

Broadcasting musical alterity

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In the 1960s, the Danish ethnomusicologist and composer Poul Rovsing Olsen produced a series of programmes that gave airplay to music primarily from non-industrialised parts of the world. In the wake of the decolonization and with the emergence of new independent countries this music had gained increased interest in Western Europe and North America. Including recordings from his own fieldworks in the shows, Rovsing Olsen invited the listener in on an 'expedition through the world of music', where he introduced and informed about music and music cultures that in his words could be 'provokingly strange'.

Around twenty years later journalist Ole Reitov produced a series of programmes and traveling montages concerning music, music cultures and music industries in small countries that were primarily non-industrialised. Providing an account of 'local' cultures through offering ethnographic detail across geographic and cultural barriers, these programmes (like the ones of Rovsing Olsen) introduced a multiplicity of Others through music. In the 1980s however, musical alterity, not least under the umbrella of 'world music' and its hybrid sub-genres, became a musical category in generalised mainstream classifications, and thus marked a turn toward the appearance of an industry literally for music of the Other.

From a position between postcolonial studies and the anthropology of music, the aim of my research is to investigate how these programmes construct and represent the image of the Other in light of the concurrent historical and institutional discourses, policy makings and radio genres. The aim of my research is to analyse the contexts, technologies and tools used to represent musical alterity, and to illuminate how the presentation of the music of the Other is used in the construction of place or locality. Furthermore, I will discuss how this musical susceptibility to the world can relate to globalization and to power, cultural privilege or economic interest.