

7th Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Music and Dance in Southeastern Europe

23rd-25th April 2021

REPORT

By the “newcomers” Bengi Çakmak, Nevin Şahin, Suna Başlantı, and Maja Bjelica

This year’s Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Music and Dance in Southeastern Europe held online due to the momentary worldwide health situation and restrictions, took place from 23rd to 25th of April. It concentrated on three main themes, mutually intertwining them, but also touching on topics beyond them. It included 47 presentations grouped under these three themes: “Music and dance in the cultural basin of the Black Sea” (7 presentations), “dance and music as resistance, integration and separation” (13 presentations), and “performance places and spaces – how these are constructed” (27 presentations).

The introductory session consisted of words of welcome from the representatives of the program and organizing committees, including **Gökhan Altınbaş**, **Arzu Öztürkmen**, **Svanibor Pettan**, and **Velika Stojkova Serafimovska**. They stressed the importance of this meeting and of the Study Group itself, being one of the biggest among the ICTM study groups that covered a variety of research areas of music and dance in southeastern Europe. The importance of the study group was later also emphasised by the honorary guest Susanne Ziegler, who was introduced by **Abdullah Akat**, who stressed her important work in phonogram archives and her research of music of Turkey, Caucasus, Georgia, and East and Southeast Europe in general.

Susanne Ziegler, the honorary guest of the symposium, presented her research work on linguistics and music, and talked about the institute where she worked and her mentors and colleagues whom she worked with. The focus of her talk was the ICTM study group on the Music and Dance of Southeastern Europe that since its inception in 2008 in Struga had kept growing in membership and has been functioning successfully despite the political differences and ideologies within the region. She also mentioned the transformation of the political and cultural frames in this geopolitical area in the last decades, such as “Europeanization”, but also a turn “back to national roots”, both accompanied by international coordination. This region is seen as a cultural unit, despite its social and cultural differences since its commonalities are strongly expressed in music and dance. She emphasised the importance of the symposia of the study group that considers themes beyond music and dance, such as problems of fieldwork, presentation, media, teaching, education, transitions, and changes, also national identities, migrations, global thinking, and political situations. Ziegler expressed her hope that the study group would continue its research in these directions and stressed the importance of topics concerning “antinational borders” on one hand, and the surmounting of disciplinary borders on the other, and that accounts of intercultural and interethnic communication in progress should also strive to establish or keep a balance between music and dance, local and global, and similar.

One of the three main themes of the symposium was entitled “**Music and dance in the cultural basin of the Black Sea**” and touched upon topics such as cultural interactions, fieldwork and gender binary, transformation processes, and migration. **Sevi Bayraktar** offered an insight into the reinforcement of gender binary in the realm of fieldwork research, carried out in the first half of the 20th Century in the region of the Black Sea, when (male) researchers visited the major coastal cities on the line between

Istanbul and Rize. With questionable methodologies, they omitted the female population who were settled in the hinterland, and thus reproduced the gender binary also in the categorisation of the traditional dances, that was formulated in a manner to fit the idea of national homogeneity. A counterpart to this was the presentation of the female mountain repertoire among the Romeyka speakers in the Pontic Alps by **Andrea Pascaru** who focused mainly on the lament, usually performed by women. She identified the role of women in this oral vocal tradition to be guardianship of the family's memories, oral archiving of collective memory, and also being a silent political voice affecting the society.

Many of the presentations unveiled the connections, interactions, and exchange among people from the Northern Turkish and Greek geographical areas that appeared due to migrations throughout the 20th century. **İdris Ersan Küçük**, for example, presented the *horon* tradition as a migrating one: the displacement of the Christian and Muslim population after the Lausanne exchange (1922–24) caused the traditions of the Turkish and Pontic/Greek societies to travel with the people. In this manner, these worked as a tool for integration and also for transforming “new” places into “old” ones. **Spiros Th. Delegos** offered an example of intertextuality and syncretism in the musico-cultural sphere with the case study of Ioannis Eitziridis (Yovan Tsaons) who migrated from Kastamonu first to Istanbul and later to Pireaus (Greece). He played the *tambouri*, a string instrument with a hybrid character, combining the Turkish *saz* and the Greek *bouzouki*, and was also part of a translocal musical cultural network, meeting and exchanging material with Ottoman musicians, forming a heteronomous style through *rebetiko*.

Abdullah Akat's presentation pointed out that the Black Sea basin is a diverse area of cultural interaction and transportation, which had been mainly investigated through focused research on a micro, local level, but it was rarely considered as a whole – the lack of holistic insight could be an incentive to rethink the Black Sea music and dance on a macro level and to connect the existing research. Akat also proposed to form a study subgroup on the Black Sea music and dance. This idea was backed up with the agreement of some researchers to form a research team focusing on interconnections in music and dance studies in the Black Sea area.

The second main theme of the symposium was entitled “**Dance and music as resistance, integration and separation**” and focused on questioning or rethinking historical events, social and political changes, identity forming, migration, as well as other topics. One of the sessions focused on feminist insights and practices in musical and dance activities. **Selda Öztürk** presented the musical activity of Syrian and Iraqi refugee women in Istanbul and Antep, through their collective and individual practices, which she had been researching since 2011. These women engage in choirs that allow them to express collectively, and challenge the negative impression of the refugees and transform this into a positive impression, empowering them as members of the community and musical performers, as well as allowing inter-community communication and social integration. This individual musical expression was found in the private realm where musical activity represents a way to cope with reality and a form of collective therapy. **Berna Kurt** on the other hand presented a feminist artistic project entitled *Dansöz* in which she took part as a dramatist that was performed and directed by Tümay Kılıçel. She identified this artistic process as an example of feminist solidarity and empowerment, and therefore a tool for resistance to the malestream artistic Eurocentric practices, rejecting hierarchies, inequalities and power relations. The performance problematises multiple identities, and leads to social emancipation of the body through “belly dance,” and empowers the suppressed body. Also, **Füsün Aşkar** focused on women dances, returning to the Black Sea and Trabzon. She focused on a case study of a successful attempt of staging the *horon*, which was predominantly presented as a male dance, for female dancers. This was done through processes of deconstruction and qualitative research, where

the dominant shape and artistic expression was transformed through an application of scientific knowledge. In this way, the existence of female traditional dances was acknowledged that allowed some concrete and aesthetic updates of life experiences.

Athena Katsanevaki presented her research on one community dance, danced by two linguistic/ethnic groups that called the *Chorlu Mare* (in Vlach language) or also *Tranos Choros* (in the Greek language), searching for similarities in societies of Blatsi and the Pindus mountains, that has allowed the two communities to establish a common and shared ritual that promoted the integration of one community with the other. In her presentation **Maja Bjelica** focused on the plurality of the role of the music of the Turkish Alevi, stressing two aspects: one was the Alevi's public performance of their ritual whirling practices, called *semah*, that can be understood as a possible agent of integration, that allowed the Alevi communities a certain amount of public recognition in Turkey. The other aspect she presented was the fact that Alevi musical practices allow them to form a safe communal, common space for their community members to meet and share their emotions and feelings thus fostering social cohesion.

Gergana Panova-Tekath discussed the role of Bulgarian folk dance in intercultural communication between different diasporas, refugees, and the host community through the concepts of "strange and stranger". In her presentation, she treated Bulgarian folk dance as a non-verbal communication tool, and showing three different ways that music and dance can act as an intercultural bridge by . Regarding this symposium theme, Gergana's inspirational presentation revealed how music and dance can provide both integration and separation – as she calls it "cultural strangeness", from a multicultural perspective. Similarly, also **Selena Rakočević** addressed traditional dances as mediums of both, integration and separation, in the dance practice of the Danube Gorge in Romania in the post-socialist era, among the Serbian and Romanian communities. Through a detailed analysis of the Romanian *brâu* and Serbian *kolo*, based on participant observation, interviews, and video material analysis, she identified similarities, but also obvious differences, that could be perceived as hallmarks of ethnic diversity. Thus, communal dancing reflects processes of both, socialisation, and othering.

Carol Silverman discussed Bulgarian wedding music by examining the political changes, restrictions, and resistance to these restrictions through the performative relationship between folk music, the market, and the state. Under the shadow of socialist, post-socialist, capitalist, and nationalist ideologies, Silverman shared the results of nearly 40 years of fieldwork, conveying the role of music as a resistance from a broad perspective in terms of historical, economic, and political processes, including contemporary media.

Muzaffer Sümbül discussed the changes in the socio-cultural structure of the Balkan immigrant communities that migrated from the Balkans to the Çukurova region since the last period of the Ottoman Empire, through dance and music practices. Sümbül interpreted the place of dance and music in the Balkan immigrant culture and the role of creating a new collective and identity through the concepts of integration, separation, and resistance by conveying the results of his ethnographic research in the region.

Kai Åberg evaluated Gypsy dances in terms of exoticism, stereotype, gender, identity, political ideologies, and dominant power, based on the data obtained from his nearly 25 years of fieldwork among Roma. Applying a critical approach, he suggested that orientalism existing within Europe should be evaluated – in his words "its orientalism needs to be exorcised," Åberg suggested that there is no uniform gypsy identity, therefore the musical identity of the Balkan gypsy dance and the musical research made accordingly should be considered as a constantly changing phenomenon.

Ivona Opetcheska Tatarcevska dwelt on the role of music as a symbolic and moving medium that was shared during the recent protests in Macedonia, “For Common Macedonia”, against “Tirana’s Platform”. She had observed that each protest exhibited a variety of musical choices including the national anthem, folk songs, sports-related motivational cheer songs, hippie songs, etc. She also observed that music was given a core role in terms of symbolizing and leading the intensity by using microphone beats resembling the heartbeat and the use of speaker-installed vehicles as the mascot of the protests. She concluded by emphasising that, more importantly, folk music was not the prominent image reflected through these protests but the selection of different sorts of music embracing the multicultural background of the urban character of the protestors.

Similarly, regarding the current dynamic political atmosphere in Macedonia due to the transitional process and debates on becoming a member of the European Union, **Velika Stojkova Serafimovska** focused on the role of music within the protests as a means of enhancing the cultural and collective memory of that social-political soundscape. She took into consideration the signals, noises, music, and slogans as the primary sounds and the latent impact on the collective memory such as the songs and videos that are being produced. Tackling music with its “social glue” function and as a “sonic act”, she focused on the aspects of transmitting political and social messages for struggles and to create the environment through collective participation. She especially emphasized how music becomes a tool of enhancing and manifesting communal identity and collective resistance, which are contested among the participants and against the authority within the soundscape of these urban public protests.

In the face of growing urban socio-political crises, **Andrianopoulou Panayiota** elaborated on the social movements continuing in Greece within the last decade that have indicated the spreading influence of traditional dance as an alternative political manifestation of resistance in terms of culture and heritage. She drew attention to the counter expression put forth using traditional dance and the activities of social groups using it against the policies and processes of commercialization, privatization, gentrification, and alike, holding a position of spatial and cultural defend. She shared her fieldwork in which she has taught dance courses and her ethnographic findings obtained from her respondents that showed that traditional dance was considered to be the crystallized form of endangered community values, the sense of solidarity, and revival.

Burcu Yıldız focused on the historical aspect of integration in the 78rpm records of Armenian immigrants from the Ottoman Empire in the USA in the early 20th century. While problematizing the tone-deafness of music researchers in Turkey regarding these recordings, she referred to the transcultural memory on a theoretical level and the multi-linguality of these recordings in order to emphasize their integrative character. Within the same historical fragment, **Nevin Şahin** shared her data on early 20th century music publication in Turkey, asserting the multilingual integration as well as the stylistic integration when the segregation of art music and folk music. Among the printed *fasıls* of Ottoman/Turkish music, she identified a diachronic tension in the changing terminology of genres. In a similar time frame, **Teja Turk** investigated the popularization of Slovenian traditional music through a transforming understanding of genres. She showed examples of how the tension between nationalistic discourse and popular culture through mass media reshaped polka into pop-folk. Putting political and ideological discourses into focus, **Gül Kaplan and Cenker Ekemen** contextualized the Praksis Music Band within the framework of the Gezi uprisings in Turkey. Analysing the uprising in relation to the Arab spring, they touched upon the function of music in integrating people of differing backgrounds into a culture of resistance, against the violation of human rights.

The third theme of the symposium was “**Performance places and spaces – how these are constructed**” and proved to be a very important and interesting topic, connecting accounts on performances, displacements, modernisation, performer-audience relations, among others. **Mehmet Öcal Özbilgin**

offered a thorough theoretical background to the understanding of space and place within choreology studies, offering an epistemological frame that understands the body in connection to space and culture. The place where the dance occurs can be accounted on as physical, emotional, and social space, but it is also a place of values, domination and orientation, distancing, and embodiment.

Some presentations concentrated on specific places and spaces of performance. **Eirini Loutzaki**, for example, presented the work of the Lyceum club of Greek Women that had a crucial role in preserving Greek traditional folklore, offering a chronological insight into their work, of which the antithetical aspect of the grandeur of the past and simplicity of the present was prominent. She presented stage or theatre as a place of fostering folk tradition. The folk-dance performance was introduced to the province in the 1960s, which helped to gain popularity. It took place in different spaces, mainly in theatres and big stages forming so-called mega events. **Marija Dumnić Vilotijević**, on the other hand, concentrated on the presentation of the local Serbian taverns, *kafane*, as specific cultural and popular soundscapes, through the analysis of musical events. In the taverns of the Skadarlija area of Beograd, participatory musical performances take place, based on folk music with improvised structure. Crucial to these events are the collaboration among musicians and the audience, and their mutual proximity, which makes these events collective in character. To the presentation she added an account of the current situation in the *kafane* during the pandemic. **Liz Mellish** and **Nick Green** provided an account of the open-air events, the village days, that create a space for community events in Romanian Banat. They presented a comparative analysis of approximately 80 events in the villages, that occurred between the years 2015 and 2019. They explained that the space used during such events is socially constructed by transforming an “everyday space” to a “special place” for the event to occur. They emphasised the focus on the event/dance space, and the character of the event’s programme being formed by local participation.

Iva Niemčić and **Joško Čaleta** presented the change of performing locations throughout the 20th century for local musical traditions: moving the performances of traditional singing such as *ojkanje* from an “authentic” setting to the stages had consequently also led to a change of the audience. Through modernization, this and similar traditions have become closer to the public, which also occurred through using the media technology and publishing on the internet, but consequently, the oral transmission between generations was mainly abandoned. The authors stress the importance of observing the consequences of the contemporary transposition of the stage to the internet due to the health crisis and social isolation.

Ana Petrović discussed the sonic and temporospatial construction of a specific form of space and place during recording processes in fieldwork, which she identified as certain performance spaces reflected through the sound recording. Her focus was on gender and how the performative space and the performance of women interlocutors differed from that of men within patriarchal environments and their spatial repercussions. Her examples of two female performers from her fieldwork conducted in Pešter, Serbia demonstrated that she, as the researcher, could get into a more intimate and informative bond with female participants, and, secondly, female performers performed in the private space and reflected very similar auditory narratives of being rather timid, self-diminished, etc. Unlike women, male performers’ “authoring of space” reflected being possessive, relaxed, etc., corresponding to the patriarchal gendered structures.

Ardian Ahmedaja’s presentation concentrated on the institutionalization of musical life after World War II with the impact of communist cultural policies and the public control of local music and dance during the communist era, exemplified by the National Folklore Festival (NFF) in Albania, and the multiple realities reflected through the female ballads performed and accompanied by *fyell*. His emphasis was on the intriguing cast involving a female singer and a male *fyell* player in 1978s NFF,

mainly because those ballads used to be performed without any instrumental accompaniment and gendered separation of men and women in everyday life did not match with that performance. He explained that since then *fyell* being played alongside female ballads has become a symbol and it has continued by being transformed and evolved in the following years until now. Considering the NFF as a resilient institutional performative space, he discussed the importance of the contrast between local practices and their stage representation and the dynamics between agents and agencies in terms of Bourdieu's concepts of field and habitus.

Pınar Kasapoğlu Akyol discussed how folk dances should be exhibited in Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Museums, through the examples of Fangango's Living Museum and "Leyli Nights" in Mardin Museum. She focused on the bond between performance as a part of the concept of ICH and museums as important means of safeguarding ICH, and especially on the new meaning attributed to museums where the issue of preservation and maintaining a holistic approach come together, that differentiates ICH museology from classical museology. From this view, she elaborated on museums as new performance spaces and traditional dance as a developing form of exhibiting ICH at museums. Noting that dance and music performances are still among the lesser exhibited forms of cultural practices at museums, she underlined the significance of folk dance performances at museums in terms of safeguarding, communicating, and sharing, and proposed that the ways of exhibiting such performances should be revised and developed.

Tanja Halužan shared the results of her research on a new singer-songwriter scene that has flourished in Zagreb for almost twenty years in which the character of the live performance space and the listening behaviour of the audience have created a specific scene. She mentioned the characteristics of the scene as the do-it-yourself approach of the performers, the physical and social importance of the intimate space showing itself within that DIY community, live music performances held in places such as cafes and libraries as part of DIY culture, and the consequential social interactions emerged within that scene. She especially drew attention to the intersection between the participatory listening and responses of the audience, instead of experiencing music as a background, and the potential of the space in which the experience was shared, which characterized the uniqueness of the scene.

Dilek C. & Aziz Ali Elyagutu focused on Caucasian folk dances performed in Turkey in Kars and Iğdır where their research was conducted. They tackled the subject in terms of the dynamic and changing nature of culture including folk dances. Considering the changes over time, they defined "old and new" dances. Classifying the current states of old dances into three categories, they demonstrated the sustenance and alteration process of folk dances in terms of their current incidence, changed forms, and availability. They also shared information about new types that have emerged since 1985, following the dance performance of the Azerbaijan State Ensemble in 1982, after which certain folk-dance groups imitated the dances they watched and recorded. Moreover, they explained that the emergence of new dances was also due to migration, passing by the elder generations who were the transmitters of the earlier dance forms, and the hardship of practicing tradition as embedded in social life because of assimilation, oppression, and cultural forgetting, organised festivals, and culture industry.

Marko Kölbl shed light on the Burgenland Croats as a minority community, and relatively new arrivals in Austria, in which he has conducted fieldwork about the musical aspect of the ethnic and transcultural identity of the community. He focused on the importance and function of Croatian popular music that has become more widespread and more popular, bridging the sense of modernity and the ethnic identification of being Croatian. He emphasized the potential of popular music allowing people to dance, creating the sense of modernity and ethnicity at the same time, the easy import of songs via online platforms, the extension of local music with the repertoire of the 1970s-1990s and

their incorporation into folk dances, the festive and ritual function of the songs, and the reinforcement of Croatian identity in the face of losing competence of language-speaking and singing.

Aleksandra Kuzman comparatively discussed how the Macedonian old-urban music tradition called *chalgia* has altered from the past to the present in terms of its changing contexts in relation to the performance space and the changing attitudes of the performers regarding their perception of the tradition. She demonstrated the changes of the performance spaces and places as the changing spatial and cultural contexts in the city, such as from private to public spheres, transitioning from informality to formality, from spontaneity to non-spontaneity, from the nonseparation between performers and the audience to their division. From the musical aspect, she stated that the use of instruments and the repertoire has changed as well as the acoustic and quiet environment of the past that has become non-acoustic and intensified with sounds. Considering the significance of *chalgia* culture with its urban, social, cultural, and ritual functions, Kuzman pointed out crucial comparisons between the earlier and current characteristics of *chalgia* as a changing yet sustaining socio-cultural performance.

Focusing on practices of folk music in socialist Bulgaria, **Ventsislav Dimov** discussed the folk music practices in media as a field of power. The power narrative behind the professional practices of non-professional local music practices standardized a style of cultivated folk music for broadcast, recordings, and concerts during the five decades of the communist period through Stalinist party slogans. Moving from media intermediaries to the stage and beyond as performance space, **Lozanka Peycheva** provided an account of Pirin Folk Festival, which celebrated the 28th edition in 2020 with the dominance of authored songs based on folklore. Different stages of the festival marked a move from traditional towards popular and from Bulgarian to Balkan, bringing in criticism on a variety of levels, the “folklore basis” being the most significant. Focusing on the performance space of HORO-teque in Bulgaria, **Dilyana Kurdova** discussed this phenomenon in relation to the discussions on revival of Bulgarian folklore dances. The motivation to meet for having fun and preserving folk dances intermingled in *horotekas* in the evolution of space into competition, a Balkan festival, inclusion of live music, and most importantly teaching of dance. Reflecting the pandemic effect of moving from actual spaces to an online sphere, **Daniela Ivanova-Nyberg** discussed the practices of Bulgarian folk dance on the internet. The significance of globalized Bulgarian identity both for digital learners and digital natives connected online spaces under dance tutorial videos, bringing together ethnomusicological and ethnochoreological questions about the new digital experiences enhanced by the pandemic.

Considering a music style through the perspective of a performance space, **Serkan Şener** shared the biographical narrative of Abdullah Nail Bayşu’s house. Giving examples from early *arabesk*, he showed the influence of the gatherings in this house on music production, the first stars of the style, and early recordings of these artists. **Irene Markoff**, through her experience of intersectionality and multilocality, provided an account of Bulgarian performance practices in Canada and their connections with Bulgaria. Questioning her positionality as a researcher and performer in terms of self-reflexivity, she led multifaceted discussions on methodology. In light of the research conducted under the direction of **Svanibor Pettan**, **Urša Šivic** connected the two axes of the symposium “Dance and music as resistance, integration and separation” and “Performance places and spaces – how these are constructed” in the performance practices of ethnic minority communities in Slovenia. Her interview data revealed how performing the traditional music of their ethnic identity helped the practitioners’ integration into both cultures and how moving beyond the traditional music of the ethnic minorities led to transnational outcomes and liberation of styles.

One of the highlights of the symposium was the panel entitled “**Methodological approaches for the musical culture and sounding/moving nature**” featuring four Turkish female scholars, visionaries in the field of environmental thinking, understanding the “eco” as the place, the environment, where

music and dance take part, forming soundscapes and choreoscapes. This panel tried to put forward an ecological, multispecies and intersensorial perspective in relation to sound, music, and dance. Based on this perspective, **Bengi Çakmak** presented the general framework of critical ecology, about which she stressed that there is a methodological need to be integrated into the field, which primarily deals with the understanding of co-existence and multiple interconnected ecosystems. **Suna Başlantı** exemplified the ecological perspective by focusing on the relationship between soundscape, intersensoriality, and music. She argued that sound, which has an effective role in the formation and revival of sonic memories, is a sensorial element of music practices in the Anatolian Eastern Black Sea region and directly affects the perception of music. **Aslı Kayhan** shared the potential advantages of mapping applications in investigating the connection between urban space and music by conveying the music mapping project over the soundscape-landscape connection. In the final presentation of the panel, **Belma Oğul** shared three new concepts in which she integrated dance with ecology, sound and multispecies. Deriving from ecomusicology, she coined the term “*ecochoreology*” that examines dance both within an ecosystem and as an ecosystem. Her new approach promises eye-opening insights for music and dance studies.

Some presentations, already mentioned, touched upon more than only one of the symposium themes. One of them was the paper of **Hamraz Lotfi Korun** who offered an insight into the musical creative environment of the Iranian musician Mohsen Namjoo. Being productive in the realm of non-religious, sensory, and emotional, his music is considered as “*haram*”, that is forbidden music. Living in the USA diaspora since 2009, the artist performed in concerts all over the world. Through proactively positioning himself on the internet the artist employs this new performing space to share his music without the need that the audience would know his religion politics or language.

The closing session included reports by **Belma Oğul** as well as the newcomers on the statistics of the virtual symposium, and the prominent topics of discussion and emerging ideas for the next symposia. The efforts of the local committee, the technical team and the executive committee were acknowledged mainly by the acting director **Mehmet Öcal Özbilgin**, emphasizing the desire to include participants from less represented countries of Southeastern Europe and the hope that we will come together in person for the next symposium. The two themes for the next symposium were chosen as “**Gender and sexuality in music and dance in Southeastern Europe**” and “**Music and dance in virtual communications.**” The third theme for the symposium will be determined by the local committee from Greece.