

Results from an Experiment in Emulating the Traditional Seto Singing Style

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Abstract

The pattern of change in singing style of the Seto people, a small ethnic group living in South-eastern Estonia and the adjoining part of Russia, is investigated. The present paper concentrates on tuning and scale structure of the ancient Seto song style. The oldest genres of Seto multipart songs are based on a specific symmetrical scale consisting of intervals approximating one and three semitones. The aim of this paper is to investigate to what extent it is possible to restore the old singing style through conscious learning by the trained musicians. The research is based on the pedagogical and scientific experiment that was carried out at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre. Multichannel recordings of two songs ('Käsikivilaul' / 'The Grinding Stone'; 'Urbepäeva laul' / 'The Palm Sunday song') performed by students and those of the original Seto songs were analysed acoustically using the software PRAAT. In conclusion, the students managed to imitate the ancient style of Seto singing quite closely to the original. Yet in some cases they tended to follow the more tempered form of the mode or sing more diatonically.