

## Call for Papers

### **Recollecting a Shared Polyphony: Popular Culture, Media Technologies and Heritagization of Music across the Mediterranean**

**A two-day workshop held on January 23-24, 2020 at the Forum Transregionale Studien, Berlin, Germany**

The nineteenth century witnessed the birth of media technologies of mechanical reproduction as well as popular culture and new patterns of consumption. Photography, sound recording and cinema revolutionized society, aesthetics, culture and politics throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Common to these emergent technologies was the possible replication, storage, circulation and commodification of images and sounds. Even before WWI these mass-media had already generated an impressive archive of photographs, records/cylinders and reels from most corners of the world. Altogether these new media accelerated impersonal cultural contact, transformed modes of performing, seeing, hearing and watching, and ultimately shaped publics both locally and worldwide.

This workshop will explore the ground-breaking consequences of new media technologies: namely, the (re)making of popular culture and publics, as well as the transmutation of musical forms and taste across distant geographies. It aims for an archeology of sound recordings in connection with the sister media in other formats. Relatedly, the workshop will also tackle competing and evolving politics of cultural heritage in the early repertoires around the Eastern Mediterranean to today.

From the outset, the shellac record was not only a global, but also a globalizing media. Discs recorded locally and pressed in Europe and North America swiftly became a major commodity in world trade. Further recording created a polyphony of interconnected audio-ports such as Constantinople, Cairo, Beirut, Thessaloniki, Venice, Budapest, Paris, to name a few. These audio lines created a new ecumene of grooves, as this new commodity had bearings beyond its merchandise value; it connected melodies, instruments and genres of the audio-ports. The beginnings of recorded music (1900-1914) were shaped by market pluralism. That is, neither the record conglomerates nor the imperial authorities were yet equipped with the vision, experience and priority of designing and censoring the mushrooming repertoire. Although gender and religious barriers existed to this recording boom, any genre, language, social-class that had an audience was represented in the repertoire. Hence, the “unwanted sounds” of the margins could also echo in homes, coffee shops, *meyhanes* (traditional restaurant/bar in Turkey/Ottoman Empire and the Balkans) and taverns across the network of audio-ports.

Particularly salient for such a discussion on the multiple lifecycles of this commercially recorded sound repertoire is the following question: what is worthy of being remembered? The issue of what constitutes

heritage has been addressed by state authorities, museums and other institutions for cultural heritage, as well as by artists, scholars, archivists and collectors. The workshop will explore how the memorialization of early media evolved in different contexts. Doing so requires a critical evaluation of nationalist erasures, imperial nostalgia and romanticization post 'world-music'. Extending beyond various examples of representation, this workshop invites participants to imagine alternative approaches to researching, archiving and curating this audio-repertoire, and thus to facilitate interconnected, accommodating and democratic representations of a polyphonic shared heritage.

The workshop will bring together historians, anthropologists, musicologists, archivists and musicians to explore the beginnings of popular culture and discuss different aspects of the social, cultural, aesthetic implications of the early media technologies, particularly sound recording and archiving practices around the repertoire amassed in the region of the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond.

The workshop will address mainly, but not exclusively, the following questions:

- What does the recent growth of (global/national/regional/ethnic) archiving practices by institutional repositories and personal collectors suggest about the current patterns of cultural heritage?
- What does the widespread absence of sonic artifacts in museum-based representations of arts and culture of the Eastern Mediterranean suggest?
- Why does it matter to revisit the emergence of popular culture and the making of musical traditions and tastes today—at a time of popular authoritarianisms and digital humanities?
- In which different ways did the recorded sound in various formats reshape the soundscapes across the Mediterranean? How have media technologies helped reconfigure the connections among sounds/images, places and people?
- How did the music disc, its circulation and listening echo the struggles for urban space along lines of class, gender and collective symbolisms? Relatedly, how have various periods and strategies of memory work reshaped the urban architecture of music?
- In which potential ways might the repertoire of the age of mechanical reproduction allow us to reread the social and political experience of the last century? How can an archeology of the early media open up fresh horizons in tackling nationalism, revolution, decolonization as well as in rethinking histories of emotions?
- Alternatively, what original ideas, conceptual frameworks and blueprints can the fields of humanities, social sciences and music production offer for archiving and curating the media for an emancipatory, connecting and inclusive heritagization practice?

Scholars of the humanities, social scientists, archivists and musicians are invited to submit abstracts of 250-300 words for paper presentations of 20-25 minutes, along with a brief academic bio (max. 300 words), to [eume@trafo-berlin.de](mailto:eume@trafo-berlin.de) by **October 31, 2019**. Applicants will be informed about the outcome by mid-November 2019. Participants invited for presentation will get the opportunity to have a version of their paper published online on the [TRAFO blog](#), a blog for Transregional Research, and may have the option to publish their papers in an edited print/open access format as well.

The workshop is convened by Diana Abbani (EUME Fellow 2018-20) and Yektan Türkyilmaz (EUME Fellow 2017-21). It is part of the activities of EUROPE IN THE MIDDLE EAST—THE MIDDLE EAST IN EUROPE (EUME), a research program at the Forum Transregionale Studien. The workshop will be held at the Forum Transregionale Studien, Wallotstraße 14, 14193 Berlin, Germany on January 23-24, 2020, with two to three panels of 90 minutes a day, a lecture and a plenary discussion. Funding is available to cover the costs of accommodation and travel for a limited number of participants. Thus, participants are encouraged to secure complementary funding for travel if their home institution offers this option.