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## 41<sup>st</sup> CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR TRADITIONAL MUSIC

July 13–19, 2011, St. John's, New Foundland, Canada

A World Conference of the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) takes place every two years, if possible each one on a different continent. This year's in Canada (hosted by the Memorial University in St. John's) was, in many respects, similar to the last one in the Republic of South Africa (2009) and the next-to-the-last one in Vienna (2007). Its themes were so broad that they provided the possibility of presentation of nearly every paper's or panel's topic; there were also film projections and complementary music workshops. The conference topics were: 1) Indigenous Modernities; 2) Cross-cultural Approaches to the Study of the Voice; 3) Rethinking Ethnomusicology through the Gaze of Movement; 4) Atlantic Roots/Routes; 5) Dialogical Knowledge Production and Representation: Implications and Ethics; 6) Acoustic Ecology; 7) New Research. More than three hundred active participants were involved in these themes, which made of the conference, rather than a place of concentration of the sharing of knowledge, some sort of a trade fair of data, theories, methodologies, methods...

Naturally it is impossible to participate in the entire program or even in the important part of it (in a few days up to eight parallel sections of three or four papers took place), much less to report on it. The topic I was connected with, that is,

of dialogicity, had relatively broad repercussions. It was most often connected to a dialogue between researcher/s and informants (for whom the most varied expressions were used in various contexts and discourses; to a certain extent the dichotomy of knower and doer was also used); in addition, there often appeared the question of dialogicity between the scholar-author and his reader or between the scholar and the wider community. All of these angles gathered, for example, in the panel presentation *Dialogic Knowledge Production: Research Practices in Europe*; eight researchers presented projects of various types in which they participated and in which the question of dialogicity was basic. At random: Ian Russell of the Elphinstone Institute in Aberdeen spoke about research of music of Scottish travelers; the cornerstone of credibility was the fact that, as members of the research team, they also employed in the institute one of the travelers who basically designed and organized the research. Svanibor Pettan of Ljubljana described the involvement of his university with two projects, one of which deals with research of the oldest music found on the territory of Slovenia (a flute 50,000 to 60,000 years old) – and, thus, it is considered a certain kind of political question; the second project has its source in Pettan's research of the music of Kosovo Roma and in the form of a film he presented this very specific musical world which the Balkan war more or less destroyed.

The panel presentation in which I participated belongs in this thematic framework. Pavla Johnssonová and I demonstrated the reconstruction of

an experiment in which, with the aid of semiotic instruments, we attempted to find the answer to the question of how the process of communication between the author/performer of music and his audience proceeds. The starting point was the Bakhtin thesis about meaning arising from dialogue. Bakhtin connected us with the other panelists: Bozena Muszkalska of Wrocław, who introduced Bakhtin's theory more complexly, and Gerda Lechleitner of Vienna, who summarized this concept of dialogicity. The following discussion, the most comprehensive of all that we experienced in the conference, showed that dialogue is clearly perceived as a burning topic by many researchers.

In recent decades the topic of change or hybridity, here formulated as *Indigenous Modernities*, has run through all of the ethnomusicological conferences. Various broad theoretical frameworks which are enabled – even stimulated – by this theme could, of course, be traps for those who are not deeply rooted in field experience: a sprinkling of random information in a theoretical mold enables some sort of conclusions, but the possibility of generalization and reproducibility are negligible. This happened, for example, to the American doctoral student Jesse A. Johnson in his presentation “*Soundscapes of World Music: Postsocialist Possibilities and Traditional Music in South Moravia*.” Moravia was also in the title of another paper, “*The Inuit Voice in Moravian Music*” of Tom Gordon and others. In it they presented not only a brief history of the missions of the Moravian Brothers in Northern Labrador, but mainly a project trying for

a revival of the music of the songbook of this mission. The revival seems meanwhile to be very successful because, among other reasons, it brings back into use Inuktitut, an Inuit language which was, after the joining of Labrador to Canada in 1949, replaced on the official level by English. According to the presenters, the original autochthonous language reinforces the group identity of the Inuits; this was mentioned with reference to the well-known respect with which the Moravian Brothers dealt with the Inuits.

The keynote address, "The Intimate Distance of Indigenous Modernity" by Michelle Bidengo also dealt with the topic of Indigenous Modernity. In this address she described her experience with the Japanese concert tour of South American musicians playing the Pan flute. Bidengo, who also plays in the group, pondered the position of the musician playing "foreign music" (thus, the "intimate distance") and ways of construction of collective, primarily of national, identity; these ways are then reflected in how we relate to this foreignness.

During the conference there were various, relatively numerous, committed voices; committed mainly for the benefit of those who are not heard. This was also dealt with by the panel "Safeguarding Living Cultures – The State of Affairs as Regard the 2003 UNESCO Convention,"

which, however, ended up relatively powerless: voices of cultural organizations are, compared to state administrations, almost very weak. A similar theme was dealt with in the reflective paper of Adriana Helbig of Pittsburgh, "Reversing the Gaze: The Rise of Musical Tourism in Eastern Europe's Romani Settlements." In it, the author considered the ethic of "experiential tourism" to Romani settlements (compared to countless numbers of negatives, it is possible to put on the positive side of the scale the fact that most often Romani NGOs deal with this tourism and, thus, they can competently decide about economic help brought by such projects). Another very current question was a concrete joint project of the University of Pittsburgh and the Faculty of Humanities of Charles University in Prague, which is oriented not only toward theoretical, but, as far as possible, also at least a bit toward practical recognition of music of the Central European Roma. How to do it, though, so that American students are not, in the best case, tourists, in the worst, voyeurs? In the following discussion, Adriana Helbig received a few recommendations. It seems that, as usual, initiatives from the ground have a more pronounced potential to be successful than those from the top.

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