



Fig.029 Picture of the actual melodica I bought at a second hand Jewish shop. The melodica was used to recompose my songs but also to play songs to my kids especially during the many rainy afternoons spent in our house in the Netherlands. The photo belongs to my photographic work in which I keep track of my activities by photographing all the objects the right hand uses, in this case the melodica.

SONGS 05

To begin with I preferred classic music and particularly opera which I have assiduously played in my car radio since the age of eighteen. With playing entire opera pieces over and over again I began to memorize the whole libretto. The same thing happened while listening to classical music in general. I got quite quick in memorizing entire symphonies, even the most complicated and abstract ones. I simply did not want to go for the banal pop music and wanted to make the time I spent in the car formative. At that time I was alone and did not have to compromise with other people's taste.

However this privileged situation did not last for so long as I began traveling and working here and there, I often had the situation of having to withstand the cheap and commercial musical taste of others. Even among the most indigenous people in the depth of a tropical jungle I had to wake up every morning with at first the incredible and ferocious sound of a big monkey screaming out loud at the rising of the sun. This monstrous

crowding was followed by a severe diarrhea attack and the native family hosting me turning the Macarena on with a radio they had attached to the only generator. Later in the lonely Scandinavian winters locked in one cabin with other people I just could simply not escape their musical tastes; outside it was too cold and too dark and I had no way to go to, as I like, recollect my thoughts in tranquility. I just had to suck the most cheesy songs the radio would play.

From the beginning I had a rather critical if not most intolerant attitude towards the Culture Industry. I mean I enjoyed folklore music and live music in general but not the redundant songs broadcasted by the radio. It was only with the beginning of this work that I went for a whole different tactic. Rather than getting grumpy I began to follow the stoic advice of Epictetian to “join the festivity” and let go of my contemplative mood if the environment tells me to do otherwise. I then figured out a way to make a formative experience out of what I considered to be most corrupting. I began to simply pay attention to the songs played and track them so as to later add them to my chronological composition and in this way also render reality through this aspect and aspect that I felt imposed on me but that by turning my ego into a mere recording device, into an objective ethnographer I became keen to take notes on.

There is perhaps a difference from my type of doing ethnographic work and that of an actual scientist. As far as I know the ethnographer examines a specific group such as a tribe. He or she analyzes their costumes and learns from them by being with a foot in and a foot out of the community. I also managed somehow thanks to my project and the method I devised with it to keep a foot out but I cannot say that I have analyzed a specific local society. On the contrary I have been analyzing the global society, a society in which all forms of localities have been pretty much erased. Whether I was in the tropical jungle or in a Scandinavian forest the music might have been slightly different yet it was the music I could have as well been listening in either places. In reality then the value of my work lays not so much in doing ethnography in the classical sense and highlighting the character of the people from one or another localities. I came to my project with pretty much all the global population under the same speakers or the same bunch of speakers. Whether the songs were sung in Chinese or in German, they were all pretty much

fabricated with the same digital tools and rhythms available to all musicians around the world.

In this globalized scenario then I believe that my approach of conducting an auto-ethnography rather than a classic ethnography has much more to say even though I am not affiliated to any university department or right because I have the freedom not to be associated with any institution yet have the discipline to carry forward my project. What I try to say here is that examining in this case the industrialized society through myself can become more effective and meaningful then trying to hop here and there taking samples and sporadic fieldnotes from this or that exotic reality. As I became more aware of this I also did not seek anymore in my project to reach out to anything abnormal. I could simply live my life, take care of my children and have much to explore only through this simple way of being.

Of course I cannot draw too many strictly scientific conclusions out of this specific world other than documenting a humanity getting increasingly more passive and increasingly more tailored by the trends that the industry imposes on them. From this vicious circle my effort is that of making a great classic composition out of all the bits of more or less pop and rock and folk music I have chronologically collected through the years. So out of all this redundant mainstream I have this fascination of thinking of my entire musical notations as a giant composition in which there is an evolution represented by the actual evolution or if you want to call it recession of the musical landscape with better technology and so forth and there is also my evolution of living with kids growing their musical tastes over the years . In a way then there is a rhythm, there is a syntax, there are songs that are often played in one period and are gradually dismissed, there are songs that for whatever reason could become a hit again. This work then depicts this inner and outer changes as pretty much also a classical symphony.