

ICTM Study Group on Mediterranean Music Studies

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The Study Group “Anthropology of Music in Mediterranean Cultures” was founded in September 1992 on the initiative of Tullia Magrini (1950–2005) at the eponymously titled conference organized by the ICTM Italian National Committee at the Fondazione Olga e Ugo Levi di Venezia. Joining the Italian participants were ethnomusicologists Bruno Nettl, Philip Bohlman, and Martin Stokes, anthropologist John Davis, and historical musicologist Iain Fenlon.

My own initiation into the study group came some nine months later, at the 32nd ICTM World Conference in Berlin. I can time it almost to the moment: I had just presented the last paper of a panel in the afternoon of the first day on Wednesday, 16 July 1993. The conference was breaking for coffee and, as we gradually dispersed, I noticed a vibrant, dark-haired person, dressed in white, tentatively approaching me: it was Tullia Magrini, and she was clearly on a mission. Quickly introducing herself, she immediately launched into an animated monologue, of which I caught only the gist: a group of scholars had met the previous year under the auspices of the Fondazione Olga e Ugo Levi in Venice to consider music of the Mediterranean region from various disciplinary perspectives. They would meet again in 1995, this time to discuss past and present trends, all expenses paid. Would I like to join them? Of course I would. And so began my relationship with a person, a city, an institution, and a fluid organizational entity that provided the framework for a succession of scholarly encounters that would transform my intellectual outlook and orientation, opening up new worlds of scholarship, bringing into focus new and necessary connectivities, and introducing me to a community of sympathetic colleagues with whom I would form lasting bonds, both professional and personal, which continue to the present day.

The study group was approved by the Executive Board in June 1993. Its work can roughly be divided into three periods, according to who was chairing it at the time: from 1992 to 2005, it was chaired by Tullia Magrini (figure 1); from 2007 to 2014, by Marcello Sorce Keller; and since 2014, it has been chaired by me. The untimely

death of Tullia Magrini in June 2005 brought about an interim period (2005–2007) in which the study group was forced to regroup as it considered its future without the support of the Levi Foundation.

1992–2005: The Venice years

When Tullia Magrini initiated the study group in 1992, Mediterranean studies (and Mediterranean music studies in particular) were in their infancy, as yet to emerge as established academic fields with their own dedicated institutes, societies, and publishing forums. In this respect, as in so many others, her initiative was pioneering.

Until my initial meeting with Tullia, I had not particularly thought of myself as a scholar of Mediterranean music. I was affiliated at the time with the Study Group on Maqām and, like many scholars of the southern and eastern Mediterranean, my geo-cultural orientation flowed horizontally rather than vertically, from Iberia through the Maghreb, Turkey, the core Arab world, Iran, and the various “stans” of Central Asia. Bringing the Mediterranean into the equation was to join the dots, revealing historical connections between ancient and modern cultures and civilizations, crucial for present-day understanding; acknowledging the centrality of the Middle Sea (and its Seas) for musical transmission and cultural connections; and inspiring a new and enriched relationship with musical historiography and the intellectual history of ethnomusicology.

My initial encounter with Tullia was, as it turned out, typical. It was quickly followed by an extensive correspondence (at first, as I recall, on paper, moving as soon as was technically feasible to email) about my proposed contribution and the logistics of my travel and stay in Venice so that, by the time I first set foot on the vaporetto to take the magical journey (always at night) down the Grand Canal to disembark at Accademia, the stop for the Palazzo Giustinian Lolin, home of the Levi Foundation, I felt I was arriving at a place to which



Figure 1. Tullia Magrini at the 6th meeting of the study group.
Venice, 10 June 2004
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I already in some way belonged, and which I already half-knew.

These were the golden years of the study group. The triennial meetings hosted by the Levi Foundation were, in current ICTM terminology, more like colloquia than symposia. Each of the fifteen to eighteen or so participants seated at the long seminar table had been invited personally by Tullia, and we participated as guests of the Levi Foundation, whose hospitality included international travel, accommodation in the adjacent Forresteria, and meals throughout our stay. Each presenter was given a generous slot of some thirty or forty minutes as needed, followed by intensive discussions which continued through long lunch breaks, dinners, and evening strolls.

Tullia's carefully constructed programmes centred on the following topics:

- 1992: Anthropology of music in Mediterranean cultures
- 1995: Past and present: Perspectives for the anthropology of Mediterranean music
- 1998: Music as representation of gender in Mediterranean cultures
- 2001: Trends and processes in today's Mediterranean musical cultures
- 2004: Music in Mediterranean islands.

An additional meeting on the theme "Musicisti del mediterraneo—Storia e antropologia" (Musicians in the Mediterranean—History and anthropology) was held

in 1996 at the University of Bari and the Templars' Hall in Molfetta, in conjunction with the conference and festival on the same theme organized by Dinko Fabris and his colleagues at the University of Bari.

PUBLICATION INITIATIVES, 1993–2006

Alongside this conference schedule, Tullia maintained a consistent flow of publishing initiatives. These spanned a variety of formats, from traditional print journal and edited volume to the then (in 1996) novel multimedia Internet format.

Selected papers from the first two meetings (1992 and 1995) were published in the journal of the Levi Foundation, *Musica e storia*, in 1993 (Magrini 1993) and 1997.

In 1996, Tullia launched the study group's multimedia, peer-reviewed, online journal *Music and Anthropology: Journal of Musical Anthropology of the Mediterranean*, hosted by the University of Bologna. The online format was a pioneering concept for the humanities at the time (including, remarkably, musical scholarship, for which the multimedia format was so obviously appropriate). Edited by Tullia Magrini with the support of an international editorial board and webmaster Giuliana Fugazzotto, *Music and Anthropology (M&A)* ran for eleven annual issues (1996–2006), and included specially commissioned articles and reviews, as well as selected study-group presentations. The final issue 11 (2006) was a special issue on Turkey edited by Martin Stokes. In her foreword to the journal (updated in

2004), Tullia describes its geo-cultural focus and, by implication, that of the study group as a whole:

The “Mediterranean” ... signifies not merely a geographical and historical region, but also a metaphorical entity with constructed and contested boundaries, cultures, and identities. Mediterranean musics offer special challenges to disciplines situated at the intersection of music and anthropology: in this crucial region, musics of all kinds and throughout the world found their origins, came into contact, underwent changes, and often were dispersed, despite maintaining a distinctive identity and evolving as a symbol of difference, local history, and cultural values. By drawing attention to the complex phenomena that characterize Mediterranean musics, *M&A* aims to foster research in the region and to broaden the range of approaches to music and musical practices beyond the region’s borders. (Magrini 2004)

The eleven issues of the journal, as well as programmes and reports of study-group meetings to 2004 can be accessed via the main page: <https://www.umbc.edu/MA/>.

In 2003, Tullia published the edited volume *Music and Gender: Perspectives from the Mediterranean*, in the Chicago Studies in Ethnomusicology Series of University of Chicago Press, based on papers presented at the fourth meeting of the study group in 1998. Her introductory essay “Studying Music in Mediterranean Cultures” is a classic in the musical literature on the Mediterranean.

2005–2007: In memoriam Tullia Magrini

After a protracted illness, Tullia Magrini passed away on 24 July 2005. For many of us, our initial shock and sadness found release in conversations at the ICTM world conference in Sheffield, UK (3–10 August 2005). There was a widely felt need for the study group to reconvene to take stock and consider the options for the future. It was in this context that I proposed the idea of hosting an ICTM colloquium on a theme relevant to the study group at the University of Cambridge. Meanwhile, it emerged that parallel discussions were taking place amongst Tullia’s colleagues at the Levi Foundation and the University of Bologna with a view to hosting a special meeting in her memory. Eventually I established contact with Marcello Sorce Keller, who had been invited to co-ordinate the Italian event, and we agreed that since the memorial meeting was planned for 2007, the Cambridge colloquium should ideally take place a year later, in 2008.

Thus the seventh meeting of the study group, on “Cosmopolitan cities and migrant musics” (based on topics Tullia had been considering for that year), was dedicated to the memory of Tullia Magrini. Held in June 2007, this was to be the last meeting of the study

group hosted by the Levi Foundation. Dignitaries from that institution and representatives from the University of Bologna were joined by ten invited speakers including Bruno Nettl, who delivered the keynote address. At a special roundtable meeting, “Remembering Tullia and planning for the future,” held on the last morning, the study group learnt that due to financial constraints, the Levi Foundation had been forced to reconsider its programme, and would no longer be able to host our meetings. At the same meeting, Marcello Sorce Keller was elected the new study-group chair, and I was elected vice chair.

A book dedicated to the memory of Tullia Magrini, edited by Philip V. Bohlman, Marcello Sorce Keller, and Loris Azzaroni, with contributions from some of Tullia’s close colleagues, was published in 2009 by the publishing house of the University of Bologna.

2007–2014: Cambridge – Malta – Portugal

Thus began a new era for the study group, characterized by renewed and intensive activity, including new venues, new thematic directions, and expanded participation. Between 2008 and 2014, the study group held five meetings in three different countries. These included two colloquia, in Cambridge (2008) and Portel (2011); and three symposia, in Valetta (2010), Lisbon (2012), and Cambridge (2014).

COLLOQUIA IN CAMBRIDGE (2008) AND PORTEL (2011)

In July 2008, I organized the eighteenth ICTM Colloquium “Musical exodus: Al-Andalus and its Jewish diasporas” at Corpus Christi College, University of Cambridge. The colloquium was funded by the Rothschild Foundation’s Jewish Studies in Europe Programme, with support from Cambridge University’s Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities (CRASSH), the Faculty of Music, and Corpus Christi College. The theme was interpreted inclusively, and colleagues who were not specialists in Jewish music were encouraged to contribute. The programme featured eighteen invited presenters, with Stephen Blum as discussant. A highlight of the colloquium was a guided visit to the Taylor-Schechter Cairo Genizah Collection in the Cambridge University Library. A volume taking the name of the colloquium, based on selected presentations with several additional contributions, was published in the series *Europea: Ethnomusicologies and Modernities* in 2015 (Davis 2015).

In December 2011, Marcello Sorce Keller organized the 26th ICTM Colloquium, “Pan-Mediterranean poetic

competitions and their music: Historical perspectives and contemporary practice,” in Portel Town Hall in Portugal. Participants from Portugal, Italy, Malta, and the UK spoke on competitive musical practices in mainland Italy, Sardinia, Corsica, Albania, Portugal, and Brazil, and Salwa El-Shawan Castelo-Branco delivered the concluding remarks.

SYMPOSIA IN VALETTA (2010), LISBON (2012), AND CAMBRIDGE (2014)

In July 2010, the study group moved to Valetta, Malta, at the invitation of Simon Merceica of the Mediterranean Institute, University of Malta, for its eighth symposium on the theme “Musical translations across the Mediterranean.” This was the first meeting of the study group in which participants were responsible for covering their individual expenses. The twenty-one presentations included a keynote by Philip Bohlman with Martin Stokes as discussant, and the meeting was followed by a day trip to the island of Gozo. A special issue of the Institute’s *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* was devoted to selected papers presented at the symposium (Ciantar and Fabbri 2012).

The ninth symposium on the theme “Musical insularity: How it favours conservation, how it triggers innovation” took place in July 2012 in Lisbon, Portugal, at the invitation of Salwa El-Shawan Castelo Branco of INET-MD (Instituto de Etnomusicologia – Centro de Estudos de Musica e Danca), Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humana, Universidade Nova de Lisboa. Once again, twenty-one international participants gave presentations.

In June 2014, the tenth symposium on the theme “Mysticism, magic and the supernatural in Mediterranean music” took place in St. John’s College Divinity School, University of Cambridge, at the invitation of Stefano Castelvechi. Allan Marett gave the keynote “Mysticism, magic and supernatural in music beyond the Mediterranean,” and Gary Tomlinson closed the proceedings as discussant.

This period saw two other important developments for the study group.

1. A new name

At the business meeting held at the 41st ICTM World Conference at St. John’s, Newfoundland, in July 2011, the study group approved Marcello Sorce Keller’s proposal to change its name to Mediterranean Music Studies (MMS) to reflect its multidisciplinary orientation. As Marcello explained in his report of the meeting:

The change of name is no simple cosmetic detail. It wishes to suggest that, in the study of Mediterranean music, anthropology, ethnomusicology, and history

are of equal and paramount importance. Moreover the Study Group wishes to be open to all other disciplines and approaches that may contribute to the understanding of musical interactions in the Mediterranean area. (Sorce Keller 2011)

2. A new online journal/website

The second development concerned the study group’s online journal, *M&A: Journal of Musical Anthropology of the Mediterranean*, whose latest issue, edited by Martin Stokes, had appeared in 2006. With Martin’s agreement, the journal was disbanded, and the newly conceived online forum *Mediterranean Music Studies (MMS)* (2010–2014) was launched under Marcello’s editorship with the assistance of study-group colleague and former webmaster for *Music and Anthropology*, Giuliana Fugazzotto. Further support was provided by a new editorial board and a board of advisors. Introducing this new initiative in an essay entitled “MMS in a Nutshell,” Marcello explains: “MMS is not conceived as a journal but, rather, a location where scholarly contributions appear as they become available, when so dependent on multimedia as to make it appropriate to publish them here rather than on paper” (<http://mms.ictmusic.org>). In addition to hosting new, original multimedia contributions, MMS would host multimedia adjuncts to paper publications related to the study group’s activities; information about Mediterranean centres, journals, and research initiatives; and announcements and reports about the study group’s activities (symposia, colloquia, publications, etc).

2014–2020: Naples (2016), Essaouira (2018), Tangier (2020)

At the 2014 symposium in Cambridge, Marcello Sorce Keller announced his intention to step down as chair, and his proposal that I replace him was approved at the business meeting. I was immediately faced with two pressing administrative tasks, which I carried out with the assistance of Cassandre Balosso-Bardin, elected in 2015 as the study group’s first secretary. Both tasks would have been impossible without the indefatigable help and support of ICTM Executive Assistant Carlos Yoder.

1. A study group mailing list

The first task was to compile a list of study-group members and create a mailing list. This involved tracking down and collating the email addresses of all the participants in the symposia and colloquia of the study group since 1992, and inviting those who did not wish to be included to unsubscribe.

2. A new study-group website

Having stepped down as chair, Marcello no longer wished to continue editing and maintaining the study-group website. After exploring various alternative possibilities, we decided to create a new Mediterranean Music Studies website on the main ICTM website in line with the practice of other study groups. Working closely with Carlos Yoder during the summer of 2015, we transferred the material relating directly to the study group from the former MMS website onto the ICTM platform, adapting it and adding new material as necessary. Then, liaising with Marcello, Carlos transferred the old MMS website in its entirety to the ICTM website where it is preserved for archival purposes. It can be accessed via the link <http://mms.ictmusic.org> on the study-group home page.

TOWARDS NORTH AFRICA

On accepting my position as study-group chair, I affirmed my commitment to build on Marcello Sorce Keller's efforts to widen participation in the study group and, in particular, to remedying the almost total lack of representation of colleagues from the Maghreb and much of the eastern Mediterranean. This was not a new idea: it had been raised in previous business meetings. However, factors such as differences in professional cultures, language barriers, and above all, the prohibitive cost for our Maghrebi colleagues of attending conferences in Europe, had as yet proved insurmountable obstacles. Meanwhile, bureaucratic obstacles and political instability in the region, especially since 2011, had so far thwarted our attempts to hold meetings in the Maghreb.

Two international conferences on music of the Maghreb, hosted by colleagues in Tunisia and Algeria, respectively, provided timely opportunities to promote the work of the study group more widely. The first, in December 2014, was organized by Anas Ghrab at the Centre des Musiques Arabes et Méditerranéennes (CMAM) in "Ennejma Ezzahra"—the spectacular Alhambra-style palace built by Rodolphe d'Erlanger in Sidi Bou Said, Tunisia. The second, in December 2015, was organized by Maya Saidani in Constantine, Algeria (Arabic capital of culture for 2015). Meanwhile, despite the enthusiastic support of our Tunisian colleagues, attempts by the study group to convene a symposium at the CMAM were thwarted by changes in the centre's directorship following successive changes of government. (Between 2011 and 2019 Tunisia experienced eleven changes of government under eight different prime ministers.)

In 2015, following an introduction by my former student, Salvatore Morra, I was approached by Dinko Fabris, president of the International Musicological

Society (IMS), with a proposal to host a joint ICTM–MMS / IMS symposium in Naples. Dinko explained that he intended the event to serve as a springboard for the creation of a "sister" Mediterranean music study group for the IMS. In the spring of 2015, he generously invited me to Naples to give a seminar at the Conservatorio San Pietro a Majella, thus creating the perfect opportunity to discuss the logistics of hosting our prospective joint symposium there. At the business meeting held at the 43rd ICTM World Conference in Astana in July 2015, the study group agreed to host the 11th symposium jointly with the IMS in Naples in June 2016. After some discussion the study group decided on the theme "Narratives of movement," which was duly accepted by our IMS partners.

In June 2016, the study group held its 11th symposium and first joint symposium with the IMS in Naples on the theme "Musicians in the Mediterranean: Narratives of movement." The symposium was hosted by the Conservatorio San Pietro a Majella and the Università L'Orientale, with the support of the International Association for Mediterranean and Oriental Studies (ISMEO). The programme committee was co-chaired by Dinko Fabris and myself, with Alessandra Ciucci and Salvatore Morra also representing ICTM. Salvatore, whose home was in Naples, liaised on behalf of the study group with Dinko Fabris, Adriano Rossi, president of ISMEO, and the Neapolitan host institutions.

The programme consisted of eight ICTM panels across the four mornings of the symposium and four ICTM/IMS joint panels, comprising a larger number of shorter presentations, in the afternoons. The study group was represented by more than fifty participants, including two Maghrebi colleagues who were attending for the first time. The panels were interspersed by a series of lunchtime and early evening lecture recitals: these included a recital on the rarely heard *'ūd 'arbī* (four-stringed Tunisian lute) by Abir Ayadī, and songs and instrumental music from Anatolia performed by Özlem Doğuş Varlı and Mahmut Cemal Sari. The study group was treated to unprecedented heights of hospitality by our Neapolitan hosts, including exquisitely presented welcoming and farewell concerts and dinners held in various Neapolitan palaces, and a private viewing of Sergio Ragni's Gioachino Rossini collection, housed in the former seventeenth-century palace Villa Belvedere.

The 2016 study-group business meeting was held in parallel with the inaugural meeting of the new IMS study group (which, somewhat confusingly, also took the name Mediterranean Music Studies). At the ICTM study group meeting, Alessandra Ciucci was elected study group vice chair, and Oded Erez was elected secretary, taking over from Cassandre Balosso-Bardin. The study group reaffirmed its commitment



Figure 2. Ruth Davis, André Azoulay, and Alessandra Ciucci during the welcoming speech, 12th symposium of the study group. Essaouira, 19 June 2018 (photo by Lhoussain Simour).

to exploring possibilities to hold the next symposium in the Maghreb.

INTO NORTH AFRICA

The breakthrough came in 2017 thanks to the initiative of Alessandra Ciucci who, working through her research consultant (who prefers to remain anonymous), arranged for the study group to hold the 2018 symposium in Essaouira on the Atlantic coast of Morocco, under the auspices of the Association Essaouira-Mogador. At the beginning of January 2018, Alessandra and I met with André Azoulay, senior adviser to King Mohammed VI of Morocco and father of Audrey Azoulay, director-general of UNESCO, in the king's palace in Rabat. André Azoulay is the founding president of the Association Essaouira-Mogador, an organization dedicated to preserving and promoting Essaouira's rich multicultural heritage, including that of its vanished, yet once majority Jewish population. As part of its commitment to cultural diplomacy, the association hosts an annual cycle of national and international music festivals including the Gnawa World Music Festival in June.

In June 2018, some sixty study-group participants, including twelve colleagues from the Maghreb, met in the beautiful surroundings of Dar Souiri—home of the Association Essaouira-Mogador—for the 12th symposium on “Music and sound at the Mediterranean crossroads.” This was the first meeting of the study group to be held in a North African country. André Azoulay was present for the duration of the symposium and partici-

pated in as many of the sessions as his schedule allowed (figure 2). The symposium was generously supported by a “Global Humanities Project Grant” from Columbia University, and the ICTM Study Group allowance, then in its inaugural year, provided indispensable support for several individual presenters. The dates of the symposium overlapped with those of the Gnawa World Music Festival, and symposium participants took part in the opening parade and were given passes to attend the evening concerts. Several Gnawa musicians likewise attended some of the symposium sessions and participated in the discussions. In addition, the study group was treated to a welcoming dinner and to evening concerts by local *chgouri* musicians and an Aissawa troupe from Essaouira. A highlight of the symposium was a guided visit by Azoulay to the newly-restored Simon Attias synagogue, renamed Bayt Dakira (House of memory), which had been converted into a museum and study centre devoted to Essaouira's Jewish heritage. Azoulay warmly invited the study group to consider the new study centre as its permanent home in Essaouira.

The volume *Music and Encounter at the Mediterranean Crossroads: A Sea of Voices*, co-edited by Ruth F. Davis and Brian Oberlander, based on selected presentations at Essaouira, will be published by Routledge in 2022.

At the 2018 business meeting, the study group agreed to consolidate and build upon the Maghrebi participation achieved at Essaouira by holding the next symposium in a North African country, if possible. A proposal by our Tunisian colleagues to host the 2020

symposium at the CMAM in Sidi Bou Said, Tunisia, unfortunately had to be abandoned when national elections were announced for the end of 2019. Instead, the study group accepted the timely invitation by Vanessa Paloma Elbaz to organize the thirteenth symposium on the theme “Music, power, and space: A Mediterranean perspective” in Tangier, Morocco, hosted by the Tangier American Legation Institute for Moroccan Studies and the Kasbah Museum of Mediterranean Cultures. The symposium, originally scheduled for 15–20 June 2020 and twice postponed due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, is planned to be held virtually, 23–28 September 2021.

Once again, the programme includes a sizeable presence of scholars from the Maghreb and the wider Mediterranean region. Confirmed highlights include a pre-recorded concert of Arabo-Andalusian music produced specially for the symposium by the Tamsamani Orchestra of Tetouan, with English commentary by the lead singer, Zaineb Afailal, filmed in the historic building of the School of Traditional Crafts and National Arts in Tetouan. The symposium will also host the world premiere of Antonio Baldassarre’s film *Mussem*, providing an emic perspective on the ritual activities of a Moroccan Sufi community during celebrations for the anniversary of the Prophet Muhammad.

STUDY-GROUP BLOG

In May 2019, following an enthusiastic response to the idea proposed at the 2018 business meeting, the Mediterranean Music Studies Blog (<https://mediterranean.music.blog>) was launched with the aim of continuing the conversations, debates, and collaborations arising from the 2018 symposium. Edited by Tom Western, with the support of Oded Erez, Sonja Kieser, and Maria M. Rijo Lopes da Cunha, the blog presents itself as “a space for conversation and community—hosting pieces of research across a variety of media, as well as reports and reflections from fieldwork, and news of events relating to study group interests.”

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