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REVIEW

AUDIOVISUAL ETHNOMUSICOLOGY: AN OLD-NEW FIELD OF STUDY

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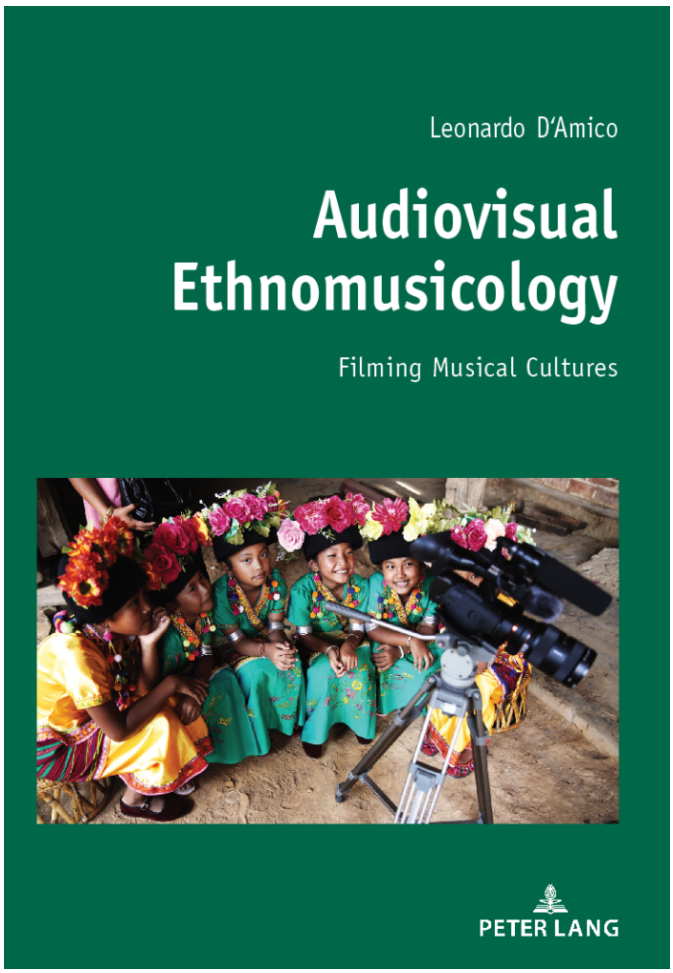

1. This review was written during my postdoctoral studies at the Department of Anthropology of the Universidade de São Paulo (USP). I would like to thank the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP) for the scholarship (2019/27545-3).

In the field of ethnomusicology, sound recording is widely considered an essential tool for the analysis and interpretation of what was sung and/or played during the fieldwork, the preservation and dissemination of musical cultures, or as a product of the research associated with the written text. However, as Killick (2013) points out, ethnomusicological work is also based on visual evidence, such as the careful observation of how participants interact in a particular musical event, the transcription of works, and the audiovisual recording. The last modality in particular has increasingly drawn the attention of ethnomusicologists in the 21st century, largely due to the cheapening and popularization of filmmaking devices.

While in anthropology, considered a neighboring discipline to ethnomusicology, important works have long been shaping the subfield of visual anthropology[2], most manuals of ethnomusicology have not discussed the use of audiovisual media for the recording of musical practices[3], the majority of the reflections being in the form of articles[4]. At the institutional level, the situation is not very different. Taking Brazilian universities as an example, while it is possible to identify quite a several anthropology departments that possess their centers and laboratories of visual anthropology (Peixoto 2019), teaching and research in ethnomusicology usually hold a minority position in music departments whose *modus operandi* is based on the conservatory (Araújo and Salgado e Silva 2009), with no technical structure (shooting equipment, projection rooms, post-production assistants, etc.) or continuous training programs that encourage and enable future ethnomusicologists to make use of audiovisual media in their research projects.

An important step toward a greater presence of audiovisual media in ethnomusicology was the colloquium *Methods and Techniques of Film and Videorecording in Ethnomusicological Research*, organized in 1988 by the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) and reported by Baily (1988), as well as the publication, in the following year, of the dossier *Film and Video in Ethnomusicology* in *The World of Music* journal. However, it was necessary to wait until 2015 for the creation of a constant forum for discussion among ethnofilmmakers, the ICTM Study Group on Audiovisual Ethnomusicology. With the mission of investigating the potential of audiovisual media in ethnomusicology from the axes of research, preservation, and dissemination, the group has already held two international symposiums (in 2016 and 2018) and has taken the forefront in establishing audiovisual ethnomusicology as a major sub-discipline. This is the context

2. I highlight the works of Banks and Morphy (1997), Banks and Ruby (2012), Crawford and Turton (1992), Grimshaw (2008), Hockings (1995) [1975], Macdougall (1998; 2006), Pink (2001) and Ruby (2000).
3. A notable exception is *The Ethnomusicologist*, by Mantle Hood (1982) [1971], which mentions the use of the film in chapter 5, dedicated to the technical aspects of fieldwork.
4. Some of the best-known works are the ones by Baily (1989; 2009), Feld (1976), Titon (1992) and Zemp (1988; 1990).

of the recent launch (2020) of the book *Audiovisual Ethnomusicology: Filming Musical Cultures*, by Leonardo D'Amico, an Italian ethnomusicologist and filmmaker who chairs the study group at ICTM. Made up of seven chapters and an appendix, the work intends to provide a historical overview of ethnomusicological film, the different theoretical and methodological approaches adopted by ethnofilmmakers, as well as the various ways of using visual media to represent musical cultures (p. 39).

The preface is signed by Timothy Rice, which takes on special meaning since one of the definitions of ethnomusicology that he proposes in his book *Ethnomusicology: A Very Short Introduction* (2014) is "word-based, reasoned discourse about all music" (2014, 10). Although Rice acknowledges that visual documentation has become almost mandatory in fieldwork (2014, 40), it is clear how prevalent is the idea that knowledge production in ethnomusicology occurs in the form of thesis, articles, and books. In his preface, Rice recognizes the limitation of his definition and states that D'Amico's book can shed light on a "parallel path" (p. 17) of ethnomusicology that is still not properly explored.

The first chapter seeks to highlight the importance of audiovisual representation of musical cultures, given that music is a multi-sensory phenomenon, and that audiovisual media can document simultaneously the sound, visual, and contextual dimensions. In that sense, the use of audiovisual media would agree with the very nature of ethnomusicological work, since researchers in this field of study tend to be more interested in the study of musical processes rather than specific works. The author also gives a brief historical overview of the use of film in ethnomusicology, which will be developed in the following chapters. At this point, it is possible to raise a first question: considering that D'Amico recognizes the difficulty of tracing a historical panorama of ethnomusicological film, given its strong connection with ethnographic film (p. 23), how to establish the specificity of the former without falling into a "chimerical and academic exercise" about which Luc de Heusch (1962, 9) had already been concerned in his attempt to define the sociological film? According to D'Amico, even though ethnomusicological and ethnographic films have areas of overlap, the focus of the first one on music-making and musical performances in context (p. 23) assures its own denomination.

The second chapter seeks to define the range of the term "ethnomusicological film" from several fronts. At first, D'Amico discusses the opposing terms *research film* and *documentary film* (the first as a support for research and the second as an autonomous work), and *world-music film* and *ethnomusicological film*, which would be distinguished mainly by the importance given to ethnographic work (higher in the second type). In the latter pair, when seeking to establish a contrast between the "catchy" character (p.

45) of the world-music films produced by European television stations and the "ethnomusicological correctness" (p. 47) of ethnomusicological films, the author treads on dangerous ground, as it seems that there is a valorization of the scientific character of the latter over what Harbert (2018, 10) calls the "aesthetic attention" in filmmaking, crucial for the spectator to get into the "filmic world." Although this view is attenuated throughout the book – in this regard, the section about the impressionist mode of representation is especially enriching –, the academic/scientific dimension is indeed relevant to D'Amico, since he defines ethnomusicological film as an "audiovisual representation of music cultures through moving and sounding images, using methodologies and theoretical perspectives developed in the framework of ethnomusicology, and capable of conveying information of ethnomusicological value" (p. 47). It is worth asking ourselves, however, if the excessive search for a supposed "ethnomusicological value" in audiovisual representation would not be turned into a restraint on creative freedom, a concern already expressed by Paul Henley regarding the intellectual training of the anthropologist (Henley and Flores 2009, 94). The chapter also presents the modes of filmic representation (expositive, observative, reflexive and impressionist) proposed by Barbash and Taylor (1997); it proposes a taxonomy of filmic content organized around three axes (thematic, organological and biographical); and it addresses issues ranging from ethics in audiovisual representation to the numerous uses of ethnomusicological film (research tool, teaching material, preservation of musical cultures, among others).

The third chapter highlights films produced in three European institutions (Institut für den Wissenschaftlichen Film - IWF, in Germany; Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique - CNRS, in France; and National Film and Television School - NFTS, in England), in addition to the work of Hugo Zemp. Although the association of these institutions with certain styles of cinematography may have been inspired by the guidelines written by its prominent members (Dauer 1969; Rouch 1974; Baily 1989), the very panorama made by D'Amico shows that, especially in the case of CNRS, the films produced there can cover quite diverse themes and aesthetics. Taking into account that the production of the NFTS was reduced to a single individual (John Baily), perhaps the author could have highlighted the productions of specific filmmakers, as in the excellent section dedicated to Hugo Zemp, rather than suggesting a stylistic uniformity of each of the institutions.

The fourth chapter uses the geographical aspect as a way of cataloging ethnomusicological films. Surprisingly, the section dedicated to Latin America does not mention Brazil, a country which vast and varied musical culture has been the subject of panoramic series of wide circulation, such as *Música do Brasil* (direction by Belizário França and idealization

by the anthropologist Hermano Vianna), exhibited by MTV Brasil, and *Taquaras, tambores e violas* (direction by Hidalgo Homero and research by the anthropologist Alice Villela), aired on CINEBRASIL TV. Although films about Brazilian musical manifestations are mentioned in other parts of the book, I think it would have been worthwhile to include them in this section for those who are interested in getting quick access to this information. In any case, the survey made by D'Amico has the merit of expanding the panorama of non-fiction films beyond the commonly cited American and European productions.

The fifth chapter highlights the use of audiovisual media both as a tool for conducting analyses that surpasses the dimension of sound (interactions between musicians and audiences in musical performance, in Regula Qureshi's videographic method; the relationship between the technique of executing an instrument and musical structures, in Gerhard Kubik's frame-by-frame analysis; comparison of body movements from different cultures, in Alan Lomax's *Choreometrics* project) and as a possibility of visual representation of musical structures. This last mode, used by Hugo Zemp, has been unexplored in ethnomusicological films and may be of particular interest to ethnomusicologists who seek to present their transcriptions synchronously to visual and sound elements or do not wish to give up the explanatory clarity of the written representation in audiovisual productions.

The sixth chapter focuses on filming music "in action," covering the execution and/or construction of musical instruments, processes of musical interaction between musicians and audience, and the transmission of musical knowledge. The illustration of the second point by D'Amico, from his film *Cantar l'ottava*, is especially interesting and makes us wish that accounts of his experience as a filmmaker and film festival director had had more space in the book.

The beginning of the seventh chapter deals with the dissemination of ethnomusicological films on "big and small screens," representing the movie theater and the television, respectively. It would worth a mention of the even smaller screens of the omnipresent cell phones, which have been used by ethnomusicologists both for filming musical practices in fieldwork and for the dissemination of their productions on the internet, since it is not always possible to present their films at festivals or on television channels. It should also be noted that nowadays it is common that musicians themselves, even those belonging to the so-called traditional cultures, film themselves and publicize their actions on social networks, which has opened, through the use of netnographic approach (Kozinetz 2014), a new and promising field of research for ethnomusicology. The chapter also presents other themes of ethnomusicological film, such as

memory, identity, and political and social engagement, which, despite their relevance, do not communicate directly with the previous discussion and could be allocated in a separate section. Finally, the appendix presents a long and valuable list of films organized into the categories shown in the second chapter.

It should be said that the specific questions made here do not mean to diminish the value of this work for ethnomusicology. D'Amico presents a combination of bibliographic and cinematographic knowledge about filming music that, I venture to say, few people could rival. Just as impressive is his didactic ability in organizing the vast amount of information in categories of easy understanding, which will be of great use to teachers who want to organize courses in this area and/or filmmakers searching for references to their creative work. Likewise, the extensive filmography raised by the author will be a fundamental reference for the establishment of future collections of audiovisual ethnomusicology laboratories.

Finally, I think that D'Amico's book can establish an interesting dialogue with the also recent book *American Music Documentary: Five Case Studies of Ciné-Ethnomusicology*, by Benjamin Harbert (2018). Although the two works present significant differences in approach – D'Amico proposes a panoramic view, while Harbert selects five documentaries for in-depth analysis –, both consider that certain films about music produced by non-academic filmmakers may be part of the field of audiovisual ethnomusicology (D'Amico) or cine-ethnomusicology (Harbert). In that sense, the subdiscipline lives a paradox: it can be considered to have a long history of ethnomusicological films *avant la lettre*, but has a long way to go in terms of theoretical reflection and institutional presence. In any case, it remains the wish that this renewed interest in audiovisual representation in ethnomusicology be no longer a chapter of the discrepancy between the film as a promise and its peripheral presence in the discipline (Harbert 2018, 4), but an effective opening to new ways of feeling and thinking music.

TRANSLATION
The author and Rubens Lacerda de Sá

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