

Some Reflections Concerning the Study Group on Analysis and Systematization of Folk Music and Other Early Study Groups

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Study groups and their importance

From the 1960s, study groups started to play an increasingly important role in speeding up the development of research within the Council. Naturally, it is difficult to compare them at the early stages with the much greater role that they play today, with a multitude of specialized study groups, changing focus from the largely European and North American area in the beginning to worldwide activities that cover Asia, Latin America, Africa, and Oceania, which characterize them today.

Within the International Folk Music Council at the end of the 1950s, some rather essential theoretical as well as organizational ideas came into discussion, among them the question whether the often-organized international music festivals accompanying the annual conferences fulfilled the demands of members and were well coordinated with the conferences and their scholarly programmes? The growing membership and the increasing number of countries participating in IFMC provided the office in London with new tasks. The generally growing interest in folk music had brought to the conferences not only those interested in scholarly and actual problems in the field, but also those who were interested mainly as tourists in organized folklore undertakings and excursions, quite apart from the conference itself.

Although an integral part of the events for years, discussions tried to find new approaches in the work of the IFMC and to identify problems connected with the research interests of the newly participating countries. These deliberations can be briefly characterized as changing from folk-music studies, folklore, etc., to developing programmes of ethnomusicology and expanding to sociocultural and anthropological views (especially in the USA), changing the ideas and developments of our field. It seemed to be essential to find solutions that not only met the demands within the framework of the Executive Board and some commissions (such as those for radio and folk dance), the meetings of national committees, and liaison officers. Namely, the changing relations with other international organizations

also required the development of activities and cooperation, as in the case of UNESCO, the International Musicological Society, International Council of Museums, folklore organizations, as well as various ethnographical and ethnological institutes.

One of the initiatives considered in the late 1950s and 1960s was to establish thematic commissions, which seem to be the starting point of the idea for establishing study groups. These commissions could work and meet separately, in addition to the conferences—which remained the principal scholarly gatherings within the Council—and they could concentrate their activities in special working groups. The Executive Board discussed the ideas and practices proposed by the committees, sometimes endorsing them, depending on their significance and the possibilities of implementation. The ideas themselves, as well as their subject matter, were frequently initiated by those scholars who were interested in working on some new specific questions that arose at the time, particularly as new views on folk and traditional music came into use.

Folk dance was one of the areas that found its place in the long run of conferences. Members were aware that folk dance and folk music are very close and inseparably connected fields, but folk dance was often not well addressed in the framework of typical conferences. Actual dance music had become more and more influenced by non-European genres, had gained a role in popular culture, and was increasingly gaining momentum in scholarship. Those who were involved in dance research and closely connected with folk music did not have their own special scholarly organization for dance. That was also the reason why the newly developing field of ethnochoreology and those engaged in it sought to find within the framework of the Council various supportive possibilities for the establishment of some sort of special organization. Thanks to the internationally shared areas and ideas within the Council, popular music and dance, including jazz, was also being understood as a kind of “folk music,” hence, acquiring a special place in music cultures. To gain a better understanding of these interrelationships, it seemed quite

acceptable in our concept of traditional folk music to alter research possibilities.

After an open discussion in 1962 in Gottwaldov, a commission chaired by Felix Hoerburger became a “bureau” with a focus on folk dance. This was how in 1962 the first steps were taken for the future establishment of study groups. The importance of dance was reflected after many years of the existence of the Study Group on Ethnochoreology in that it eventually expanded to create four different sub-groups. In 2018, that study group organized its 30th symposium on dance, having 170 members from 45 countries. The Study Group on Ethnochoreology and its sub-groups (see chapter in this volume) reflect their important role in the history of the Council over many decades.

In the early 1960s, we can see that the changes started with dance and other special fields, asking for similar possibilities within the framework of the Council in order to gain special conditions to organize meetings on their own. They reflected particular scholarly, as well as sociocultural views in the development of ethnomusicology. In general, we can state that such new breezes came from initiatives, views, and ideas, from both inside and outside of the Council. They started a dialogue at a time when “study groups” were starting the long, complicated, and difficult road to establishment.

The beginning of study groups

At the time of the beginning of study groups, the initiative for these projects was taken in countries where special research was practised that sought a more international comparative and corrective procedure, in order to transcend national boundaries and develop multinational and worldwide concepts. This means that the Council became a platform for the rapidly expanding internationalization processes of actual research programmes that were evolving important aspects to be discussed in larger groups of ethnomusicologists. This particularly touched those with different theoretical outlooks when viewing traditional music genres and cultural areas. From this point of view, study groups played an essential role in the development of the Council from the 1960s on. Study groups provided a framework for the improvements of disciplinary directions advocated by their executives and members. The ideas and the programmes of the study groups were subject to presentation and ratification by the Executive Board.

After the study groups were ratified, their executives were considered fully competent to discuss and align the development of their scholarly units and the administrative areas concerning their programme, such as

how often and where they would meet, how they would handle publications and editorial issues associated with them, etc. They were in charge of communication between the study-group membership and the Executive Board. Study groups did not receive financial support from the Executive Board.

These were some of the general starting points. Other, more important aspects were their scholarly programmes, and their role and meaning in the development of the IFMC, as well as in ethnomusicology at large. Each group initially had specific challenges as well as accomplishments, taking into account their character, potential, conceptions, and the results they sought.

Let me take a closer look at an early study group in which I was actively involved from the beginning to its end. Its research focus was analysis and systematization of folk music.

The Study Group on Analysis and Systematization of Folk Music

One of the old ways of evaluating folk songs and folk music concerned classification from the aspect of structure and conceptualization, rather than as being “simple” or “primitive” in comparison to Western art music, a view that was prevalent in historical musicology. In general, there was a lack of analytical views and systems considering folk or traditional music as a distinctive and independent sociocultural subject. Therefore, one of the essential tasks was to document the characteristic features of folk music as a worldwide, but much differentiated, phenomenon. It was an international as well as a national concern to understand folk music, especially its specific national and cultural development.

A series of meetings were held in the 1960s in Czechoslovakia, alternating between Bratislava, Brno, and Prague, to discover and compare classification systems to gain analytical data for the desired classification procedures. After more than six unsuccessful sessions that attempted to find common solutions for Slovak and Czech folk songs, a more international way seemed to be more fruitful. The problem raised additional attention in discussions at the 1962 IFMC conference held in Gottwaldov. A proposal for featuring analysis and classification as a leading topic for the 1964 conference in Budapest also received approval by the president of the IFMC, Zoltán Kodály, who was participating in the Gottwaldov conference.

The resulting publication from the conference in Budapest appeared as a second part of the 1965 *JIFMC*, namely the *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 7/1–4 (1965). It consists of two sections: the first on “folk music and music history (pp. 11–209); the



Figure 1. Participants of the meeting of the Study Group on Analysis and Systematization of Folk Music: Valens Vodusek, Margareta Jersild, Ludwik Bielawski, Wiegand Stief, Hartmut Braun, Ilse Deutsch, Jan Steszewski, Julijan Strajnar. Bled (Slovenia, Yugoslavia), 1971 (photo courtesy of Walter Deutsch).

second on “methods of classification and lexicographical arrangements of tunes in folk music collections (pp. 213–355). The latter section contains fifteen papers on classification from many cultural areas, spanning from the Middle East to northern Europe to Japan, with a multitude of methods, from conventional analytical ones to those involving computer programmes. A paper intending to compare different classification systems could not be read at the conference because of the absence of the author, but was later published in the *JIFMC* (Elscheková 1966).¹

The general discussions started at the conference in Budapest and various systems of classification were presented during two sessions. The first session featured paper presentations; the second was a meeting of interested participants which would be continued at future events. At the same time, I presented a film on making the Slovak bagpipe, and František Poloczek, the leader of the Department of Ethnomusicology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, took part in the second session

concerning discussion, where he gave an invitation to meet at a special conference in Bratislava in the following year. This was accepted by the Executive Board, and Karel Vetterl was appointed by the Board as the first chair to lead the study group, although he could not take part in the first three meetings of the group.

Meetings and resulting publications are listed below:

1. Bratislava, Czechoslovakia (1965). Invitation of the Institute of Musicology, Slovak Academy of Sciences. Papers published in Elschek and Stockmann (1969)
2. Vienna, Austria (1966). Invitation of the Institut für Volksmusikforschung, Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst
3. Radziejowice, Poland (1967). Invitation of the Institute of Arts, Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. Papers published in Stockmann and Steszewski (1973)
4. Stockholm, Sweden (1969). Invitation of Svenskt Visarkiv. Papers published in Stockmann and Steszewski (1973)
5. Bled, Yugoslavia (1971; [figure 1](#)). Invitation of the Folklore Institute. Papers published in Deutsch (1974) ([figure 2](#))
6. Krpáčová, Czechoslovakia (1975). Invitation of the Department of Ethnomusicology, Slovak

¹ An earlier publication was published by the same author with similar goals, but even more challenging comparative content (Elscheková 1963). We must also note how analytical views have changed (e.g., Tilley 2018). The International Workshop on Folk Music Analysis was held in June 2018 in Thessaloniki, Greece, and presented numerous different technologies and concepts.

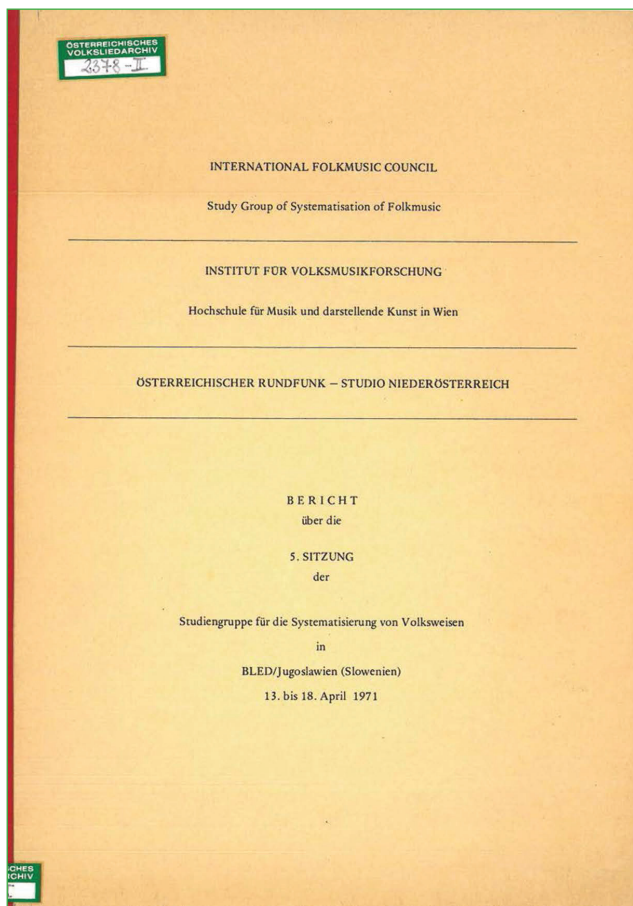


Figure 2. Cover page of the report about the 5th symposium of the IFMC Study Group on Systematization of Folk Music, which took place in Bled, Slovenia, Yugoslavia, in 1971. Vienna: Österreichisches Volksliedarchiv, 2378-II (photo courtesy of Wather Deutsch and Erna Ströbitzer).

- Academy of Sciences. Papers published in Elsček (1975)
7. Debrecen, Hungary (1978). Invitation of the Institute of Musicology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Papers published in Ujfalussy (1978)
 8. Weimar, German Democratic Republic (1981). Invitation of the ICTM National Committee of the German Democratic Republic and the Hochschule für Musik in Weimar²
 9. Pürgg, Austria (1983). Invitation of the Institut für Musikethnologie, Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst in Graz. Papers published in Elsček (1990)
 10. Freiburg im Breisgau, Federal Republic of Germany (1987). Invitation of the Deutsches Volksliedarchiv. Papers published in Braun (1990)
 11. Santiago de Compostela, Spain (1990). Invitation of the Institute for the Galician Language, University of Santiago de Compostela.

2 Although a publication from this meeting was announced as being in preparation (Elsček and Mikušová 1991:183, 184), it was never published.

Further information about these and other activities of this study group has been summarized by Elsček (1976) and later by Elsček and Mikušová (1991). The latter publication was the final act of this study group.

For more than a quarter of a century, the group achieved its purpose by bringing together researchers from different nations interested in the theme of the analysis and systematization of folk music. New generations of ethnomusicologists brought new research topics, and this study group ceased to exist.

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