

***From Chantre to Djak: Cantonal Traditions in Canada.* By Robert B. KLYMASZ (ed.), (Ottawa, Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2000, viii + 185 p.; Mercury Series, Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Series Paper 73, ISBN 0-6600-17834-6)**

Ian Brodie

Volume 23, numéro 2, 2001

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1087944ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1087944ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Association Canadienne d'Ethnologie et de Folklore

ISSN

1481-5974 (imprimé)

1708-0401 (numérique)

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Citer ce compte rendu

Brodie, I. (2001). Compte rendu de [*From Chantre to Djak: Cantonal Traditions in Canada.* By Robert B. KLYMASZ (ed.), (Ottawa, Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2000, viii + 185 p.; Mercury Series, Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Series Paper 73, ISBN 0-6600-17834-6)]. *Ethnologies*, 23(2), 178–180. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1087944ar>

traditions, kinship relations, tourism, and community. If none of those themes has any particular appeal, it's still worth reading due to its narrativic skill and fascinating subject.

Heather Sparling
York University
Toronto, Ontario

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This collection of essays attempts to answer, in various fashions, two interrelated yet distinct questions: what is the role and significance of music in worship, and what is the relationship between the singer, the song, and the act of singing? The former is a theological question (in the loosest sense of the word): the latter is a question present in any discussion of performance. In a study of cantorial traditions, the two are combined and, ultimately, inseparable.

Within the traditions represented in the collection "Ukrainian Orthodox, Ukrainian Catholic, Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Orthodox, Conservative, and Reformed Judaism", the cantor holds an ambiguous position within his (it is overwhelmingly, although not exhaustively, a male tradition) faith community. A cantor is not liturgically necessary: rather, he is *prima inter pares* of a congregation or, using the Hebrew formulation, the *shli'akh tzibur*, the "messenger of the gathering". He is a congregant, not a celebrant.

Both Claudette Berthiaume-Zavada, in her ethnomusicological analysis of the cantor Iwan Semenovich Kozachok, "Au-delà de la tradition: Rôle et fonction d'un chantre dans la survie d'une église à Montréal", and Joseph Roll, in his autobiographical essay "Becoming a Cantor", write of the extensive training available for cantors in both the Ukrainian Catholic and Ukrainian Orthodox churches. But Roll's essay points at a further facet beyond training: that the cantor, as representative of the congregation and not of the liturgical offices, straddles the line between the two: "A cantor is a visible sign coming from a parish of its affiliation, attachment, and participation in a larger ecclesiastical community. The communal expression of liturgy, music,

and ritual comes through the local congregation. A cantor is both a member of the congregation and a leading instrument of this expression" (p. 36). Peter Galadza, Kule Family Professor of Eastern Christian Liturgy at St Paul's, concurs: "I would insist that anyone chosen to stand before a community to give voice to its faith in melody is bound to be an enfleshment of its fundamental convictions" (p. 39). Being the congregation's chosen representative is not simply the assigned role within liturgy: one is just as likely to be chosen to be cantor by virtue of being a musically inclined longstanding member of the community. The training for a cantor, therefore, need not be the institutional process described by Roll and Berthiaume-Zavada: there is also the training acquired osmotically by being an active participant.

The cantor is understood as the embodiment of the voice of the community lifting itself up to the divine: an embodiment that extends to actions as well as to song. Both Natalie Kononenko's preface and Bohdan Medwidsky's "Cantors and Godparents in Ukrainian Folklore" concern patterns in Ukrainian oral tradition where cantors have not lived up as exemplars of Christian virtues, and Kononenko refers to the autobiography of one eighteenth century cantor, Turchynovskiy, who was perpetually quarrelling with clergy and parishioners, offending prominent citizens, getting thrown from balconies, and so forth, yet who rose to prominence despite his transgressions (p. 8-10).

In the tension between how a particular faith community is mandated to exercise their religiosity by a higher ecclesiastical authority and how that faith community wishes to exercise it, the community normally wins: more precisely, the community decides to what stringency the authority's dictates are followed. This puts the cantor in a mediating position, not only between congregation and religious but also between the traditions of the church and the lives of the congregants outside of liturgy. The cantor must sing in a voice that is both relevant yet grounded. Anne-Marie Poulin, in "Pour la suite de la beauté: le parcours de Claude Gosselon, chantre de Québec depuis 1943", quotes at length from l'abbé Paul Boily, who wrote of the rush to confuse "popular" with "relevant" following the *aggiornamento* of Vatican II: "Pourtant, sous prétexte que la liturgie devait correspondre au 'vécu', un grand nombre de chants faisant souvent appel à une émotivité superficielle et instantanée ont pénétré nos liturgies, quand on ne va pas jusqu'à utiliser tels quels les textes et musiques de chansons populaires qui n'ont rien à

voir avec le mystère célébré, quand ce ne sont pas des ballades absolument incongrues dans une célébration liturgique” (p. 80).

The routines of ritual are a connection between its present performance and every previous performance of that ritual up to the first one, but they are a structure within which actions are performed not by rote but with an intensity that makes them perpetually new. So too of the cantor's songs: the word is sacrosanct, but the many of the melodies need only adhere to a general structure, within which the cantor as performer / artist can improvise and experiment. Sheldon Posen, writing of the Jewish cantors of the Greater Ottawa area, refers to the *nusakh*, the mode (in the manner of the modes of the medieval Western church — Aeolian, Phrygian, Mixolydian) appropriate to a particular time of the holy calendar. By virtue of appropriate mode and syllabic scansion, one of his informants was able to incorporate the melody of a Chris de Burgh song (p. 141).

It is difficult to say how true is Kononenko's claim that “the cantor is an artist guided by faith” (p. 10): just as easily, the cantor is a faithful guided by art. More likely, to distinguish the two is only to make our task of discussing the cantor's art easier: it is a false distinction that forces us to view one only in light of the other. The editor has done an adequate job of balancing the two approaches, but has provided an excellent bibliography for facilitating further research.

Ian Brodie
Memorial University of Newfoundland
St. John's, Newfoundland

***Northern Folk: Living Traditions of North East Scotland.* Edited by Valentina Bold¹ and Tom McKean. General Editor: James Porter. (Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen, 1999. CD-ROM (Windows / Mac OS) EICD01).**

The power of multimedia lies in the idea that users can choose their own paths through the material on offer. No two journeys through a CD-ROM will be the same. Even if the user revisits particular information, a slightly different navigational path leads to new

1. See article in this issue p. 111.