

## Prague hosts 4th Symposium of the ICTMD Study Group for Music and Dance of the Slavic World

From 5th to 7th October 2023, ethnomusicologists and ethnochoreologists gathered in Prague for the 4th Symposium of the ICTMD Study Group on Music and Dance of the Slavic World. The study group forms part of the International Council for Traditions of Music and Dance (ICTMD), which until recently was known as the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM). This renaming emphasises the significance of dance in music cultures and, equally importantly, engages with contemporary scholarly discussions re-evaluating the concept of “traditional music” and exploring the mutual interactions between traditions and music. These themes resonated in the symposium’s 31 contributions, which presented diverse case studies from across the Slavic world.

The conference commenced with Daniela Stavělová, head of the Department of Ethnomusicology and Ethnochoreology at the Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences (which oversaw the event’s organisation). Her paper, exploring the concept of folklore in late modern society within the context of the former Czechoslovakia and the contemporary Czech Republic, laid a robust foundation for reassessing key terms and themes in current ethnomusicology, including “traditional music,” “folk music,” and “folklore.”

Numerous other contributions also questioned this fundamental terminology and related conceptualisations. Maria Małanicz-Przybylska, for example, offered valuable insights into the Crudo community in Warsaw, highlighting how folk music extends beyond rural areas to encompass diverse urban-based communities. Matěj Kratochvíl’s paper then underscored how folklore is not confined to formalised festival stages; informal off-stage activities constitute a compelling field for studying the musical identities of agents in the folklore world.

The theme of musical identity was explored in various other contributions, too. Katarzyna Skiba investigated Polish national identity within the Mazowsze folk ensemble. Zita Skořepová examined regional folk identities through a Czech children’s singing competition. Iryna Fedun focused on the identities of “folklore professionals” in Ukrainian traditional instrumental music. Jana Tomková introduced her PhD project on the musical identities of the Rusyn ethnic minority in Slovakia. And Svetlana Stepanova explored musical dimensions of identity among Russian migrants in Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic.

Transformation of traditions was another key conference theme. In an online presentation, Tanja

Halužan discussed the revival of the “Pohodi trikralskih zvezdara” custom in the Sutla Valley, Croatia. Larysa Lukashenko explored the Ukrainian folk performance revival through the Kyiv ensemble “Drevo.” Michaela Šilhavíková presented her emerging PhD findings on contemporary capping ceremonies in Uherské Hradiště, Czech Republic. Drago Kunej provided an insightful overview of the evolution of the diatonic button accordion in Slovenian traditional music. Lucia Franická Macková illustrated changes over time in the traditional vocal-movement expression of “spievanie na Dura” in the Slovak village of Selec. Finally, Laura Kolačková shared results of her digital ethnography on “Súboriáda,” a project carried out by Slovak folklore ensembles during the Covid-19 pandemic, showcasing how folklore movements adapt to innovation and transformation while resisting decline.

Another significant theme was the relationship between folk music and dance in the contemporary Slavic world, and implications for heritage activity. Mojca Kovačič provided an overview of the heritagisation of traditional music in Slovenia, offering theoretical insights into the emergence of heritagisation processes. Rebeka Kunej delved into similar themes in traditional dance in Resia, Slovenia, considering how tradition is shaped by heritage policies. And Gabriela Gacek provided a parallel perspective from Poland, focusing

on contemporary folk music festivals in Lower Silesia as a unique expression of translocal cultural heritage.

Ethnomusicology’s broader scope was evident in diverse papers highlighting applied and implementational research projects. In a particularly impactful contribution, Jana Ambrozová demonstrated how ethnomusicologists and ethnochoreologists play a crucial role in re-evaluating and reshaping elementary school curricula, influencing understandings of musical diversity for future Slovak generations. Pedagogy as a challenge for ethnomusicology surfaced in other works, with Katarína Babčáková exploring innovative methods for teaching folk dance in Slovakia’s formal and informal education. Kateřina Černíčková then introduced a database for creative pedagogical approaches in the Czech Republic. And Iryna Dovhaliuk and Lina Dobrianska offered a Ukrainian perspective on innovations in musical pedagogy and its intersection with ethnomusicology.

Musical archives – a common focus in applied projects within ethnomusicological and ethnochoreological research – were presented in two contributions from Poland. Mariusz Pucia outlined the preservation of musical culture in Silesia throughout the 20th century. And Łukasz Smoluch showcased an extensive phonographic collection, collected between 1976 and 2006, held at Adam Mickiewicz University. This collection not only serves as an

invaluable source on Polish folk heritage but also illustrates the evolution of ethnomusicological methodology and technology over the years.

While the majority of scholars represented Slavic perspectives, two papers offered insights from further afield. Zigurds Ete, hailing from Latvia, shared research on the Ventspils Belarusian song ensemble *Žuravinka* performing in his country. One of the most captivating presentations came from Lili Wen, connecting online to discuss Polka in China. Wen showcased intriguing audiovisual samples, revealing how Chinese primary school teachers reinterpret and recreate polka, turning this “traditional” Slavic heritage into a fascinating component of the Chinese dancescape.

We also had the privilege of welcoming scholars from occupied Ukraine, both those temporarily settled in safer places across Europe and those joining directly from the country. Naturally, many contributions reflected the current war situation. Ulrich Morgenstern (despite not being Ukrainian) offered a profound theoretical overview of how war and conflict has been theorised and conceptualised in ethnomusicology. He emphasised that the field tends to underestimate the role of violence in culture. Anastasiia Mazurenko followed with a contribution exploring the role of traditional music in forming Ukrainian national identity amid the Russian invasion, demonstrating how music

becomes an instrument for endurance in a country under military occupation. Olga Velichkina provided a perspective on the Russian people, examining the evolution of the youth folk movement in Russia from the 1960s to the present and analysing the emerging violence in the folk tradition and its connection to the contemporary situation.

Certain contributions stood out especially for their form. Zdeněk Vejvoda’s paper defied any expectation that a music analysis presentation would be dry. His original study, categorising the musical structure of 19th and early 20th-century Czech dance tunes, was accompanied by an extraordinary a cappella performance of this material, allowing the audience to immediately engage with the analytical content. Petr Nuska then presented his recent research with Romani musicians from Slovakia through a 90-minute ethnographic film titled “Hopa lide.” The presentation sparked a lively discussion, exemplifying the potential that alternative forms of disseminating ethnomusicological work can offer to the discipline.

Any ethnomusicological and ethnochoreological event would be incomplete without live music. The first conference evening was spent in the company of the band *MusEquality*, led by primáš Viktor Janošťín. They not only impressed with their high level of skill but also showcased remarkable knowledge of folk repertoire from across many

Slavic regions. The evening also provided participants with opportunity to get moving, thanks to the exemplary pedagogical guidance of Laura Kolačkovská, who taught two traditional dances from Slovakia.

Given the impact of the previous meeting's disruption by the Covid-19 pandemic, the participants in the symposia greatly appreciated the warmth of face-to-face interaction. The cohesion of the group was further enhanced by there being no parallel sessions scheduled, allowing everyone to fully enjoy each paper. A heartfelt thanks goes to the organisational committee and the programme committee for orchestrating such a memorable event. Special commendation is due to the students from the Dance Department of the Music and Dance Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts for their exemplary production and organisation of the event.

As a final thought, I would like to revisit the question posed during the introductory speech by the

director of the Institute of Ethnology, Jiří Woitsch: what constitutes the "Slavic world"? How might we go about exploring this (almost *fictional*) world, one that is geographically scattered across 40 degrees latitude and more than 50 degrees longitude, that shares such a diverse political and cultural history, and that has linguistic ancestry as probably the only commonality? Using music and dance *as lenses* to examine both congruences and differences offers an exciting avenue for unravelling the complexities of this enigmatic world. It enables us to discern continuities and discontinuities that may go unnoticed by other scholarly lenses. Thus, conferences like this one, producing ample food for thought, have significance not only for ethnomusicology and ethnochoreology but also for anthropology, political science, and cultural studies. The Slavic world will surely remain a captivating field for this study group for many years to come.

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## **2023 Annual Meeting of the Gypsy Lore Society and Conference on Romani Studies, São Paulo, Brazil, October 3–6, 2023**

The Gypsy Lore Society (GLS) is an international organization that, according to its website, "promotes the study of Gypsy, Traveler, and analogous peripatetic cultures

worldwide." Every year, the GLS organizes the Annual Meeting and Conference on Romani Studies in a different country. Over the past two decades, the conference has