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**The Player, the Instrument, and
Music in Society:
The 19th Symposium of the ICTM
Study Group on Folk Musical
Instruments¹**

Following its usual, biennial pace, the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) Study Group on Folk Musical Instruments assembled this year for the 19th time. The Symposium took place in Bamberg, Germany (20–23 March), on the initiative of our colleagues there who wanted to help the Study Group by hosting it at a time of economic hardship and the inability of many countries to perform that role. A special symbolic value was added to the symposium by their choice of venue, the concert hall of the renowned clarinet makers, *Schwenk & Seggelke Werkstätte für Innovativen Klarinettenbau* (Schwenk & Seggelke Workshop for Innovative Hand-

made Clarinets). Accordingly, the main topics of the Symposium were “Wind Instruments in Regional Cultures” and “The Social Significance of Instrumental Music Practice”. As usual, the programme committee encouraged the presentation of new research strategies as well. The thematic orientation of this Study Group (on folk instruments, unlike the ICTM’s Regional Study Groups) enabled a truly diversified international assembly, comprising this time participants from more than 20 countries. Unfortunately, there were far fewer participants than planned – many of them had to cancel their participation at the last moment, mostly for financial reasons. In that context, we consider the Organizing Committee’s encouragement and support of the Serbian delegation a gesture of special respect and a compliment to Serbian ethnomusicology. When one considers not only the number of participating countries, but also the diversity of instrumental music traditions that formed the focus of the symposium (by fieldwork location), one realizes the complexity of the network of information presented at the Symposium.

The Symposium was organized in seven successive sessions. There were two panels, at the opening and closing of the symposium, respectively. Our Austrian colleagues (D. Mayrlechner, M. T. Stickler, M. Riedl, and R. Pietsch) used the Edler-Trio, a Styrian musical group that enjoyed much success in the years immediately after the World War II, as a cultural-historical example and experience, as well as a starting point for wider reflections. They highlighted the changes that performing on the contemporary scene brought to the social status of these village musicians, specific solutions related to the usual functions

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of their instruments (in concrete terms, the opposition between the melodic and accompanying/bass instruments), based on each musician's inventiveness, as well as the impact of their repertoire and style, ranging from folk music to music industry. The closing panel was prepared by an interdisciplinary team of ethnomusicologists and an anthropologist from Serbia (M. Zakić, D. Lajić Mihajlović and M. Lukić Krstanović), focusing on festivals as a typical contemporary context for public performances of folk music. The Dragačevo Assembly of Trumpet Players in Guča, Serbia, was used to problematize the reshaping of traditional folk music to fit the demands of the contemporary scene, music industry, and cultural policy under the auspices of official competition and revue events alike, as well as the relationship of music, the musicians, consumers, media, and the market in informal, offstage performances on the streets and in makeshift tent restaurants.

Most of the individual presentations featured the experiences of researchers focused on a great number of regional folk wind instruments, which was a practical indication of the breadth of their positions in contemporary society. These range from endangerment (in some cases registered on the international level and covered by current UNESCO projects for protecting intangible world heritage, but in many cases still without any protection and left to the vicissitudes of time, as R. Ungpho, O. Chuluunbaatar, U. Morgenstern, and K. Lengwinat explained), via engagement in rituals of a new(er) kind (for example, combining vocal expression with brass-band sound in burial rituals, discussed by R. Žarskienė), to the specific utility and treatment of

sound sources for marketing purposes (problematized by R. Fujita). Some presenters also focused on the relations of the aesthetics of instrumental sound and its cultural environment (G. Jähnichen, A. F. Aydin) and on the peculiar stylistic features of extremely individual musicians and their innovativeness with respect to tradition (M. Aho, Ş. Sençerman). This time, too, the revitalization of folk music, in this case instrumental music, was once again the topic of several papers, directly or indirectly, in terms of discussing the changes in the positioning of individual musical instruments in given cultures (S. Moreno Fernández, M. Aho, C. Meinel, L. Surmanidze, V. Polubinska). Some of the speakers also presented the possibilities of reading the identity of a musical instrument in light of historical data regarding its presence in a specific area (C. P. Meddegoda, T. Teffera) and attention was also drawn to the specific role of music in psychological empowerment and identity preservation in exile (G. Kirdiene). The speakers used various examples to discuss the social standing of musicians and factors impacting their (re) positioning, among others, authorities, from leading musicians to leading scholars (N. Zeh, J. Talam). In relation to their specific role in traditional culture, special attention was given to the social status of instrument-makers and to instrument-making as a craft that directly refers to music (R. Jakovljević). The papers devoted to the role of women in instrumental music practice pointed to the different circumstances of their positioning, as an exception from gender regulation in the regional tradition, which also relates to morphological exclusivity relative to the instrumentarium in that area (J. J. Rivera Andia). Vernacular

music pedagogy and its specific systems of “notating” used as its auxiliary tools were the topic of I. Popova’s (И. Попова) presentation, but this aspect was also included in other papers dealing with changes in folk music practice. The relationship between musical instruments and children was discussed in terms of the function, ergology, and repertoire of “children’s” instruments (N. Makharadze), as well as through specific experiences in using instruments in children’s folk-music ensembles (M. Matuskova). Ergological features and playing techniques were discussed in terms of particular topics, as well as in relation to diversification and standardization (e.g. A. Lommel’s presentation on bagpipes in the Carpathian region), as well as relations between different ergological variants, playing techniques, and sound aesthetics (e.g. J. Elsner’s presentation on the *mizmar* of Yemen). Inter-cultural contacts were discussed as a commonplace in many of the presentations, but inter-culturality was specifically examined in the context of a certain type of tuning of different chordophone instruments (banjo, bouzouki, *setar*, and guitar) and their use in various musical genres (M. Bartmann).

As it was planned, this year’s Study Group meeting was dominated by discussions of the current status of folk musical instruments and (re)positioning of players in relation to their socio-cultural environment. As a standard part of ethno-organological considerations, the ergologico-technological level was discussed in the context of specific subcultural, local circumstances, functions, and aesthetics. Inter-cultural relations are also a permanent topic, stimulated by migrations of musical instruments as their material traces. Cul-

tural influences are studied on a general level, as well as in terms of regional variants and migrations of structural and/or ornamental elements, as well as those of playing techniques with the goal of achieving a particular sound effect. The presentations heard at the Symposium suggest that in terms of methodology, fieldwork still predominates in ethno-organology: most of the papers were based on original fieldwork material and experiences. However, every particular instance of fieldwork is articulated in accordance with the concept of research, and moreover, the key differences lie in further elaboration, which is often realized by the “systematic-ethnophonic” method, as a blend of ergology and organophony, as well as in interdisciplinary approaches. Identities are likewise always intriguing, which entails referring to different types of historical sources, although other references, stemming from cultural studies, sociology, and psychology are also present. As a discipline, contemporary ethno-organology thus strives to meet the challenges of its primary domain – a broad understanding of “folk” musical instruments and the diversity of individualities that constitute the community of players of those instruments. Above all, the scheduled, formal discussions, as well as those informal ones, occurring during the breaks, confirmed the importance of events such as this Symposium, as an occasion for establishing personal contacts and engaging in direct communication. Even if this might seem commonplace, the Bamberg experience testifies in the best way about the advantage of an immediate opening of many important fields, from particular information related to the sources and literature, to the operating principles of research proj-

ects and scientific policies in different countries; even the most heated debates are thereby waged with less risk and overcoming language barriers is much easier.

This study group's good internal dynamics rests on the principles of its founders and first members, and the presentation of M. Modin initiated an homage to one of them, Ernst Emsheimer. Nonetheless, ICTM Secretary General, Svanibor Pettan, presented the first special acknowledgement of the ICTM to Marianne Bröcker for her contribution to the study of folk musical instruments, committed membership in

the Study Group, and dedication to the organization of this year's Symposium. Thanks to excellent organization, the Symposium unfolded as planned and the participants could also enjoy listening to Upper Franconian folk music performed by renowned folk-music ensembles. The organizers of the Symposium intend to publish selected papers in the next volume of the new series of *Studia instrumentorum musicae popularis* (III), edited by Gisa Jähnichen, in an endeavour to make the most important results presented at this Symposium available to a wider readership.