

EVENT REVIEW: THE XXXVI EUROPEAN SEMINAR IN ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

This review describes the XXXVI European Seminar in Ethnomusicology as a virtual event organized by colleagues. The event is important to all ethnomusicologists and people interested in the field of ethnomusicology globally. It is mainly to inform about the organization and the way of interactions among its members.

KEYWORDS

Event organization, Ethnomusicology, Europe, Scholarly traditions, Technology in ethnomusicology

The XXXVI European Seminar in Ethnomusicology was held from 13 to 18 September 2021 as a virtual conference (https://whova.com/portal/webapp/msee_202109/).

Normally, ESEM organizes a seminar per year and the XXXVI edition should have been held in 2020 at the University of Valladolid, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, but the COVID-19 pandemic forced the organizers to postpone it.

Founded in 1981 by Professor John Blacking as a European network for ethnomusicologists, ESEM welcomes scholars and topics from all over the world. It also functions as a platform for exchanging news on recent events, publications, and job offers (<http://esem-music.eu/about/>).

The program committee included Enrique Camara, Susana Moreno Fernandez (University of Valladolid, chairs), Laura Leante (Durham University), and Marko Kölbl (Universität für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Wien), and the seminar theme was *Ethnomusicology and Intangible Cultural Heritage in the 21st Century*. The aim of the seminar was to reflect on the concept of cultural heritage as historically constructed, re-elaborated, and transmitted in various ways. How the public and private initiatives have contributed and still contribute to preserve intangible cultural heritage (ICH)? From archives to festivals, there are many possibilities to do it. This also include technologies, social media, dynamics of large-scale commercialization, and touristification.

As mentioned in the call for papers: “For this conference, we welcome proposals that reflect on how the use of new technologies, internet, and social media has changed the systematization, preservation, and dissemination of music as intangible cultural heritage. The connections between the global production and consumption of music and local cultural heritage re-appropriation and re-elaboration may also be explored. We also want to encourage discussion of the tensions that arise, in a postcolonial world, between the ethnocentric concept of universal cultural heritage and the needs, goals, epistemologies, and ontologies of other cultures whose cultural property is being used and consumed. Decolonial approaches to the preservation and dissemination of culturally sensitive musical materials in archives and museums will be valued. Additionally, presentations

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that deal with folklorism, revival and spectacularisation of culture and how these processes dialogue with ethical concerns will be appreciated.”

The result has been a six-day seminar full of presentations: 21 paper sessions, more than 50 papers from all over the world (from China to Canada), one roundtable, a film session and, as usual since Blacking’s death, the John Blacking Memorial Lecture.

This year’s lecture was given by Professor Naila Ceribašić, a research advisor at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, Zagreb, and professor of ethnomusicology at the University of Zagreb. Naila Ceribašić has also been a representative of ICTM at UNESCO since 2011, and in that capacity, she had crucial roles in the UNESCO policies and practices around ICH. A perfect introduction to the seminar was a lecture entitled “Music as heritage: On do-it-yourself curators, culture bearers and ethnomusicologists in the context of experience economy, liquid governance, and other facets of late modernity.” Her contribution offered a deep insight into the role of do-it-yourself curators in the processes of nomination and safeguarding ICH. Issues such as money, intellectual property, access to global education and information system, and viability of the inscribed heritages were all discussed. Ceribašić also discussed the characteristics of music as a specific domain of ICH, as a recorded object or a process of recording, and as an encounter of experiences and memories, the complexity of identifying a community of practice, and of course the role music has in every society. Her lecture insisted on the crucial role of ethnomusicologists in UNESCO policies while advocating the need for an ethic and decolonized approach.

The distribution of the papers in the sessions was effective, leading to good debates and deep reflections.

Several papers were related to the role that states are having in the life of ICH from inventorying, to archiving, to creating formal educational programs. Do these processes help cultural heritage to be alive or do they freeze it in specific features hindering the normal adaptation that every tradition achieves when passing from a generation to the next?

UNESCO 2003 Convention and ethical principles are very clear, as all the regulations the states part of the convention should apply. The reality that emerged from several papers was often different from what is envisaged in the UNESCO policies. Additionally, ethnomusicologists should be more involved in local processes connected with the 2003 Convention, as was suggested by Tiago de Oliveira Pinto.

Many papers dealt with reinventions more than revitalization or safeguarding. This emerged especially in contributions related to tourism and commodification. Moving from the real life to the stage inevitably produces modifications in music, dance and related emotions, symbols, and meanings. Things can be extremely different from case to case. For example, in Portugal, luthiers complain about the inclusion of their violas in the national inventory, claiming that it freezes their art (from the paper of Rui Marques, Carlos Batista, and Jean-Yves Durand). In Goa, the recognition of the Ghumot as a heritage instrument is a way of liberation, ecological conscientization, and coexistence (in the paper of Susana Sardo). Both in music and in dance (to which the organizers devoted a special session), legacy, tradition, and sustainability are crucial but very delicate issues. We need to acknowledge that the changes occur from one generation to another, that some traditions change or are revived, and that some others die. At home or in migration, the processes of adaptation are crucial for the understanding of human cultural behaviors.

How can we manage the restitution of old recordings preserved in European archives, or understand if and when it must be done? Some traditions disappeared, while others have changed radically. At the same time, does it make sense to collect cultural heritages that are kept only in the memory of the elderly? For whom? Community-driven research is more and more needed if

we want not to become archaeologists and to detach ourselves once and for all from colonial attitudes.

Special attention around the decolonization debate in ethnomusicology was given in the roundtable chaired by Enrique Cámara de Landa on the second day of the seminar. Several ethnomusicologists from different European countries debated around the issue and stressed the need to take further steps toward decolonization not only in research but also in the academic world and in institutions dedicated to culture. Still, questions of hegemonies and representation in fieldwork and restitution are to be addressed. Interestingly, several papers gave good examples of decolonized fieldwork, as in the case of Ignazio Macchiarella's on Sardinian cultural heritage, where research has now been carried out for decades through dialogism.

I cannot conclude this report without mentioning the film session and the concert.

The film session took place on 15 September 2021. Chaired by Matías Isolabella, it featured Michael B. MacDonald, Professor and Cine-Ethnomusicologist. We watched together the film *And, And, And...*, which MacDonald produced in 2021, and then we discussed the efficacy of filmmaking in research and the need to involve the producers of the realities we study in the process of documentation. As a matter of fact, the film mixes shootings of MacDonalds with cell phone footage made by the protagonist of the film, as well as YouTube footage. Thanks to the possibilities offered by the Wohva platform, McDonald uploaded other three films we could see separately, to add material for reflection.

On Thursday, 16 September 2021, we had the opportunity to enjoy a Castilian Music Concert: "From Tradition to Recreation". To give a high-quality performance through the web, it had been previously recorded in the Palacio de Santa Cruz, Valladolid University's Rectoral palace. Wonderfully realized by Olaia Sánchez, it showed several examples of Castile music, from traditional music preserved in Cancioneros performed by *Dulzaineros de Tierra de Pinares* to authored songs performed by the music duo *Alicornio* and the duo formed by Jaime Vidal and Carlos Martín Aires. The first duo performs a repertoire of songs compiled almost entirely in the province of Valladolid, which they extracted from the Joaquín Díaz Foundation's sound library, as well as other songbooks and recordings of traditional music. The latter creates new songs with a strong emphasis on rhythm and traditional lyrics, adding melodies and harmonies influenced by other types of music to traditional styles and forms.

To conclude, it was an intense week full of exchanges and food for thought.

Next year, in September as usual, the XXXVII ESEM Seminar will take place in Graz, hosted by the Institute of Ethnomusicology of the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz/Austria (KUG).