

# Angelika Tracz

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UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW

## **Gender in Traditional Music: An Overview of the New Challenges Related to Polish Ethnomusicology in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

### **Abstract**

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The subject of the article is to present the feminist trend in Western ethnomusicology and then to compare it with the state of research in Poland. The query included the latest Western musicological and ethnomusicological literature, as well as the known sources about gender in Polish traditional music. The author, based on the experience gained during the field research carried out in recent years, indicates possible changes in conducting and analysing the field in order to obtain more accurate knowledge about gender performativity in Polish folklore.

### **Keywords**

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feminism, critical theories, gender, ethnomusicology

Social transformations clearly imply some kind of transformations in academic discourse. In the twentieth century, against the background of cultural and social changes, as part of the critical theories developed by the Frankfurt School, gender, sexuality, and the discrimination associated with them began to be recognised in the humanities. As early as in the 1960s, the representation of women and minorities as the subject and object of scientific research became one of the topics of lectures, seminars, and publications. Today, after many years of evolution of issues related to its perception, socio-cultural gender can be defined as a form of representation of complex social relations and, therefore, a social construct that makes it possible to think about the interrelationships between sexual identity and other variables: race, age, culture, class, lifestyle, etc.<sup>1</sup> All of these variables are part of the identity of the subject under study, embedded in a material reality marked by the power relations of the subject's identity.<sup>2</sup> According to this definition and the views of the representative of the second-wave feminism Simone de Beauvoir, 'one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.'<sup>3</sup> Adding Judith Butler's theory, this 'becoming' takes place by means of constant role-playing, which is assigned to us and which seems to be an intrinsic, unchangeable feature, while in many cases it is the result of institutional pressure.<sup>4</sup>

At this point, it is worthy to mention misinterpretations of this definition. I am not speaking here of the scholarly, constructive criticism of elements of gender performativity theory undertaken by Biddy Martin, Eve Sedgwick, and Slavoj Žižek, among others,<sup>5</sup> but of its portrayal in media discourse. There are reports that do not refer to scientific articles on gender theory as such, but only to its criticism by conservative circles. Gender theory is accused of being biased, contrary to common sense, revolutionary, or being an attempt at social engineering, among

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<sup>1</sup> R. Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects Embodiment And Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (2nd edn, New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 145.

<sup>2</sup> Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, 184.

<sup>3</sup> S. de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, tr. C. Borde and S. Malovany-Chevallier (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), 283.

<sup>4</sup> J. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York–London: Routledge, 1999), 57.

<sup>5</sup> Compare S. Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London–New York: Verso, 2000).

others.<sup>6</sup> However, it is nothing more than an attempt to describe the diversity of inborn, attributed and acquired human characteristics and their influence on human life. Moreover, it is not only the humanities that take up the issue of gender. The ambiguity of biological gender and the need to define it is mentioned at least in the biological sciences.<sup>7</sup>

Although the struggle of musicology with feminist issues can be dated back to the early 1980s,<sup>8</sup> a major study on gender in the strict sense of the term was published only in 1991. One of the most important feminist music scholars is Susan McClary. She focuses on determining how historically constructed ideas of gender and sexuality have influenced the development of music in the early modern period. In 1991, she published the first comprehensive analysis of this topic in her book *Feminine Endings*.<sup>9</sup> It addresses feminist critiques of music within traditional academic disciplines, such as musicology or music theory. McClary tries to prove that, depending on the chosen topic, some elements of the gender construct and traces of the patriarchal system are present in sources concerning music since Antiquity.

In a similar way, feminism developed in ethnomusicology. The study of women was already present in research during the 'reign' of comparative musicology, i.e. at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Bożena Muszkalska summarised the activity of Richard Wallaschek, whose book *Primitive music: an inquiry into the origin and development of music, songs, instruments, dances, and pantomimes of savage races*<sup>10</sup> included a special section devoted to women.<sup>11</sup> He considered women to be more gifted than men and acknowledged that through social considerations, that is, a developing system of male domination, they

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<sup>6</sup> See also: J.J. Pawłowicz, 'Ideologia gender realnym zagrożeniem dla małżeństwa i rodziny', *Teologia i moralność*, 1 (2012), 139–154.

<sup>7</sup> See e.g.: C. Ainsworth, 'Sex redefined', *Nature*, 518 (2015), 288–291.

<sup>8</sup> See e.g.: C. Neuls-Bates, ed., *Women in Music: An Anthology of Source Readings from the Middle Ages to the Present* (New York: Northeastern University Press, 1982).

<sup>9</sup> S. McClary, *Feminine Endings. Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

<sup>10</sup> R. Wallaschek, *Primitive music: an inquiry into the origin and development of music, songs, instruments, dances, and pantomimes of savage races*, (London: Longmans, Green and C., 1893).

<sup>11</sup> B. Muszkalska, 'Biological and Social Aspects of the Theoretical Thought of Richard Wallaschek', *Interdisciplinary Studies in Musicology*, 8 (2009), 71–80.

were unable to develop their musical activities.<sup>12</sup> However, even if we consider more contemporary anthropological scholars, then we can see that already John Blacking includes a critical element in his definition of music, presented in *How musical is man?*:

[...] I have music as humanly organized sound. [...] we ought to look for relationships between patterns of human organization and the patterns of sound produced as a result of organized interaction [...]<sup>13</sup>

At first sight, it does not seem that Blacking's views also apply to the use of cultural gender theory in ethnomusicology. However, his definition of music is very broad. Firstly, he mentions the experiences of human beings (which may differ significantly depending on gender identity), and consequently their influence on the culture that creates music. Secondly, music is meant to make visible the spectrum of experiences, so not only experiences regarding past and present events, but also their perception, which can differ between individuals. Thirdly and finally, Blacking's other works also point to his interest in performativity of musical behaviour and especially the meaning of corporeality in this behaviour.<sup>14</sup> Thus, it seems right to argue that gender identity or belonging to a cultural gender may have influence the performance of traditional music or traditional music itself as such.

The pioneer, however, turned out to be Ellen Koskoff. In her book *A Feminist Ethnomusicology: Writings on Music and Gender*<sup>15</sup> she was the first ethnomusicologist to summarise more than fifty years of studies of gender in traditional music, she described them and characterised problems that have remained unresolved until our times.<sup>16</sup> Thus, I will look at three periods in the history of Western feminist thought in ethnomusicology as distinguished by Koskoff. Then, I will try to relate them to Polish ethnomusicology.

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<sup>12</sup> Muszkalska, 'Biological and Social Aspects', 78.

<sup>13</sup> J. Blacking, *How musical is man?* (Seattle: Faber & Faber, 1973), 7–15.

<sup>14</sup> J. Blacking, *The Anthropology of the Body* (London: Academic Press, 1977).

<sup>15</sup> E. Koskoff, *A Feminist Ethnomusicology: Writings on Music and Gender* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2014).

<sup>16</sup> It is significant that the author of this work is a woman. The topic which is worth analysing but still absent in this article is the position of women-ethnomusicologists in the academic discourse: the issues they undertake, the way of conducting the research, the effect of such studies, etc.

The first step, as in other fields of musicology, was to face the problem of the lack of representation of women. Ethnomusicology encountered it at the beginning of the 1970s from two perspectives. Firstly, like most of the humanities, it was subject to the socio-political changes implied in the statement about the influence of patriarchy on the critical evaluation of artists.<sup>17</sup> As a response to this problem, publications began to 'compensate' for this lack: women's musical practice was described,<sup>18</sup> their hitherto neglected role in the life of the society was documented (for example, one of the first articles on the subject, by Norma McLeod and Marcia Herndon, describes the behaviour of Maltese women).<sup>19</sup> And most importantly, the view was established that in ethnomusicology, just as in music history, there is in fact a general division between well-described output and biographies of men and the marginalised sphere of women. At the same time, feminising tendencies appeared much earlier also in anthropological studies. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the so-called feminist anthropology has been slowly developing, continuing the work of Ruth Benedict and Zora Neale Hurston. Here, too, the first publications concerned the restoration of women as distinct social and cultural actors.<sup>20</sup> In the early 1980s, Elizabeth Wood introduced the distinction between biological and cultural gender into the ethnomusicological environment, and then pointed to the places where gender studies prove necessary in the study of traditional music. She also positioned gender studies within the broader context of discrimination studies.<sup>21</sup> For more than a dozen years, Western scholars have been concerned with the connections of different people, including women, both with music and with the (social, religious) system in which their music functions.

The next stage was a breakthrough in ethnomusicology. The third wave feminism of the early 1990s almost completely abandoned the

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<sup>17</sup> See e.g.: L. Nochlin, 'Why Have There Been No Great Woman Artists?', in V. Gornick, B. Moran, eds, *Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness* (New York: Basic Books, 1971).

<sup>18</sup> See e.g.: B.W. Lee, 'Evolution of the Role and Status of Korean Professional Female Entertainers (Kisaeng)', *World of Music*, 21/2 (1979), 75–84.

<sup>19</sup> M. Herndon, N. McLeod, 'The Bormliza: Maltese Folksong Style and Women', *The Journal of American Folklore*, 88/347 (1975), 81–100.

<sup>20</sup> See e.g.: P. Golde, *Women in the Field: Anthropological Experiences* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986); M.Z. Rosaldo, L. Lamphere, J. Bamberger, *Woman, Culture, and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974).

<sup>21</sup> E. Wood, 'Review Essay: Women in Music', *Signs*, 6/2 (1980), 283–297.

concept of definable gender. The oppressiveness of language and cultural behaviour was addressed, feminism was juxtaposed with post-colonialism, and, most importantly, the first musicological works on queer theory were published.<sup>22</sup> Then, first encyclopaedic mentions concerning women in music occurred and the first books, the milestones of feminism, were written. On the other hand, ethnomusicologists and anthropologists signalled how difficult it was to translate very complex and individualised gender issues into the reality of field research and to study them.<sup>23</sup> A particularly interesting issue raised during that time was the relationship of the person to the instrument and the style of playing, examined in relation to environmental factors affecting the performer. The need to summarise all these issues was fulfilled in the publications of the Music and Gender Study Group, an association of scholars active since 1985 that have promoted a gender-balanced approach to the study of music and dance activities. The Group's statements include: a critical approach to gender roles presented in ethnomusicological research, the identification of gaps in gender research or the development of gender research terminology.<sup>24</sup>

The most important conclusions drawn from the meetings of the Music and Gender Study Group since 1985 and the accompanying publications included, above all, the need to revise the researchers' view of their work in terms of being subject to social constructs, stereotypes and prejudices.<sup>25</sup> A similar shift should also affect historical sources on traditional music and dance. Moreover, recent research shows how interdisciplinary professional field research and its analysis should be. Especially in the publications of Pirkko Moisala and Beverley Diamond—grounded in years of field research based on historical context, in-depth biographies of the subjects, a broad cultural context and existing secondary sources—research guidelines for gender ethnomusicology in the study of foreign cultures become clear.<sup>26</sup> Pirkko Moisala

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<sup>22</sup> S. Cusick, 'On a Lesbian Relationship with Music: A Serious Effort Not to Think Straight', in P. Brett, E. Wood, G.C. Thomas, eds, *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 67–83.

<sup>23</sup> Koskoff, *A Feminist Ethnomusicology*, 67–83.

<sup>24</sup> The information is available on the website of the International Council for Traditional Music, <http://ictmusic.org/group/music-and-gender>, accessed 30 May 2020,

<sup>25</sup> N. Ceribašić, 'Theory and Method of the Gender-Based Studies in Music', *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, 27/2 (1996), 187–190.

<sup>26</sup> Koskoff, *A Feminist Ethnomusicology*, 156–158.

specifically refers to Judith Butler's concept of gender performance, which I have already mentioned. It turns out that the gendered nature of performance is influenced by many other factors, such as the place of performance, the performer's identity, the situation, the circumstances, and even the audience, which has not been which has received little attention until now.<sup>27</sup> It is only with extensive interdisciplinary research that we can see clear how important the factor of the performer's gender is and how fluidly it can change. Such a research also enables us to notice how social changes of the early feminist movement in ethnomusicology are inspiring the next generation of Western female researchers.

In Polish musicology, the topic of gender appears infrequently and fragmentarily. It is only in the last few years that publications on women's music-making have appeared quite regularly (e.g. the studies by Aneta Markuszewska, Magdalena Walter-Mazur, Magdalena Dziadek,<sup>28</sup> or the recently published volume *Musicology Today*<sup>29</sup> devoted to female composers). Danuta Gwizdalanka has quite efficiently dealt with gender stereotypes in her popular book *Music and gender*.<sup>30</sup> Karolina Kizinska came up with very interesting conclusions about the very meaning of the word 'gender' and guidelines for research on this category.<sup>31</sup> According to the author, while searching for the meaning of the activity of a female musician one should refer to both the performer

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<sup>27</sup> See e.g.: P. Moisala, 'Gender Performance in a Finnish Dance Music Restaurant: Reflections on a Multicultural Fieldwork Experiment, Reflections on a Multicultural Fieldwork Experiment', *Narodna Umjetnost*, 38/1 (2001), 7–19; P. Moisala, H. Järviluoma, A. Vilkkko, *Gender and Qualitative Methods* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2003).

<sup>28</sup> See e.g.: A. Markuszewska, *Kompozytorki i patronki muzyki w XVII i XVIII wieku. Wybrane portrety* (Warszawa: Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie, 2017); M. Walter-Mazur, *Figurą i fraktem. Kultura muzyczna polskich benedyktynek w XVII i XVIII wieku* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk, 2014); M. Dziadek, 'Utwory fortepianowe polskich kompozytorek do 1939 roku. Kontekst kulturowy, strategie wyboru gatunków i środków', in J. Krasowski et al., ed., *Muzyka fortepianowa XIII* (Gdańsk: Akademia Muzyczna im. Stanisława Moniuszki, 2004), 544–560.

<sup>29</sup> S. Żerańska-Kominek, ed., *Musicology Today: Women-Composers in Poland. Their stories, ideas, and Music*, 16 (Warszawa: Instytut Muzykologii UW, Związek Kompozytorów Polskich, 2020).

<sup>30</sup> D. Gwizdalanka, *Muzyka i płęć* (Warszawa: PWM, 2001).

<sup>31</sup> K. Kizińska, 'Gender a kultury muzyczne – kulturoznawcze spojrzenie na badania etnomuzykologiczne i historyczne', *Przegląd kulturoznawczy*, 4 (2012), 382–390.

herself and the social organisation within which she performs. It turns out that in Polish ethnomusicology, there are studies addressing the issue of gender in a very similar manner: in correlation with gender, the context of performance, analysis of songs, mood, or emotions accompanying the performance, which places the (often complex) musical effect in the complex web of relations existing in a given community.<sup>32</sup> However, the only Polish study concerning the determination of the respondents' gender in correlation with the repertoire and its presentation in the form of statistical data was undertaken by Piotr Dahlig.<sup>33</sup> These data have been critically evaluated by Teresa Nowak.<sup>34</sup> Among his 543 respondents, 282 were vocalists and 259 were instrumentalists. Among vocalists, 42 were men and 242 women, while among instrumentalists there were only 4 women.

In the absence of information on the questions concerning the subjects' gender identity, I assume that it was determined on the basis of biological features visible at first sight. However, this is not an accusation. The publication comes from the beginning of the third wave of feminism, when theories of performative gender were just emerging in scientific discourse. Looking at the data presented above, we can cautiously accept two theses. First, there was a division: a majority conforming to the distribution of gender roles, and a minority, representing exceptions to the rule that occur less frequently with women. Second, the majority of men could be classified as performing acts belonging to the sphere of culture (music-making), while the majority of women could be classified as performing acts belonging to the sphere of nature (ritual repertoire).<sup>35</sup> The above statements by Teresa Nowak seem to be confirmed by Anna Czekanowska, who linked

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<sup>32</sup> See e.g.: B. Muszkalska, *Tradycyjna wielogłosowość wokalna w kulturach basenu Morza Śródziemnego* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 1999); M. Małanicz-Przybylska, *Między dźwiękami skalnego Podhala. Współczesna góraliszczyzna* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2018).

<sup>33</sup> P. Dahlig, *Ludowa praktyka muzyczna w komentarzach i opiniach wykonawców w Polsce* (Warszawa: Instytut Sztuki PAN, 1993), 8–9.

<sup>34</sup> T. Nowak, 'Muzykantki w kulturze muzycznej wsi polskiej. Zarys problematyki', *Etnomuzykologia polska*, 1 (2016), 44–48.

<sup>35</sup> A larger ratio of male vocalists probably indicates of the funeral signers, whose presence on the list is obvious: the rituals connected with Catholicism are based on patriarchy, so 'male' is present in the sphere of culture.

women's performance to its specific function, a specific event, a staging, a meeting, a ritual.<sup>36</sup>

Together with social and moral changes taking place at the turn of the millennium, the community of folklore scholars became interested in the subject of discrimination and began to revise its view of the musical activity of male musicians, adding to it the space for female musicians. Their activity is recorded on digital media and presented on the Internet, which allows it to be easily popularised among a significant number of recipients. It turns out that in the twenty-first century, women increasingly play instruments, and older female musicians are invited to workshops as teachers. There is a growing activity of women in newly formed bands, as well as in folk ensembles, and girls are also encouraged to play from an early age.

However, as far as the older generation of female artists is concerned, a few best known names of recognized musicians are usually mentioned: Bogusława Dziadońka, a legendary player from Podhale; the recently deceased founder of Kapela Kuracie, Albina Kuraś; and the 'first squeezebox player in pants', Wiesława Gromadzka. In their case, it was primarily their skills and the resulting popularity that led to their activities being documented. The very fact that we know only a few names, which seemingly fill our gap among all musicians, is reminiscent of the practice of tokenism<sup>37</sup> within the mechanism of discrimination: there is a rule (men = musicians) and exceptions to the rule (women treated equally to men), which at first makes one think that only a factual assessment of the skills of other female musicians made them unknown. However, the situation is (not at all) so simple. The multiplicity of themes related to women in Polish traditional music is pointed out by Polish folklore researchers and performers of folk music, often also engaged in research 'at source'. On the one hand, almost all of them recognise the irreversible cultural change and the resulting need to revise the activity of women in the culture of the Polish countryside, but on the other hand, there are doubts concerning, for example, the borderline between prohibition and the practical

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<sup>36</sup> A. Czekanowska, 'Towards a Concept of Slavonic Women's Repertoire', in M. Herndon, S. Ziegler, eds, *Music, Gender, and Culture* (New York: Wilhelmshaven, 1990), 57–70.

<sup>37</sup> The same rule applies to the race discrimination, see e.g.: G. Mixon, 'Good Negro – Bad Negro: The Dynamics of Race and Class in Atlanta During the Era of the 1906 Riot', *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 81/3 (1997), 593–621.

aspects of village life or the interference of external factors in the rural environment and the personal lives of the subjects.<sup>38</sup>

Certainly, the state of gender-specific research in Polish ethnomusicology is to a large extent *terra incognita*, based on conclusions drawn by researchers 'as a side note'. However, the delay in comparison with other branches of musicology seems obvious if we take into consideration the subject matter of ethnomusicology. One would have to agree with Koskoff, who emphasises how time-consuming and laborious is the in-depth study of the described culture, which makes it much more difficult to quickly draw clear conclusions, especially those concerning moral and ethical issues, on the basis of field research conducted in the face of the social change of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.<sup>39</sup> Simply put, the possible reasons for the absence of gender issues in Polish ethnomusicology can be divided into two types: those related to the analysis of the field study and those related to the field study.

Without doubt, every researcher should at least try to follow the advancement of the subject of research. In the case of an ethnomusicologist who wants to deal with feminist studies, they are obliged to read especially carefully the literature produced by other branches of musicology, apart from ethnomusicological works. But this is only the beginning of the scholarly struggle. It must be taken into account that the development of feminism in the last hundred years has accelerated to such an extent that we are now at the end of its third wave. Every social change gives rise to a revision of concepts: first, it happens in the Western humanities; only later ethnomusicologists become familiar with its products inspired by them. Additionally, ethnomusicologists should confront the literature with the also developing anthropological discourse. It turns out, therefore, that the topic only seems narrow, and dealing with feminism in ethnomusicology requires a very regular verification of the already gathered information.

However, in the face of a constantly updated state of research the real challenge becomes field research. Let us take a look at the example of interview documentation. The latest 'methodology' of ethnomusicological research popularised in the country are the instructions of Jadwiga and Marian Sobieski, covering experiences dating back to

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<sup>38</sup> H. Matuszewska, K. Trebunia Tutka, A. Bieńkowski, R. Mazur-Hanaj, T. Janas, 'Kobiety – muzykantki', *Pismo folkowe*, 108 (2013), 4–17.

<sup>39</sup> Koskoff, *A Feminist Ethnomusicology*, 168.

the 1950s [sic].<sup>40</sup> In the sample protocol attached to the instructions,<sup>41</sup> there is no place for determining the gender identity of the respondent. Works belonging to the feminist movement indicate that it undoubtedly matters and is certainly not as obvious as it seemed to researchers of that period. The effect of raising awareness of the gender pioneers in ethnomusicology is the aforementioned broadening of the scope of field research to include these issues, e.g. in the works of Maria Małanicz-Przybylska or Bożena Muszkalska. Another element which is also worth paying attention to is, obviously, determining whether the performer with their musical behaviour belongs to the traditionally understood, specified pattern (in our case, it will be a general division into male instrumentalists and female singers), or whether they break out of it, and why. Also the questions concerning the repertoire should not be omitted (the question can be asked both to the audience and to the performer) as well as the individual evaluation of the repertoire: is it meant to be performed by everyone, or should it be performed by a person with specific gender characteristics? A question about the evaluation of a piece or an entire work may also elicit observations about musical qualities, perhaps attributed, according to the writer of the statement, to certain human or gender characteristics. Especially when interviewing a person who breaks out of the pattern, one should also keep in mind the social perception of this behaviour. A very good example of answers to questions of this kind is a fragment of an interview with Stefan Kołaziński, a violinist from the Kołaziński band from Zdunków, in which he played together with his daughter, Wiesława Gromadzka.<sup>42</sup> For instance, Kołaziński claimed that ‘everybody wanted to see how the girl played’ and listed the farthest places to which the band was invited also because of the fact that she was a woman. This example shows how the reaction to the performative act of Wiesława Gromadzka, unusual for the culture of the Zdunkowo region, is shaped.

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<sup>40</sup> J., M. Sobiescy, *Polska muzyka ludowa i jej problemy* (Warszawa: PWM, 1973), 458–476.

<sup>41</sup> Sobiescy, *Polska muzyka ludowa*, 476.

<sup>42</sup> The archival recording of the conversation of Magdalena Tejchma with Stefan Kołaziński, a famous violinist from Zdunkowo, and his daughter Wiesława Gromadzka from 1971, broadcast on Channel Two of Polish Radio in the programme ‘Sources’, [https://www.polskieradio.pl/8/478/Artykul/2283666,Kapela-Kolazinskich-ze-](https://www.polskieradio.pl/8/478/Artykul/2283666,Kapela-Kolazinskich-ze-Zdunkowa)

*Zdunkowa*, accessed 11 Jan. 2020.

Thus, it can be seen that despite the distant date of publication of the interview, gender issues were present among folklore researchers, although probably in an unintentional way.

However, the anachronistic questionnaire is not the greatest problem. In my opinion, the attitude of the researcher themselves is crucial. It is obvious that conducting research requires a high level of empathy, tact and sensitivity. Nevertheless, when it comes to interpersonal relationships, personal issues, individual rituals or possible taboos, the more trust is needed in the researcher and the community at large, as well as mutual understanding and honesty, which is extremely difficult to achieve. In many cases, questions about identity, gender roles, and discrimination are private matters that should not be discussed, and if they are, it should be with a friend or a close one. The same is true of revealing such stories. Many researchers might risk losing the contact with the community they are actively observing and the inability of the next group of researchers to revisit them. The need for sensitivity in research and its subsequent evaluation has already been mentioned by Sobieski and should be given special attention.<sup>43</sup>

The conducted research may provide answers to a number of questions, some of which I will try to quote. Was there in fact an unwritten nature-culture division in Polish traditional music, where people of a certain gender identity became part of the system of performative acts? Even if we answer this question in the affirmative (and, as I proved above, it is not obvious), doubts begin to multiply. Does this division in traditional music still exist in the twenty-first century, when the performance context is completely different? Was crossing the borderline (or not) part of the pragmatics of the different physical predispositions of men and women, or—given the spectrum of sexuality—did it not matter at all, and did the real problem lie in the discrimination of those who tried to break out of the patterns (in which case we would be dealing with a taboo)? What makes this happen? Are we actually dealing with taboos and breaking them?

During my research, another extremely interesting topic occurred. According to information obtained from the younger generation of folklorists working in the archives of Piotr Gan, at least within a 50-70 km radius of Gromadzka's birthplace, other women were playing the

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<sup>43</sup> Sobieski, *Polska muzyka ludowa*, 467.

squeezebox or accordion at the same time.<sup>44</sup> Their names are known, and some of them are still alive. There is no information about such finds in other archives. On the other hand, during field research in September 2019 in Muszyna and its surroundings, I personally managed to find musical traces of a talented female musician in near Złockie, playing wind instruments in a wedding band with several men.

These two examples indicate the urgent need for regular research into the presence of women musicians. After researching many other regions of the country, it might turn out that women musicians were not as rare as we currently think and statistics indicate. Perhaps their presence is associated with a particular region, or perhaps even the entire country. It is also unclear when women started playing instruments. Going a step further, it is unlikely, albeit still possible, that there has always been a female musician within a few villages, playing better or worse, remembered or completely forgotten, but once an element of the local culture. In conclusion, in the light of current knowledge, we cannot say whether the occurrence of female musicians is an insignificant phenomenon, containing only a few names and surnames, a regional phenomenon, or a part of musical tradition forgotten by scholars.

The questions and hypotheses I have presented are only the beginning of a list of unresolved issues related to gender. However, it is not only Poles that can complain about the constantly growing volume of this list. Even taking into account the literature I mentioned at the beginning of my presentation, the global discourse on ethnomusicology still pays relatively little attention to gender, often treating the topic as a passing academic fad. Already in the 1980s, Bruno Nettl noted that ethnomusicologists are at the beginning of their journey when it comes to relating the relationship between a musician's gender or sexual identity to the music they create or perform.<sup>45</sup> Twenty years later, Moisala Pirrko and Beverly Diamond stated in a similar way: 'musical genders' have yet to be recognised as a useful item in the scholarly dialogue across cultures or in the discourse between them'.<sup>46</sup> It seems that after

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<sup>44</sup> I gathered this information thanks to the kindness of Mr Piotr Baczewski.

<sup>45</sup> B. Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-One Issues and Concepts* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 450–460.

<sup>46</sup> M. Pirrko, B. Diamond, *Music and Gender* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 347.

another twenty years, only a few tentative steps towards exploring the topic have been made.

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