Reclaiming and Preserving Traditional Music: Aesthetics, ethics and technology

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Music history is full of examples of composers drawing upon traditional repertoires for their works. Starting from the late nineteenth century in particular, many of them have looked at this specific sound material for several reasons: overcoming the limitations of tonal system, discovering different compositional strategies, finding new inspiration and aesthetics, evoking exoticism. Electronic music is no exception. Since the emergence of sound recording, sonic artists and electronic music composers have experimented with new technologies trying to integrate traditional elements in their works with different results and various purposes. In the present time, the preservation of these traditional elements could represent one of the most crucial goals. In a world characterised by a widespread globalisation, traditional music might be at risk of being neglected or even forgotten, as for local identities and cultures in general. As electronic music composers and sonic artists we should ask ourselves if it is possible to create a link between tradition and innovation, connecting these two apparently opposite realities. Can we safeguard at-risk traditions and at the same time re-present them through contemporary artistic practices and technologies? Is there a way to develop a form of expression that could reach a wide and diverse range of listeners, taking into account recent trends and studies in electronic music while preserving the main distinctive features of the traditional repertoires? The article attempts to answer the above-mentioned questions with the support of a case study: the personal research conducted into the use of traditional music from the southern Italian region of Campania in the scope of electronic music composition.

1. TRADITION AND TECHNOLOGY

The act of drawing upon traditional repertoires has always been a common practice in music. Music history can provide several cases of composers borrowing and incorporating traditional elements in their works, both from their own cultures and from other traditions. This praxis has become a widespread trend also within electroacoustic music circles and nowadays the issue of cultural engagement represents a significant focus for many composers and scholars. The topic has been investigated from different angles, from the origin of source material to the possible ethical approaches, and composer's motivations represent one of these different aspects. The motivations behind the employment of such culturally connoted elements as source

material are diverse. Robert Gluck (2005, 2008) has extensively analysed the issue and reported several reasons for composers to seek a dialogue between traditional music and technology. Some composers, for example, have drawn upon their own musical tradition, sometimes to reaffirm or rediscover their cultural roots. In fact, this was one of the main motivations that led me to investigate the use of the traditional music of Campania, the southern Italian region where I was born and grew up. Other artists, on the other hand, have looked at foreign musical traditions (without these personal cultural connections) for several reasons: in search of new aesthetics, forms and structures; to create a dialogue between different cultures; to overcome problems of creativity. In some cases, composers wanted to investigate the possibilities of extending the sonic potential of musical instruments through technology and processing.

In this era characterised by widespread cultural exchanges and boundless networks, globalisation might have been one of the major factors to give impetus to this musical exploration. In this regard, Gluck affirms:

> Recently, globalization and the late arrival of Modernity in non-Western societies have at times re-awakened interest in indigenous ethnic culture, especially within the generation of people attuned to new technologies. The proliferation of tape recording also made it possible for people to learn more about the traditional music of their own cultures. For these reasons, among others, traditional indigenous instruments have been integrated with tape or live electronics, processed sounds from traditional instruments have been used as source material for electroacoustic composition, and traditional aesthetic and musical materials have joined in dialog with the evolving aesthetic and practices of electroacoustic music. (Gluck 2005: 1)

However, globalisation is at the same time a phenomenon seen as a threat for local identities. For the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) 'the distinct and diverse qualities of the world's multiple cultural communities are threatened in the face of uniformity brought on by new technologies and the globalization of culture and commerce' (WIPO 2004: 9). In terms of music, Barry Truax (2008) points out that many

critics fear another aspect of globalisation, that is, the homogenisation of local identities due to the widespread hegemony of American popular music.

Globalisation is obviously just one of the multiple facets of a more complex problem, but represents a concrete example of the threats that loom over local identities. The loss of ancestral music heritages is a concrete risk. Therefore, sonic artists might consider including another important motivation for engaging with traditional music: the preservation of endangered or neglected musical repertoires. In this sense, Tullis Rennie (2014) has already suggested the idea that an electroacoustic work created through a respectful and appropriate use of culturally connoted material could be considered as an ethnographic study. However, a process of preservation and recontextualisation of such repertoires needs specific directions and guidelines in terms of selection and collection of traditional elements, compositional strategies, elaboration of the material and ethical issues. In particular, a musical approach focused on preservation should always give priority to the recognisability of the traditional material and its cultural content (as opposed to the Schaefferian paradigm), while contemplating, at the same time, the most respectful ways of engaging with local cultures and communities.

Therefore, through the analysis of my work as a composer on the traditional repertoire of a very circumscribed area – the southern Italian region of Campania – in the ambit of contemporary artistic practices and technological media, I attempted to define a set of guidelines for other composers and sonic artists willing to grapple with the hard and risky task of introducing traditional elements in their works with a particular focus on the theme of preservation. These guidelines include compositional strategies as well as indications for appropriate modalities of cultural engagement, often regarded as 'respectful'. In fact, the act of engaging with other musical traditions raises complex ethical issues, especially in the scope of electroacoustic music, where source materials can be perilously detached from their cultural contexts and treated as mere 'sound objects' (Schaeffer 1966). Drawing upon traditional repertoires might be seen as a natural aspect of a composer's creative process but at the same time could be interpreted as an act of cultural appropriation (Said 1978, 1993). A respectful investigation should always be a matter of primary importance. Therefore, considering and defining ethical and creative boundaries constituted a central feature of my research, together with the composer's relationship towards the musical tradition employed.

1.1. Criteria for an appropriate selection and collection of the traditional material

The stage of selecting and collecting the source material for a preservative recontextualisation of traditional music within sonic arts should always start with the identification of the general components of the repertoire we are engaging with. The definition of these elements requires preliminary research that has to take into account both literature and field work, including indispensable interviews with local practitioners and members of the community. The interviews are particularly important in the case of scarcity of studies and bibliographic sources.

But what are the elements that form a traditional repertoire? The WIPO-UNESCO Model Provisions provides an exhaustive description of 'traditional cultural expressions' (TCE). According to the document, TCE comprise several tangible and intangible characteristic elements in terms of 'verbal expression', 'musical expression', 'expression by actions' and 'tangible expressions'. Among those, the most relevant for our case might include tales, poems, musical forms and instruments, dances, ceremonies and rituals (WIPO-UNESCO 1985). Taking the Model Provisions as an important reference, and with the support of the data and the experience acquired during the research, I propose to divide the elements of a traditional repertoire into two categories: musical and extra-musical. The classification is exclusively intended to facilitate the task of identifying the elements that constitute a specific musical tradition and does not claim any anthropological or ethnomusicological validity.

The musical elements category comprises:

- musical instruments
- musical forms
- musical structures
- instrumental and vocal techniques
- musical systems and scales
- rhythm, melody, harmony.

The extra-musical elements include:

- language
- text
- dances, ceremonies, rituals
- environmental sounds.

Once the repertoire has been analysed in details, the following step consists of selecting specific elements that are going to be employed as source material.

The selection should be undertaken according to several parameters chosen in view of initial motivations, cultural engagement modalities, compositional goals and opinion of local practitioners and members of the community.

1.1.1 Importance of an element within the repertoire

In a musical tradition, some components might be more influential and relevant than others. These components may include elements belonging to both musical and extra-musical categories. In Campania's traditional music, for example, the tammorra drum is an essential instrument since it accompanies dances and other musical forms with its characteristic rhythm. As for extra-musical components, in Campania's repertoire Neapolitan language[1] and its variations are also very significant. In other traditions, these elements can be represented by different musical systems (e.g., micro-tonality), instrumental or vocal techniques (e.g., Mongolian throat singing), particular musical structures or important rituals.

1.1.2. Uniqueness

Some traditions may include unique elements that cannot be found elsewhere, such as exclusive musical instruments, musical forms, languages and rituals. Therefore, these components can be very emblematic and serve as a useful tool to epitomise the repertoire. For Campania's music, Neapolitan language can be considered as one of these. With regard to musical instruments, Italian zampogna already stands out for its particular construction features compared to other types of bagpipes. But, in addition, the different models that can be found exclusively in Campania represent a uniqueness on the national scene. Sometimes, as unique as they are, these components may be at the same time endangered elements. Therefore, the idea of employing them becomes even more significant. The concept of uniqueness can be also applied to environmental sounds, and in particular to 'keynotes' and 'soundmarks'.[2]

1.1.3. Relevance in representing and evoking the geographical area and the related culture / musical repertoire

The parameter relates to the capability of a specific component to recall in the listener the repertoire and the related geographical area. This is a crucial point for the purpose of recontextualisation. In fact, it is necessary to utilise symbolically and culturally powerful inputs to make it possible for the listener to create a strong link with the tradition in question. In this sense,

some elements are more effective than others. For example, in terms of instruments, the sound of a didgeridoo could immediately invoke Australia, while a zurna or a bağlama could take us to Middle East. On the other hand, the sound of a diatonic button accordion is less efficacious since it is an instrument diffused in many areas of the globe. This is one of the reasons that led to the removal of the diatonic button accordion from the list of Campania's instruments that could have been possibly employed in my compositions.

Speaking of the evocative power of sound, we must not forget to mention environmental sounds and the fundamental principles behind soundscape composition. In fact, keynotes and soundmarks can be an extraordinary tool for evoking specific areas and cultural contexts.

1.1.4. Elements neglected and endangered in present times

The parameter refers to threatened elements within a tradition. The elements may include, for example, rare instruments, dying languages or endangered sound environments. This parameter should be a central feature of a compositional approach focused on preservation. In this sense, the bark flute represented an endangered instrument of Campania's traditional music, hence the decision of employing it in my work.

1.1.5 Features that could attract listeners not familiar with electronic music

This criterion refers to a collateral topic of my research related to the identification of those traditional music elements that could act as a pull factor for listeners not familiar with electroacoustic music. In this sense, rhythm, melody and harmony could be seen as the most obvious examples. But other elements such as traditional musical structures, original purpose of use, forms, lyrics, vocals and verbal expressions in general can represent key factors for creating a point of contact with a non-specialised audience.

1.1.6. Ethical issues related to the employment of culturally connoted material

This parameter should be central in an operation of recontextualisation of traditional components. In fact, the members of a local community can be very sensitive towards a specific element of their culture. In his article *Towards an Ethics of Creative Sound*, James Andean (2014: 177) recalls how Steven Feld, while working with the Kaluli people in the Bosavi rainforest of Papua New Guinea, 'was reprimanded for a casual reference to the call of a particular bird, unaware that the local culture believes this call to be the voices of ancestors, and was therefore to be treated with

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[1]The use of the term 'language' is preferred to 'dialect' in accordance to the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages that defines this language as south Italian, Neapolitan or Neapolitan-Calabrese.

[2]Keynote and soundmark are two terms coined by the Canadian composer, scholar and environmentalist Raymond Murray Schafer and described in his work *The Tuning of the World* (1977). The term 'keynote' refers to the 'key' sounds of an area. The keynotes, that is, sounds created by nature (e.g., geography or climate), outline the character of the people living in that place and are not always heard consciously. The term 'soundmark' derives from the term 'landmark' and refers to a sound that is unique to a place.

deference'. This case clearly exemplifies that a profound knowledge of the tradition that the composer is about to engage with is paramount. Being aware of the cultural implications of a sound is crucial. In this regard, Manuella Blackburn (2011: 2) has coined the expression 'sonic souvenir' to indicate 'culturally tied sounds/sound objects that are not common or familiar to one's own cultural heritage or immediate surroundings'. More specifically, she refers as 'cultural emblems' to all those sounds that entail deep musical, political, religious or geographic implications and connections.

If we are planning to utilise a 'delicate' component, we should first consider the opinion of local musicians and community members. Then, according to their impression, ask for their permission or reconsider the idea of utilising it. I personally applied this approach for all the pieces conceived for the project. For example, the final selection of the musical instruments to be used in each piece (zampogna, chitarra battente, flauto di corteccia, tammorra and tromma) was made after consulting local practitioners and experts and obtaining their *placet*.

1.1.7. Accessibility of sources

This parameter refers to the possibility of accessing a specific element with ease. It is primarily a practical problem, but nevertheless it should be taken into account when proceeding with the selection. The rareness of an instrument, the scarcity of local practitioners, their refusal in being recorded or in providing samples, logistical difficulties in reaching a location: these are just some examples of potential problems that one could encounter. The accessibility of sources should be carefully considered since it may affect the successive stage of material collection. For instance, the initial idea of selecting Campania's traditional flute sisco a duje was later set aside due to the difficulties in tracing this rare instrument and its performers.

1.2. Collecting the material

The collection of the traditional elements to use as source material can include both new recordings and pre-existing samples. In the latter case, from an ethical point of view, the most appropriate approach may consist of gathering samples directly from local practitioners and community members. In fact, due to the frequent and globally widespread practice of promoting traditional repertoires and folk cultures for tourism or commercial reasons, 'the culturally identifiable material we collect and appropriate may not be as culturally authentic as we think' (Naylor 2014: 113). In a way, the phenomenon of folk revival had both beneficial and harmful effects on traditional repertoires. In this sense, speaking about Campania, the traditional

musician and instrument maker Gianluca Zammarelli[3] considers that 'many people became familiar with an adulterated version of the tradition due to its massification and actually ignore their real tradition' (D'Agostino 2017). On the same topic, singer Francesco Pellegrino[4] affirms that 'today everything is a revival and ephemeral' (D'Agostino 2018). If the intention is to reclaim and preserve a tradition, it is imperative to draw upon material we can prove to be reliable and authentic. Therefore, when collecting pre-existing samples, the safest way to proceed is to rely on recordings provided by the members of that tradition themselves instead of gathering material from uncertain sources. The theme of authenticity has to be a central feature of our work. The pieces composed for this research make use of pre-existing samples provided by local practitioners exclusively. The recordings were also always employed with their consent, as the act of borrowing musical material involves issues of appropriation and ownership. When using somebody's else material, a considerate and respectful way to proceed would include the consent to use the material after a clear and honest explanation of our intentions. The issue becomes even thornier when the material is culturally significant. Therefore, when collecting pre-existing recording for compositional works, illustrating the purposes to the original authors and obtaining their permission should represent a matter of primary importance. The same respectful approach should be taken when recording local performers or involving any other individual in new recordings. Ideally, an identical stance must be maintained even when borrowing from our own culture. I believe that electroacoustic composers should always consider themselves as outsiders even if they employ traditional elements from their own culture, unless they had previously practised, studied and understood the repertoire and felt and integral part of that community. In this sense, if we refer to Mantle Hood's concept of 'bi-musicality' (1960), a sonic artist should be able to work competently within both the electronic and the traditional music practice.

Additionally, the stage of recording new material is not exempt from careful reflections. First, one must consider the importance of the original context and purpose of use of the material or repertoire we intend to record and utilise. For example, some musical

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[3]Gianluca Zammarelli, originally from Cilento, is a multi-instrumentalist and a scholar. He plays several traditional musical instruments from Campania's tradition and studied and analysed traditional music all over Italy, especially in the southern regions of Campania, Calabria and Apulia. He rediscovered the traditional 'canto alla Cilentana', a typical vocal form of his native land.

[4]Franceso Pellegrino is a tenor and opera singer. He is the lead singer of the Vesuvius Ensemble, a band based in Canada whose purpose is to preserve and transmit the cultural and musical heritage of southern Italy.

forms of Campania's repertoire are related to ceremonies and rituals occurring in rural environments and open-air events. Trying to reconstruct the scene and record this kind of material in a commercial studio environment could already adulterate the original sound world and undermine its authenticity in the light of the importance of the environmental component (e.g., the acoustics of a church, the soundscape of a ritual location, the voices of the audience). Therefore, field recording could represent the most appropriate solution for collecting these specific elements of the tradition.

Field recording leads us to another sensitive subject: the presence of the microphone. Very often the physical presence of the microphone can be compared to that of a camera, inducing people to act less spontaneous and with a less authentic recording as a result. I personally experienced this situation during a soundwalk recording in the typical street market of Antignano, in Naples, trying to catch the characteristic calls of the vendors. The presence of the microphone and the recording equipment was drawing the attention of the vendors, leading them to change their behaviour and act less spontaneous. Therefore, in case of field-recording sessions involving human presence, the employment of in-ear binaural microphones[5] can represent a useful expedient.

Binaural recording can be considered an excellent option for environmental sound recordings in general. But in this specific case, the use of in-ear binaural microphones is particularly suitable since the sound artist is 'camouflaged' and does not stand out with noticeable equipment, blending in with the surrounding people. Obviously, this approach to field recording again brings into play the issue of sound appropriation. Just like many people refuse to be photographed, some other might reject the idea of being recorded or even more being part of somebody's else artistic work. Therefore, one of our priorities should be informing the individuals involuntarily (and sometimes inevitably) 'caught' in the recording without their knowledge about our intentions to use this material and obtain their consent. I personally used this approach during a field-recording session in the streets of Naples. While recording with my in-ear binaural microphones, I chanced upon some street musicians performing traditional songs. The particular equipment I was employing allowed me to record the performance without ruining its authenticity and spontaneity. However, once the musicians concluded their performance, I immediately

approached them and asked their permission to utilise the recordings for my pieces.[6]

The problem of appropriation might be less crucial when dealing with natural soundscapes, although the example of Steven Feld's experience with the Kaluli people, mentioned above, clearly shows how even natural sounds can be a carrier of cultural elements with a line of ownership or significance in a community or geographic location/region. The issue of appropriation is thus very delicate and involves contrasting elements between ethics and aesthetics.

Location recording practices themselves may also be a relevant consideration when recording traditional musicians and local practitioners. In this case, in fact, two important factors need to be taken into account: their familiarity and acquaintance with professional studios, and the availability of recording facilities. As regards the specific case of traditional music, many performers might not be professional musicians. In Campania's repertoire, for instance, several elements (work songs, rituals, dances etc.) originate from rural culture. According to Francesco Pellegrino, '[Campania's traditional music] had a specific territory and environment, that is the fields and the rural areas. Everything was coming from the countryside' (D'Agostino 2018). In Campania, several performers and tradition-keepers were (and still are) farmers, shepherds or somehow connected with rural culture and definitely not professional musicians. Therefore, the choice of recording such performers in a professional studio might be counter-productive. It could make the players uncomfortable, or intimidate them and hence harm the final result. Some performers could even refuse to record in a studio. Moreover, the presence of recording facilities in the close proximity of the areas where the practitioners live (often far away from big centres in the case of Campania) can represent an additional problem. Several factors (e.g., age of the performer, distance) might prevent the act of recording in a professional studio. Location recording becomes then the best solution possible in these situations.

However, in particular for musical instruments and vocals, the option of recording in a well-equipped facility (whether professional or a home-studio) should never be discarded, especially for what concerns sound quality. Ultimately, the final purpose of

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[5]The in-ear binaural microphones are a special system in which binaural recording and monitoring are combined. The microphone capsules are located in each earpiece making the set looking like a normal pair of earphones. There are several models on the market produced by the main audio companies.

[6]The musicians responded positively and gave their consent. In the case of a negative response, I would have asked permission to keep the recording private for research purposes. If the musicians had declined this proposal as well, I would have respected their choice and deleted the recording if requested. I believe the musicians' favourable decision was facilitated by the following factors: a prompt, clear and honest explanation regarding my research, the purpose of the recording and the way I planned to use the material; my intention to provide them with the recording; my commitment in crediting them properly.

our effort is to produce a sonic art work, and the quality of the source material cannot be forgotten or left to chance, for both new recordings and pre-existing samples. But, especially in the latter case, sound quality may not be a priority. For example, the use of 'lo-fi' recordings can be deliberate if it serves as a means to express a sense of antiquity in the new work. Unprocessed old recordings from previous ethnomusicological fieldworks may be used as a way to present the original version of the tradition within the new musical context, creating a link between the old and the new; or, for instance, a homemade non-perfectly clean recording provided by a local musician can be combined with polished electronics to produce different listening spaces, with a 'real' level and an 'imaginary' one. On the other hand, if the samples are intended to be utilised as source material for sound processing, high-resolution recordings are certainly recommended. The 'antique glaze' and the 'lo-fi' effect can always be achieved at a later stage through elaboration. Therefore, the use of high-quality equipment represents a big advantage when recording new materials.

A final matter to consider when collecting new musical sources is the length of the recorded samples. A recontextualisation of traditional elements based on a preservative approach should always look at the material for its capacity to evoke the repertoire and to convey the correct spirit. Therefore, recording entire performances rather than short samples could be a recommended approach to catch the cultural and musical essence of a piece, as also suggested by Alessandro Cipriani and Giulio Latini (2008). Sampling single notes or short sounds can reduce our capacity to fathom and interpret the character of a musical form in its entirety and therefore to utilise it appropriately. The risk is to employ the material exclusively for its sonic qualities. In this regard, when working on her project 'Instruments INDIA', Manuella Blackburn witnessed the reluctance of traditional practitioners in recording short samples with the motivation that 'the essence of Indian music could not be reduced to individual components, where it was felt that the sum or totality of their art form does not have meaning in singular form' (Blackburn 2014: 148). While on this topic, it should be noted that the use of virtual instruments or samplers during the composition would not be recommended. Musical phrases or gestures reconstructed via surrogate instruments divert the purpose, remove the integrity of the cultural content and might not transmit the necessary nuances or the appropriate playing technique.

Finally, recordings of complete performances can represent a valid support and a useful reference model for the structure of the new work. For instance, a whole uncut performance could constitute the scaffolding on which to structure the new work and organise the electronic material accordingly; or it may be cut up into sections afterwards to create a dilated version of the original form.

2. MANIPULATING THE TRADITION

The approaches that electroacoustic composers have taken towards traditional material vary and are strictly related to the goals they wanted to achieve in their works, because initial motivations can shape compositional directions. The aim of this research is to define the necessary strategies for an encounter between technology and tradition focused on the preservation and promotion of neglected repertoires with an emphasis on the use of traditional elements as a way to attract listeners not accustomed to electroacoustic music. This particular approach may require appropriate restrictions and procedures in terms of treatment of the original sound sources, material organisation and compositional techniques.

2.1. The levels of intervention

With regard to sound processing, modern technologies make available infinite possibilities to explore and completely transform a sonic event. Sometimes heavy processing may culminate in a musical outcome that is a remote recollection of the initial material. In this sense, Denis Smalley (1997) has extensively examined the various levels of 'surrogacy' with regard to sound-shapes and their source/cause in an acousmatic listening situation. In terms of elaboration of the traditional material, I propose to divide the types of approach into three different levels, or modes of intervention, first theorised in 2011: 1) *conservative*, 2) *transformative* and 3) *destructive* (D'Agostino 2011). These levels refer to the degrees of detachment between the processed traditional sound event and its original version. Therefore, the levels of intervention describe the degrees of separation from the cultural content/context, whereas Smalley's terminology deals with the remoteness of sound events from the gestures and sources that caused them.

In *conservative intervention* the elaboration of the material is minimal. The sonic features of the original sound are kept almost or even entirely intact and maintain a high degree of intelligibility. As a consequence, the cultural content is preserved making it easier for the listener to create a connection with the repertoire. The use of transparent editing, reverb, delay or EQ in the mixing stage, for corrective purposes and for specific effects (e.g., the 'radio effect', move sounds into space, reconstruct a specific acoustic space) represent an example of this approach. In a work that makes exclusive use of conservative intervention, creativity is limited in terms of sound processing

and the work of the composer is mostly focused on formal aspects and the synergistic interactions between the traditional material and the other sonic elements of the piece. In this respect, it is possible to make an analogy with soundscape composition and compare conservative intervention to what Barry Truax (2002) defines as 'found sound' approach.

In *transformative intervention* sound processing starts to be significant. The sonic events might lose some of their characteristics, hence recognisability. Transformative intervention may lead to a certain deterioration of the cultural content and the evocative power of the material, with the effect of reducing the possibilities for the listener to establish a link with a traditional repertoire or clearly recognise the presence of traditional elements. Creative editing (e.g., modification of the amplitude envelope), pitch-shifting or time-stretching constitute just a few examples of processing employed in transformative intervention. In this type of approach, the composer intends to maintain a certain degree of intelligibility without abandoning the sonic exploration on the material. We could continue the parallel with soundscape composition and compare transformative intervention with the 'abstracted' approach that Truax (2002) extrapolates from Emmerson's terminology (1986). Nevertheless, it is important to stress that 'soundscape composition always keeps a clear degree of recognisability in its sounds, even if some of them are in fact heavily processed, in order that the listener's recognition of and associations with these sounds may be invoked (Truax 2002: 6). Therefore, we may compare this approach with transformative intervention as long as the sound processing does not undermine the relationship between the material and its cultural content/context. In fact, the outcome resulting from a transformative intervention could lead to a state of uncertainty. A piece fully based on transformative intervention can be seen as a sonic limbo in which the listener is not able to clearly identify the traditional element and therefore create the necessary connection with the repertoire.

In *destructive intervention*, the degree of elaboration is maximum, leading to the total loss of the original sound qualities and cultural content of the traditional material. The sonic outcome results in a completely transformed version of the initial sound devoid of any traditional vestiges. As an inevitable consequence, the listener is unable to identify the original source and therefore cannot associate it with a traditional repertoire. In destructive intervention, the traditional material can be seen as an 'unconventional sonic seed' to obtain a variegated and uncommon electronic sound palette. In a piece that makes exclusive use of sound material obtained by this type of approach, it would

be extremely difficult if not impossible to establish any sort of relationship with traditional music.

Clearly, destructive intervention can be seen as the thorniest approach of the three in terms of ethical issues, but simultaneously may go undetected and less scrutinised as an example of cultural appropriation (unless the activity is communicated in a programme note). However, each of them may entail positive and negative sides if they represent the only type of sound processing applied in a piece. Conservative intervention can restrict creativity in terms of sonic exploration and material development, limiting the work of the composer to only formal aspects and sound organisation. There is the risk of perceiving the traditional material as a 'foreign body' employed for its exoticism if no relationship is adequately built with the other elements of the piece. Transformative intervention enables more freedom in terms of material development and electronic research, but at the same time can create a sense of ambiguity and dismay in the listener, since the ties with the tradition become less explicit. Finally, destructive intervention allows a deeper sonic investigation of the sound material but at the same time cuts all ties with the repertoire to which it originally belongs, thus deleting any possible cultural content implied.

It may be difficult to identify pieces that would make use of one level of intervention only. Nevertheless, it is possible to mention works in which one of these levels is predominant or more significant. Hector Zazou's *In the House of Mirrors* (2008), where the French-Algerian composer fuses Indian and Uzbek music with electronics, and Javier Leichman's work on tango in *Tango, Otra Mirada* (1998), represent exemplars where the elaboration of the traditional material and the electronic counterpoint are mainly conservative. As regards transformative intervention, we may cite Alessandro Cipriani's *Al Nur* (2001), based on Islamic chant, and Xristos Zaxos' *Study for Tzouras* (2010), in which the Greek composer explores and extends the timbral qualities of the tzouras, a traditional Greek stringed instrument. Finally, for destructive intervention, we can mention Vassilis Roupas' *Lullaby* (2007), based on a traditional lullaby of a northern region of Greece, and Massimo Fragalà's *Contaminazione* (2003), where the Italian composer works on the processing of traditional songs hailing from former Soviet Union countries. In these two last examples, the heavy elaboration often prevents clear connections with the traditional sources.

I believe that in a compositional approach focused on the preservation of traditional elements, the cultural content of the material should be a focal point of the listening experience, as opposed to exploring Schaefferian aesthetics. The intelligibility of the traditional component must be considered as a matter of

prime importance. On the other hand, the sonic artist should not renounce the possibility of expressing his or her creativity in terms of material elaboration and use of technologies. Ultimately, the aim is to create an art work that will take into account contemporary languages and trends, and not a mere presentation of ethnographic fieldwork recordings. Therefore, the middle ground can be achieved by combining the three types of intervention in the same work. The lightly processed (or even unprocessed) material can be combined with its deeply elaborated versions, with a transformative intervention representing the bridge between the two. In this way, the evocative power of the culturally connoted sound is kept intact; the listener can experience the use of the traditional element in an electronic frame constituted (partially or entirely) by its permutations, in a meaningful network of connections between the different elements of the work. I tried to achieve this goal in *Lallum* (2018), the first piece composed for the project. *Lallum* focuses on one specific medium of Campania's traditional repertoire: voice. The piece utilises some elements of the tradition related to vocals such as Neapolitan language (and its variations), the traditional vocal form called *fronna 'e limone* and an old lullaby from the town of Carpino.[7]

2.2. Realistic approach and figurative approach

According to Steven Naylor (2014), we can divide the borrowed music material into two categories: structures and concepts, which he defines as 'symbolic' elements, and samples and instruments, considered as 'representational' ones. He wonders if it is more ethically acceptable to draw upon the first or the latter.

When using a traditional element, whether it is musical or extra-musical, 'symbolic' or 'representational', I believe the composer may have two possible ways of presenting the material without breaking the ties with the repertoire and still achieve a respectful appropriation. I called these approaches *realistic* and *figurative*.

The realistic approach consists of employing a traditional element with its original features. For example, melodies, harmonies or rhythms are presented in the new work in their authentic versions and performed by the traditional instruments (with the appropriate technique) for which they are originally intended; a particular musical structure is employed to organise the sound events and construct the form of the piece in accordance with its fundamental principles; the original purpose of use of an element or musical form reflects the final musical outcome of the electroacoustic work; the number and type of musical instruments

respect the original ensemble of the traditional repertoire. The realistic approach also includes the use of environmental recordings.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, we find the figurative approach. In this approach, the composer can transfer a specific feature or quality of the traditional element into another one. For example, a musical instrument is replaced in the traditional ensemble with an electronic counterpart; the inflection of a voice is transferred into another sonic event – an example of what Cifariello Ciardi (2008: 130) defines as 'translation'; an instrumental technique is applied to another instrument; a traditional melody or rhythm is performed by electronics; the principles of a musical form are employed for structuring musical phrases or gestures; the prosody of a text is used to create a rhythmic part.

In a way, many of the above-mentioned examples may be considered as 'abstracted' approaches (Emmerson 1986) when syntactic principles and processing techniques are extracted from the traditional elements. The simultaneous use of realistic and figurative approach in the same work may represent an effective way to achieve a meaningful encounter between traditional music and electronic composition. On the other hand, moving away from the figurative approach, with an extreme transformation of the original component, may result in the removal of the distinctive features of the traditional element and therefore to the impossibility for the listener to detect any correlation with a traditional repertoire.

3. ENGAGEMENT MODALITIES: THE TRADITIONAL ELEMENT AS A CENTRAL FEATURE

The elaboration of the source material represents just one of the compositional processes involved in a strategy focused on the encounter between tradition and technology. In fact, on the basis of this research premise, other procedures must come into play when engaging with this particular material.

Above all, it is important to consider the role of the traditional component in shaping the structure of the work and its relationship with the other elements of the piece. It is crucial to regard the culturally connoted material as a central feature and an active part of the formal process, instead of a mere sound object. In this regard, Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Telemusik* (1966) has been severely criticised by Frances White (1990) for its use of non-Western traditional material, an approach that she describes as 'unification through annihilation'. According to White (1990), the traditional elements 'are treated as inanimate objects whose function is merely to be acted upon' and their cultural content is not considered as a relevant and operative

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[7]The voice belongs to Francesco Pellegrino, who kindly provided the voice samples utilised in the piece.

factor when constructing the piece. In an operation of rediscovery and protection of traditional elements in the scope of electronic music, I believe that the role of the culturally connoted material should be central when structuring the piece. The traditional component cannot be relegated to a subordinate role or, even worse, treated exclusively for its intrinsic sonic qualities. In fact, Murray Schafer's concept of 'schizophonia' (1977) could also be associated to musical instruments and culturally connoted sound sources, as suggested by Karl Neuenfeldt (1998) and Robert Gluck (2008).

When employing traditional music elements, a useful approach could consist of looking at the forms in which they are originally employed in as a contributing factor for structuring the piece and something to be aware of if they have special significance. In fact, in traditional repertoires some musical forms are strictly related to rituals and ceremonies and might have a particular meaning for practitioners and members of the community. Taking such forms as a reference when structuring a new work can help maintain a strong relationship with the repertoire and provide a purposeful scaffold for organising the sonic events; at the same time, it represents a conscientious and respectful way of engaging with this particular musical material. For this reason, as already mentioned previously, it is always recommended, in the material collection stage, to record entire pieces and performances instead of short sound samples.

For the same reason, the composer should always be aware of the original purpose of use of a specific element of the repertoire, whether it is a musical instrument, a text or a musical form. First, the initial intended purpose of the traditional repertoire can represent a source of inspiration and a concrete aid when structuring the piece.

Second, in this particular form of engagement with traditional material – which places the issue of preservation at the centre – the composer may look at the original mode of use as an effective support in order to achieve a respectful outcome in terms of electronic recontextualisation. For example, when recontextualising a Western musical instrument in a new Western music work, the appropriation appears to be legitimate even though the sound is heavily transformed through processing, and 'its nature is being expanded rather than denied' (White 1990). On the contrary, combining a traditional dirge with a work song or transforming a frenetic dance piece in a slow electronic ballad can be seen by some as a disrespectful act of appropriation.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In a historical period characterised by globalisation and the consequent risk of homogenisation and disappearance of local identities, the theme of rediscovery

and preservation of endangered music traditions can and probably must constitute an additional reason for sonic artists to employ traditional material in their works. The focus on preservation is certainly neither new nor foreign to the electroacoustic music world. Murray Schafer addressed the issue for the first time in the late 1960s. One of the main goals of his World Soundscape Project was recording and cataloguing international soundscapes with a focus on preservation of soundmarks, dying sounds and sound environments. But nowadays, in my opinion, it is paramount to draw particular attention not exclusively to endangered sound environments, but also to all those local music traditions that are gravely threatened. Including these sounds and traditions in a serious preservation process through electronic music and contemporary digital technologies is an approach that can enable creativity and respect to occur in the same place. Mira Burri (2010: 33) states that despite the fact that 'digital technologies have often been perceived as imperilling traditional cultural expressions (TCE)', such technologies can nevertheless be employed for their protection. She affirms that 'in the context of the protection and promotion of TCE, rather counterintuitively, there are a number of ways in which digital technologies may act as benevolent factors' (Burri 2010: 34). I believe that composers and sound artists can also play a key role here by looking at their artworks from an ethnographic point of view for preservation purposes.

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