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THE AEPPEM COLLECTION: A SET OF ANNOTATED TRADITIONAL FRENCH MUSIC SCORES

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to present the AEPPEM collection, consisting of more than five thousand scores of French traditional melodies. The original material and the digitized collection are described. A short statistical analysis is performed to compare this collection to existing ones in terms of melodic profiles.

1. INTRODUCTION

The AEPPEM is an association, created in 2004, working on French traditional music. Its name is an acronym for what can be translated as “association for studying, promoting, and teaching traditional music from French provinces”. Aside from its role as a record label, the main focus of the association has been the publication of a digital music library.

During the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, popular music and songs have been collected in many parts of France. The collectors, or “folklorists”, in charge of this work have documented the artifacts with various degrees of precision. Books containing the scores, sometimes alongside other ethnographic considerations, have been published at that time. Many of these books are publicly available via the French National Library¹ or on the website archive.org.

The AEPPEM is aiming at making these music scores available, in a digital format, and in a single repository.

2. THE DIGITAL LIBRARY

The scores have been manually digitized using the software Melody Assistant.² The files created are in a proprietary format, with a `.myr` extension. MIDI and ABC files were automatically generated, and are also available. 5418 melodies are published at the time of writing, but this number is growing as more books are being digitized.

When it is available in the original book, the following metadata is given:

- title
- incipit: first line of the lyrics
- type of melody: dance tune, lullaby...
- location and date of collection
- name of the singer
- location and date of birth of the singer
- name of the collector

¹ gallica.bnf.fr

² www.myriad-online.com/en/products/melody.htm

3. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

In this section, we compare the AEPPEM collection with:

- the Meertens Tune Collection - Large Corpus (MTC-LC), presented in van Kranenburg et al. (2014), and containing 4830 Dutch songs
- O’Neill’s collection *The Dance Music of Ireland*, containing 1001 Irish traditional tunes³ (O’Neill (1907))

First, we simply count the occurrences of different intervals in all melodies of the corpora. The bar charts in Figure 1 shows the relative frequency of all intervals. In AEPPEM as in MTC-LC, ascending and descending major seconds, and unison, are the most common melodic intervals. Unison occurs much less frequently in O’Neill’s collection.

Second, we count the frequencies of pairs of successive intervals, that give a richer description of the melodic contours. The heatmaps in Figure 2 show these frequencies, restricted to intervals between descending and ascending fifths. The X- and Y-axis represent the first and second interval of the pair, respectively. A striking resemblance appears between the AEPPEM and the MTC-LC heatmaps, but is not shared with O’Neill’s.

Further analysis could be conducted using n -grams of intervals, or other sets of features, to reveal common characteristics and specificities of the different corpora. More importantly, musicological and perceptual analysis could be conducted to assess whether or not these objective measurements correlate with perceived similarities.

4. CONCLUSION

We have introduced the AEPPEM collection, and described both its sources and the digitized collection, available on request.⁴ A short statistical analysis revealed similarities of the melodic contours in this collection and in MTC-LC.

The AEPPEM collection is the result of a collaborative effort started in 2004. We believe it can be a valuable resource for the study of French traditional music, from the perspective of ethnomusicology as well as computational analysis. Thanks to the metadata provided, and the availability of scanned versions of many of the books, tasks such as geographical clustering or optical music recognition can be tackled.

³ ABC transcriptions available at trillian.mit.edu/~jc/music/book/oneills/1001/

⁴ www.aepem.com/contact

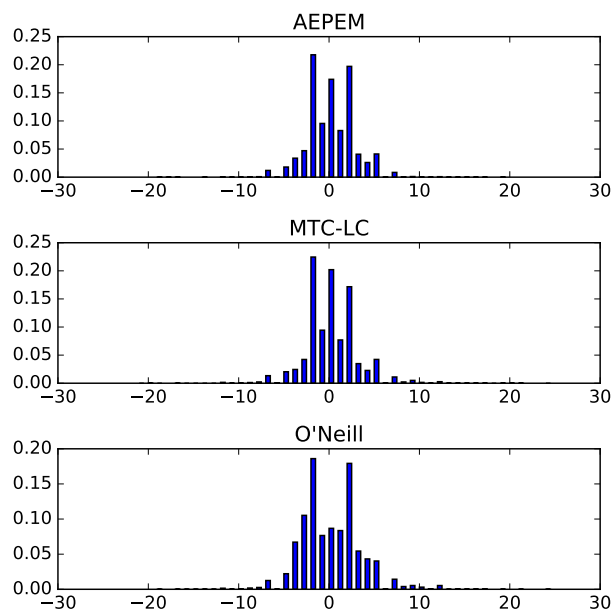


Figure 1: Relative frequency of intervals (X-axis in semitones)

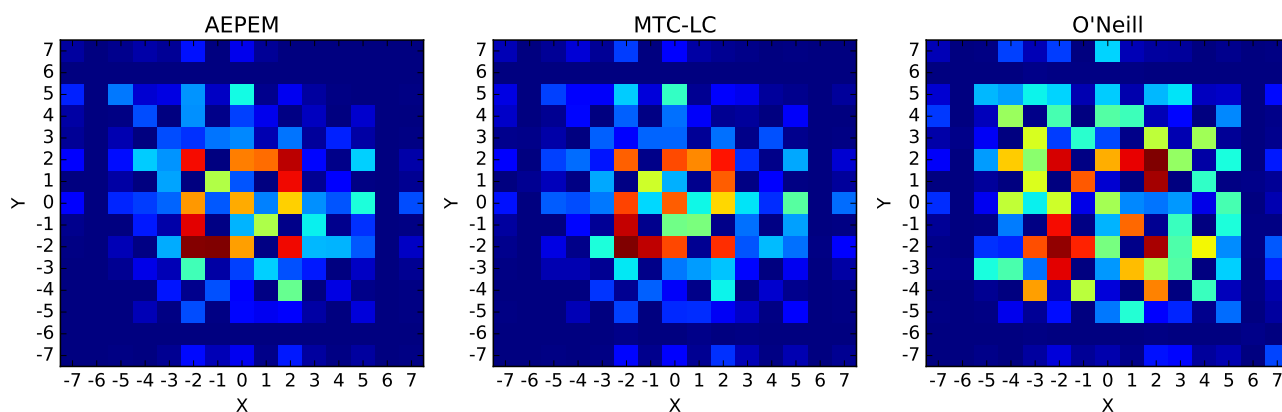


Figure 2: Heatmaps of the relative frequency of pairs of successive intervals (axes in semitones)

5. REFERENCES

- O'Neill, F. (1907). *The Dance Music of Ireland*. Chicago: Lyon and Healy.
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