). Work on vocal techniques is very important and the voice should be the same as it was sung in the country. The authority of teachers is moving from the old generation to well-trained professionals. Leaders of such workshops very often stress the relationship between this kind of singing and a nature, a first scream of a newborn child, something archaic which was obscured by civilization. Workshop groups very often present themselves on a stage and many of the participants conduct their fieldwork, personally collecting and learning songs from older people, which is very often regarded as saving old music from oblivion.

Keywords: *countryside singing, workshops, revival, community, the past.*

Introduction

In this paper I discuss workshops of traditional countryside singing in Poland, a phenomenon that has been gaining popularity through the past several years. Although songs sung in the country that have been passed from generation to generation are mostly regarded as a relict among countryside communities, the idea of learning and singing such songs in the form of workshops is becoming more and more recognizable among city residents.

The main goal of the paper is to show that a very contemporary practice - workshops of countryside singing - can sustain strong links to the past on many different levels. At the beginning I would like to pay attention to the popularity of workshops and the factors that motivate people to take part in this kind of activity. In my opinion it is important to consider how the teachers gain their authority through techniques of warming-up, experience and knowledge. I then focus on categories which are closely related to these kinds of workshops, that is: community, the past, repertoire, and reconstruction. The latter is understood quite widely as being related to repertoire, past ways of singing, being and acting together, or the past in general. I conclude by discussing the idea of different kinds of bridges. The bridge between generations is first and foremost in this analysis, but it is worth seeing the problem in a wider perspective, referring to geographical and interpersonal bridges, which seem to me equally significant.

I base my paper on several interviews¹ I conducted with people who have sung in workshop groups as both teachers and participants, my own experience acquired some years ago, and finally online sources like films, descriptions of workshops and opinions about them. To give a notion of their popularity in Poland, I recall some organizations, events, and groups which, however, are evoked only as a few examples of a very complex movement.

There are several categories important in my interpretation of the singing workshop movement, such as community, notions of the past, or different understandings of tradition. It may be interesting to put that phenomenon in a wider theoretical context of music revivals. Although there are some suggestions that the term is not suitable any more (Slobin 2014), I agree with Livingston who claims that it still deserves attention (Livingston 2014: 63). Music revivals can be understood as social movements that “perform and promote music that is valued as old or historical and is usually perceived to be threatened or moribund” (Hill and Bithell 2014: 3) in order to restore and preserve it (Livingston 1999: 68). They may appear as a kind of “cultural opposition and as an alternative to mainstream culture” and “improve existing culture through the values based on historical value and authenticity” (ibid). “Dissatisfaction with some aspect of the present and a desire to effect some sort of cultural change” (Hill and Bithell 2014: 3-4) are then the most frequent motivations of revival movements. This phenomenon is involved in different aspects of the relation to the past and entails different consequences of how music is performed, perceived and transformed. Among those issues and processes are: activism, reinterpretation of history, establishing new or revising historical narratives, decontextualization, recontextualization, legitimization of musical and cultural changes,

¹ Especially valuable for this paper is the interview with Weronika Grozdeu-Kołacińska who plays a double role both as an ethnomusicologist and a teacher, has long-time experience and a very reflective attitude to the subject.

and the concept of authenticity, new ways of transmission, promotion, and dissemination of the revived music. If successful, music revivals may enter a post-revival phase which results in creating new subcultures or being absorbed by mainstream culture (Hill and Bithell 2014: 3-4).

Tamara Livingston (1999) recognizes several characteristics that form the basis of music revivals. The phenomenon of countryside singing workshops in Poland corresponds largely with these theoretical frames. As already mentioned, there is an aspect of activism related to the revival movement. Livingston calls these groups of people “core revivalists” whose feelings of strong connectivity to tradition make them believe in “rescuing” it from oblivion (70). This is what could be observed in Polish circumstances: a group of enthusiasts started the movement and today there are still some core individuals who have a vision, who organize (see: *ibid*) and encourage other people to come and sing old songs. The idea of what and how to sing derives from the knowledge of individual informants or historical sources (such as recordings), that – according to Livingston – forms another salient ingredient of her theoretical model (*ibid*: 69). Common features of stylistics and aesthetics of such performances are then “transformed into the ‘essence’ of the style” (*ibid*: 71), which, in some cases, can cause problematic questions about “the balance between ‘preservation’ of the tradition ... and innovation” (*ibid*). Such considerations entail another issue, which is the idea of authenticity – an important element of revivalist ideology and discourse. It is strongly connected with the notion of historical continuity and the purity of revived music, as opposed to other musics, as well as with the concept of the “folk,” contrasted with modern society and technology (*ibid*: 74-75). Since “the ideology of authenticity ... must be carefully constructed and maintained” (*ibid*: 74) “in order to pass on the tradition in a controlled manner” (*ibid*: 73), it is frequently enriched with an educational aspect (which, in the Polish case of singing workshops, is a key concept of the whole movement). A feeling of unity with other revivalists is being sustained by knowledge and practice (*ibid*: 74). This, going further, may contribute to creating a sense of community, another component of Livingston’s model. Revival communities, although non-territorial, are strengthened both symbolically and physically by different organizations and activities like revivalist magazines, journals, recordings, radio stations, festivals, and competitions (*ibid*: 69-73). Such enterprises very often become a revival industry, which then needs marketing action.

The model proposed by Livingston seems to be very accurate when it comes to workshops of countryside singing organized in Poland. Thus, many elements identified in the Polish phenomenon could be interpreted using theoretical frames of music revivals. In my opinion, there are two categories presented by Livingston that deserve special attention as they are crucial for the movement: community and the past. The term “community,” as defined by Anthony Cohen, is a symbolic construct that stems from the awareness of boundary, which distinguishes one social group from another. A community is being constructed symbolically by people who make it “a source and repository of meaning and a referent of their identity” (Cohen 2001: 118). Communal singing which takes place during workshops is also a physical practice which, through “embodied, sensual and emotionally charged” (Amit 2002: 16) experiences, creates “a sense of belonging” (*ibid*). Going further, it is also important, that people gather for a reason – “whether to remember and recall, to share, or to create new experiences” (Barz 2006: 25). Communities, however, are not “simple gatherings of people,” but “gatherings of people involved in social action,

in processes that allow performance to function in the definition of self (selves) within society(-ies)” (ibid: 29). Also, the notion of the past is salient in the context of workshops. According to Caroline Bithell, the past can be understood as "a source of cultural symbols that have a power beyond mere history” (Bithell 2006: 5), although “even with the best of intentions there is always an element of hypothesizing, reconstructing or imagining” (ibid). What is significant here is that “what our interlocutors tell us reveals not only different aspects of the past but also the mechanisms by which the past is remembered, constructed and invested with meaning” (ibid: 6). When “the perceived loss of roots and soul” is dominant and revival movements arise, revitalization and reclamation of the past are identified with restoring a sense of community (Bithell 2014: 34).

Overview of Workshops

Before 1989 most of the countryside-singing movement was incorporated within the official frames of “people’s culture” (*kultura ludowa*), having its focus shifted towards scenic performances rather than sustaining tradition (see: Nowak 2014). Political transformation changed the role of governmental and institutional supervision and gave individual social actors an opportunity to have more agency. In the last twenty years there has been a growing interest in *in crudo*² music, which is accompanied by many initiatives like organizing festivals, publishing recordings, manufacturing traditional instruments and especially by workshop forms of making music (Nowak 2011).

The very first workshops in Poland were started independently in the nineties by the *Muzyka Kresów* (Music of Kresy) Foundation³ and the *Dom Tańca* (House of Dance) Association.⁴ The first one was founded in 1991 and at first dealt mostly with music of eastern Slavs. In 1998 the organization set up the International School of Traditional Music, whose aim was to interest young people in traditional Polish music.⁵ Since then its workshops have been taking place in many Polish cities. Similarly, the first workshop held in Warsaw in 1994 (which in fact was a dance workshop) was the initiative of the people who one year later established the House of Dance. As a formal association, they have been organizing regular workshops since 2002, which comprise of traditional dancing, singing and playing, very often in the form of summer camps (Grochowska and Mazur-Hanaj 2014: 266).

Workshops of countryside singing are organized in Poland as regular meetings or occasionally, for example during festivals, not only in cities, but also in the country. As it is a very lively and differentiated phenomenon, my aim is not to present its complete classification or typology, but to give an overview of how it functions in the present reality.

² From Latin: in a raw, natural condition. The term is widely used in Polish ethnomusicological literature and within the workshop movement, although seldom defined. It may be understood as a “traditional,” “roots-based,” “authentic” (Baliszewska, Mazur-Hanaj 2011: 151), “clear,” or “pattern” music (Wosińska 2014: 203). The term is popularized by the House of Dance which releases CD series under the same name. As the series authors suggest, *In Crudo* means recorded naturally, without any arrangements

(<http://www.domtanca.art.pl/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=31>).

³ <http://www.muzykakresow.pl/>

⁴ <http://domtanca.art.pl/>

⁵ See a very interesting film from one of its editions:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rMn2Z85YFyY>

Usually workshops are devoted to specific masters, groups, regions or countries from Central and Eastern Europe (mainly Slavic). As already stated, they are primarily organized in cities, taking place, e.g., in museums, cultural institutions, or theaters. Most of them are held as regular meetings (e.g., once a week, when a group gathers more or less formally, with a teacher or – less often – without her or him), camps (usually organized in the summer, when people come to a venue for approximately one week to sing and/or play traditional repertoire of the region under the direction of teachers and/or local masters), or as part of festivals, conferences or artistic projects devoted to traditional culture (that are organized mainly by associations and foundations whose work is devoted to traditional music, such as *Wszystkie Mazurki Świata – All the Mazurkas of the World Festival*) (see: Grochowska, Mazur-Hanaj 2014: 272-273). The initiative to organize workshops can vary then from informal, private, self-organized and bottom-up to formal, funded and top-down.

The audiences of such events are very complex and diverse. Although the need to classify them may be strong (see: Livingston 1999), in my opinion it is very difficult to make such an analysis in terms of background, class, or any other social frames. According to Tamara Livingston (2014), the idea of identifying music revivals as middle-class phenomena may be adequate in some cases (especially from Western Europe and North America), but certainly it may not be applied to all of them (64). In the Polish case there is, of course, a core group concentrated around the *in crudo* movement and there are some people whose style of, e.g., living and clothing is hugely impacted by their activity in this field (see: Grozdew-Kołacińska 2014: 44-45), but certainly the workshop environment is not homogenous. It is enough to say that most participants are young and the majority of them are women.

Workshops started to gain popularity several years ago. As my interlocutor said,⁶ now they are becoming more common, for they often accompany many different events (which are not always devoted to “traditional” culture). They appear, for example, as voice training workshops organized by companies for their employees. Some singers have even started to present themselves as vocal coaches and to create commercial offers of workshops. Of course the attitude toward singing depends on many factors. Motivations and meanings are different among different people. Certainly, some of them participate in workshops occasionally, but for some it is a very important and popular activity. A greater interest in countryside traditional music (or maybe in singing in general) is a fact and it is much easier than a few years ago for endeavours dedicated to traditional culture to be financially supported.

⁶ Interview with W. Grozdew-Kołacińska, August 2014.

Concepts

There are several levels of working with songs during the workshops. Many people (not only teachers, but also their former or present students) have developed a way of practice which derives from detailed research. They learn songs directly from countryside singers or from archive recordings. The aim of such practice is to become familiar with the nuances of the local style and to master the technique and singing manners typical of a certain region. That is why some workshops are devoted to the repertoire of one specific singer (the repertoire of one singer and his or her style of singing are very often the main topic of some teachers' field research) and most of them are dedicated to songs from a specific area. Some meetings are designed for a wider audience and their goal is to popularize this kind of repertoire. There are also people engaged primarily in experiencing community singing and creating natural musical situations. In such cases the emphasis is placed more on the notion of community and contexts than on the workshop form (Grochowska, Mazur-Hanaj 2014: 271-273).

People decide to participate in workshops for different reasons. One major motivation is a general desire to sing. Referring to my interlocutor,⁷ who has regularly been taking part in workshops for 14 years, at the beginning there were many people who wanted to learn alternative singing techniques and improve their vocal abilities: classical and jazz vocalists, actors or people who were looking for new ways of vocal cords' rehabilitation. There are also people who treat this kind of activity as a form of psychological therapy (see: Grozdew-Kołacińska 2016) – for singing with the whole body evokes emotions and helps to express oneself. As workshops became popular and more accessible, there were more and more people who were involved in the subject of countryside singing in the practical and theoretical sense, looking for certain techniques. Another motivation factor is illustrated by the opinion of my interlocutor: “Involving the whole body in singing gives me great physical pleasure. But the most enjoyable is harmony with other people and that is why I prefer Ukrainian multipart singing. Tradition is also important for me, but not the most important, because I am totally aware of the fact that I can be just its sympathizer and I will never be part of it.”⁸

Nevertheless, “tradition” is a term frequently used by people involved in a workshop movement. It turns out that for many of them it has a very specific meaning. A printed discussion run by members of the Forum of Traditional Music (Domachowska 2014) seems to be a good indicator about how tradition is understood, because this informal organization gathers people practicing and protecting countryside music – many of them are workshop teachers. Traditional music is then defined in many ways: it is a countryside music, a local legacy which constitutes one's identity; it is rooted in the past and the (home)land, but is not invariable; it binds the present with the past, gives its performers a special kind of sensitivity, being authentic and democratic (because everybody can participate in it), and transmitted directly in living, social situations which lead to creating communities (ibid: 312-314).

The feeling of community is embodied through being and singing with others. “When people sing together,” as one teacher says, “they feel power because of resonance.

⁷ Interview with a participant, August 2014.

⁸ Ibid.

Maybe this is the mystery of discovering nature and community, ... a different kind of voice, which gives space and freedom.”⁹ “We always sang in a circle, mixed, to ourselves; that’s when I feel harmony excellently and it is easier to sing.”¹⁰ Singing in a group as a past way of being together is practiced in a new contemporary context, which is indicated by, e.g., names of workshops (such as “Song in a big city”¹¹) or descriptions of workshops (such as “nowadays, singing could be important element of gathering, also in an urban environment”¹²). As stated by Grozdew-Kołacińska (2014), characteristic traits of traditional music underwent substantial transformation, but the sense of community and communicativeness in a group persisted.¹³ Those two factors are present in the phenomenon of contemporary workshops, being a way of self-defining for many people involved in that practice (ibid: 42-43).

On the other hand, it is the education, civilization advance and other cultural and social circumstances we live in that have obscured and blocked the natural, open voice, also called “white,” “archaic,” “traditional,” “singing-shouting,” etc. (see: Grozdew-Kołacińska 2014), which is also compared to the first scream of a newborn child.¹⁴ According to other opinions, traditional singing is natural only for those who were raised surrounded by countryside music, because “the difference between ordinary use of the speaking voice and singing is significantly narrower (because of constant training) in the unbroken rural tradition” (Amrazevičius 2012: 336). Both of those attitudes though, lead to implementing methods and techniques of voice training, which were (and some of them still are¹⁵) partially inspired by alternative theaters and work of mainly Ukrainian ethnomusicologists with a classical background in vocal performance.¹⁶ It involves working with your body¹⁷: breath’s strength, lungs’ capacity, resonators, stomach muscles, which in practice could be embodied, e.g., by having the singer lay down and sitting on her/his back, putting fingers into their mouth to check the strength of breathing or shouting through an imagined river for a boatman. This is also the work of tuning to achieve harmony with others.¹⁸

Authority is another salient element which connects people with the past (very often personalized in a master figure) and/or constitutes the role of the instructor. Today, many participants are usually aware of the importance of the village master, e.g., in camps organized by the House of Dance and at many other events where people interested in local traditions gather. Thus, the presence of a master does not have to be physical – high awareness of participants allows them to feel and appreciate the legacy.¹⁹ Therefore,

⁹ Interview with W. Grozdew-Kołacińska, August 2014.

¹⁰ Interview with a pair of participants, August 2014.

¹¹ <https://web.facebook.com/events/239492092876377/>

¹² <http://www.muzykakresow.pl/a-cappella-tradycje-wokalne-lubelszczyzny/>

¹³ As opposed to other factors, e.g., oral and intergenerational transmission, variability in performances, anonymity (deriving from paying attention to folk as a creator, medium and source of music), connection to a place and to rites (Grozdew-Kołacińska 2014: 42).

¹⁴ See discussion under the film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tRwdsV93B6Y>

¹⁵ Like *Laboratorium Pieśni* – Laboratory of Songs: <http://laboratoriumpiesni.pl/warsztaty/>

¹⁶ Interview with W. Grozdew-Kołacińska, August 2014.

¹⁷ See e.g.: <https://youtu.be/tRwdsV93B6Y?t=7m25s>

¹⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yUjmRXmPqXk>

¹⁹ Interview with W. Grozdew-Kołacińska, August 2014.

placing in the center an authority of a village singer happens by inviting her or him to workshops as a special guest²⁰ or by dedicating the whole meeting to the repertoire of a specific person. The situation of summer camps or other workshops organized in the country is yet more complicated and can be analysed in a different context. Authority then could be seen at least two-dimensionally: participants admire specific singers who sustain tradition by transferring their repertoire further and the local people can see that their music is highly appreciated so they start thinking that maybe it is really interesting and valuable again. Relationships between workshop participants and local people makes the case of authority very complex and show that, depending on the perspective, it can be located differently.

Building a theoretical background also affirms the authority of teacher, which very often moves from the older generation to well-trained professionals. Experience, very specialized knowledge, proprietary programs of teaching, and participants' desire to feel the community make the teacher a professional who can give something valuable to less experienced students. Some people even claim that "without the help of an instructor ... the student can miss some important qualities of the style and inappropriately exaggerate or misinterpret irrelevant or accidental qualities" (Ambrazevičius 2012: 328). A teacher can be then a medium who knows how people sang in the past and how a certain song should be performed. Of course, different understandings of authority can overlap, as people usually have very diverse motivations and their will to learn the repertoire of a specific singer or region does not exclude placing the authority on a workshop instructor.

Learning traditional countryside songs binds present with past on different levels. Supporting intergenerational transmission of tradition, return to tradition of communal singing and experiencing traditional singing are basic aims of many workshops.²¹ There are people who have very personal motivations related to the past. They want to discover their own – even family – tradition, because they come from an environment where singing had been present, but it is not continued any more. "They feel it and want to come back to it. For me it is so real. If somebody wants to learn it intentionally, in my opinion it is a continuation of tradition of some kind, because they frequently come back home and try then to animate or sing for themselves."²² Another aspect of the relation between past and present mentioned by my interlocutor is historical curiosity. Contact with the past often generated through a master (regardless if she or he is alive or not) is considered a very deep experience, even deeper than that of learning just songs and techniques. Furthermore, it influences imagination, moves us to another world which on the one hand is unreal, but on the other – very real and tangible, as we take part in it.²³

The notion of the past is constructed by many situations that happen beyond singing. Teachers try to introduce participants to the subject by telling stories, explaining origins of songs, giving lectures, listening to archival recordings, stressing differences between contemporary life in cities (but also in the country) and past life in the rural world.²⁴ Therefore, workshops may start with a short introduction to what is going to be

²⁰ See e.g.: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZpGMAEliSE4>

²¹ See e.g.: <https://pl-pl.facebook.com/aktywnirodzice/posts/503179309760219>

²² Interview with W. Grozdew-Kołacińska, August 2014.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ See e.g.: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qooXA2Zvy7E>

sung. The way of learning songs (by ear, writing down the words in a notebook) is compared to how they were learned in the past.²⁵ Ritual repertoire may be placed in the context of rites, which should make students aware of its symbolic meaning. Teachers also put emphasis on singing as a former, bygone way of being together which could be continued by workshop participants and passed on to younger generations.²⁶ An impression of being closer to the past may be stressed by the surroundings of the venue, such as a natural or rural landscape.²⁷

The links to the past are evident in most workshop offers, although some people see them as an addition to the workshop essence – physical pleasure derived from singing old songs. I have heard the opinion that theoretical knowledge does not embed the participants of workshops in a specific tradition. It is worth noting that, in the case of past countryside singers, transmission of tradition and sustaining memory were practiced largely unconsciously – without awareness of the process – and that is what may happen today as well among the workshop participants. In such cases, the most appreciated aspect of singing is thus more connected with the physical enjoyment which results from singing and which is also regarded as a motivation that accompanied people in the past.²⁸ Some teachers have similar opinions claiming that they used to “gain knowledge of the vocal techniques and other matters of singing style rather unconsciously and paradigmatically – from direct contacts with the informants during extensive fieldwork,” which “is similar to the natural process of transmission characteristic of the unbroken tradition” (Ambrazevičius 2012: 325).

However, there is still a strong desire to sing a traditional repertoire and this is a factor that makes the workshop offer unique. Nonetheless, learning a traditional repertoire in a group leads to different problems, paradoxes, and changes. Group performances tend to diminish the variability in performances of music, e.g., from central Poland, where songs used to be sung solo. As a result “specific performances are then strengthened and preserved as a template, although they did not use to be such, as once not everybody sang similarly”²⁹ (see: Grozdew-Kołacińska 2014: 42). Some teachers try to stress the fact that songs function in many variants and they are performed in different ways, some of them try to make workshop offer more attractive by introducing songs of different characters, techniques, regions, or even countries. There is also a group of teachers who go further: combine different techniques and build their own methods which only stem from traditional singing.³⁰ There are also examples of teaching songs which were originally composed as traditional in character and which then started being practiced as traditional repertoire.³¹

²⁵ See e.g.: https://www.facebook.com/siwcowa/info/?tab=page_info

²⁶ See e.g.: <http://muzykadawna.info/wydarzenie/przedswiateczne-wprawki-koledowe-2013-warsztaty-koled-tradycyjnych-z-podkarpacia-2013-12->

²⁷ See e.g.: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rMn2Z85YFyY>

²⁸ Interview with a participant, August 2014.

²⁹ Interview with W. Grozdew-Kołacińska, August 2014.

³⁰ Interview with a participant, August 2014.

³¹ Interview with W. Grozdew-Kołacińska, August 2014.

When discussing the subject of repertoire, a question about reconstruction emerges: how it is understood and practiced. It is differently and widely defined: reconstruction could be just shifting performance from elderly to young people (with all technical aspects preserved), learning songs from recordings, working on specific ornaments or intonation, or performing music from sheet notes (which demands good theoretical knowledge and awareness of how it should sound and what kind of timbre should be produced – if it is only possible). Besides music itself, one can reconstruct situation, context, soundscape, that is, e.g., communal singing, singing in nature, reproducing all timbre aspects of old village music. These concepts show that understanding this term is very individual and that there is a thin line between reconstructing, copying, reproducing, interpreting and transforming.

But what is important here is the way people use this kind of music. Very important are spontaneity, community and anonymity, which appear very often in impulsive actions that emerge during workshops.³² Moreover, workshop groups very often present themselves on a stage – that gives the participants specific opportunity to step out, and many of participants passionately conduct their fieldwork, personally collecting and learning songs from older people, which is very often regarded as saving old music from oblivion. They also frequently decide to organize themselves as informal groups without a teacher, which are open to new participants (like *Rozśpiewania Warszawskie*³³). Sometimes meetings at workshops can also begin forming of groups which then function independently, giving concerts and making field research³⁴. Intensive involvement in this kind of activity is a kind of decision and a choice of a specific path of life, which goes beyond singing and includes playing traditional instruments, dancing, presence of folk motives in outfit, kitchen and the way of housing³⁵.

Conclusions

The movement described in this paper is a very complex phenomenon, whose relation to the past can be invested with different meanings, especially when analysing it in the context of revivals. Workshops of countryside singing organized in Poland and efforts of their agents to continue musical traditions in *in crudo* version are involved in multidimensional processes and concerns.

Bridges between the present and the past may embody through the idea of authenticity in a specific repertoire: old, anonymous, rural songs identified with the “folk” and their culture (see: Livingston 1999: 75). The term’s ambiguity, though, puts a thin line between timelessness, historical continuity and purity of the revived music, and transformation and innovation (ibid: 69-74), that seem to be inscribed in such practices. Another bridge is built during workshops by singing and being with a local master. Learning a specific musical code creates “a strong feeling of cohesion” (ibid: 74) among workshop participants, who “become cultural insiders to the revived practice” (ibid).

³² Ibid.

³³ <http://rozspiewaniawarszawskie.blogspot.com/>

³⁴ One example of such phenomenon is a group *Dziczka* (<http://www.dziczka.pl/>). Its members started meeting at different workshops of traditional music.

³⁵ Interview with a participant, August 2014.

According to Cohen (2001: 12), they create a community because of shared common experiences and a feeling of unity. But, what is more, due to this practice, they distinguish themselves from other groups, as they “serve as cultural opposition and as an alternative to mainstream culture” (Livingston 1999: 68).

Learning old songs may “sometimes give an impression that workshops take us to the past. But this is true only in part, because the past is very present now.”³⁶ This statement of my interlocutor shows that such practices, paraphrasing Caroline Bithell (2006), deconstruct too-easy opposition of the past and the present. Remembering the past is still reproduced and sometimes the impression of continuity with tradition is constructed. A musical past is being recalled and reconstructed for a contemporary purpose. What is more, it is the contemporary practice which, due to recalling the past, gathers new meanings.

However, not only intergenerational bridges are important here. I think that geographical and interpersonal bridges play a significant role as well. Since connections between city and village gain new meanings, countryside singing seems to be more popular now in cities than in the country thanks to workshops. These are the residents of cities who consider traditional songs valuable, showing especially to young people who live in the country that it is possible to see traditional music as inspiring and worth practicing. It is also that “motivations connect people, they are like bridges between them and lead to the community.”³⁷ Workshop practice can also be seen as a bridge leading to self-definition, helping to express and understand ourselves. Regardless of the perspective we choose, paraphrasing Cohen (2001), it gives the notion of closeness and sameness as well as distance and difference.

Illustrations

<https://web.facebook.com/muzyka.zakorzeniona/photos/pb.165288160187505.-2207520000.1459685467./751395471576768/?type=3&theater>

<https://web.facebook.com/muzyka.zakorzeniona/photos/pb.165288160187505.-2207520000.1459685886./700980333284949/?type=3&theater>

<https://spiewoluby.wordpress.com/poogladaj/#jp-carousel-353>

<https://spiewoluby.wordpress.com/poogladaj/#jp-carousel-369>

³⁶ Interview with W. Grozdew-Kołacińska, August 2014.

³⁷ Ibid.



Figure 1: Rozśpiewania Warszawskie – self-organized workshop group.

Source:

<https://web.facebook.com/138475586208338/photos/a.556510971071462.1073741826.138475586208338/574999775889248/?type=3&theater>



Figure 2: "The Voice of Tradition" workshops, part of the European Day of Languages, Jubilo Foundation, Wrocław 2014, www.jubiloproject.com.



Figure 3: "The Voice of Tradition" workshops, part of the European Day of Languages, Jubilo Foundation, Wrocław 2014, www.jubiloproject.com.

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Interviews

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Interview with a participant, August 2014.

Interview with a pair of participants, August 2014.