Filippo Bonini-Baraldi: *Roma Music and Emotion*

Oxford University Press, 2021. 325 pages, with accompanying online video materials.

Filippo Bonini Baraldi may have graduated in 2001 as an electrical engineer in the Italian city of Padua, but after that his interest in music began to predominate. He earned his doctorate in ethnomusicology from Paris Nanterre University in 2010, the culmination of his long-term research on musicians of Roma origin in Romania, above all in the small village of Ceuaș, Transylvania. One result of that research is the documentary film *Crying for the Dead* (*Plan-séquence d'une mort criée*, 2015, 62 min), an audiovisual documentation of the emotional escalation that happens during a vigil for a deceased woman from the Roma community in Ceuaș. Now his longtime focus on musicians of Roma origin in Romania as a subject has resulted in the thorough elaboration of one of his prominent themes: the association between emotions and performance (and not just pertaining to music) in Roma life. We must immediately recall that Baraldi had a lot of academic work to draw from; musicians of Roma origin in Romania have long been the focus of study by Speranta Radulescu, Anca Giurchescu, and Margaret Beissinger, for example, while emotion as a subject has been specially studied by Baraldi's fellow-traveler (also Radulescu's research collaborator) and earlier graduate of the same university, Victor Alexandre Stoichita, whose published dissertation refers to emotions right in its title: *Fabricants d'émotions. Musique et malice dans un village tsigane de Roumanie* [*Emotion-Makers: Music and Mischief in a Gypsy Village in Romania*] (2008).

Baraldi's monograph is based on close ethnographies of three contexts, each different from the next, in which musicians of Roma origin are engaged, and during which "tears roll down their faces" (which the author comprehends as evidence of emotions): playing music professionally at a wedding; the informal collective music-making that he calls an "after-party"; and the musical – or more precisely, audio – productions associated with death (Steven Feld, the famous American music anthropologist, who was a member of Baraldi's dissertation committee, appreciates this thorough dose of ethnography in his preface). The ethnographic sections are interlaced with analyses of phenomena important to each context. In association with music performances at weddings, Baraldi examines how musicians who are professionals create their repertoires in order to elicit emotion in the audience; when it comes to the after-parties, he considers them in relation to the emic concept of being inwardly torn apart. Baraldi then linguistically analyzes the salient Roma emic concepts that are associated with emotions in general, as well as those used when mourning the dead in particular. In addition to his linguistic analysis, he incorporates music analysis, both classic musicological analysis (when discussing the ornamentation and phrasing used to create a sense of sadness) and music analysis based on computerized processing (e.g., to detect deviations in the rhythm of the *aksak* asymmetrical meter as it is actually performed in each of these contexts).

The last two chapters (13 and 14) are theoretical (the analytical sections are

densely interwoven with references to theory as well). Chapter 13 focuses on the concept of empathy, which is de facto the emotion mentioned in the title of the book and the subject of this research; Baraldi considers it crucial to comprehending what is happening in Ceuaș among these musicians and their audiences. In this chapter, he first discusses ethnomusicological works on the subject of emotional sharing, specifically code sharing, as in Feld (1982), Pasqualino (1998), and Becker (2004). However, because no other ethnomusicological work has explicitly engaged with empathy as Baraldi comprehends it, he does not focus in depth on any of those ethnomusicological studies and turns to the findings of philosophers who have reflected on aesthetic empathy (e.g., Pinotti 1997), cognitive scientists researching mirror neurons (e.g., Gallese et al. 1996), and others. Baraldi then integrates this combination of analytical concepts and findings into an empathy model that works not on the basis of the mechanisms for perceiving art, but in accordance with approaches "emphasizing the fundamental role of simulation, imitation, embodiment, and empathic animation" (p. 295).

Baraldi then uses this model in Chapter 14, where he transforms the data he has collected and discussed in previous chapters into an answer to the book's central question of how the music performed in Ceuaș by musicians of Roma origin functions with regard to the creation of emotions, or to be more exact, the creation of empathy. His basis for these interpretations is British anthropologist Alfred Gell's (1998) theory, which is not primarily about music but about art. Gell explicitly rejects an approach to "artifacts", i.e., artworks that are semiological. "Turning his back on ideas of meaning and communication", Baraldi explains, "Gell took a pragmatic approach to art, understood as a system of actions" (p. 264). Based on this approach, Baraldi finally presents the emotional effect of music as the result of "the intentionality attributed to different types of agents constituting [complex] networks" (p. 272) created by the audience, the musicians, the repertoire, etc., (the basic design of which is reminiscent of, but does not refer to, Latour's *actor network theory*, known as ANT). The entire model, therefore, shows humans to be beings who are not just entangled in the network of meanings (Geerz), but who also experience emotions only when they have the "capacity to attribute intentions and emotions to others" (p. 273).

Roma Music and Emotion is more than just an excellent book that provides deep insight into the music and social life of Roma in Ceuaș, augmented by the available online video materials (it is a pity that *Crying for the Dead* is not available for online streaming as well); it is also a book that teaches us about how to be empathetic human beings.

Zuzana Jurková
(Charles University in Prague)