

# ICTM Study Group on Music and Minorities

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As I have been a founding member of this study group and its chair, 1999–2017, this text will also include personal accounts, because this study group has been and still is a major part of my academic life. I will first outline the history before and after the establishment of the study group, and then focus on terminology, as this is an issue that seems to have been crucial for the group over the years.

### **History I—Becoming: The path to the establishment of the group**

When I started work on my dissertation project in 1979 at the Institute of Musicology of the University of Vienna, supervised by Franz Födermayr, I had no idea what would develop out of this research. The now-existing network of an internationally well-positioned focus on music and minorities, which is currently very influential in ethnomusicology in general, was not even in the planning stages at that time. My dissertation, finally finished in 1987, was entitled “Hochzeitslieder aus Stinatz: Zum Liedgut einer kroatischen Gemeinde des Burgenlandes” (Wedding songs from Stinatz: On the song repertory of a Croatian village in Burgenland) (Hemetek 1987). The focus was on Burgenland Croats, one of the so-called “autochthonous” minorities in Austria. I was actually conducting ethnomusicological minority research, but at the time there was no such terminology nor any institutional focus. What did exist was research on minorities in other disciplines, such as ethnology, geography, or political science, which could have served as models to a certain extent.

To my knowledge, and according to Svanibor Pettan—who outlined the history of the ICTM Study Group on Music and Minorities in an article (Pettan 2012)—the first internationally visible event with the keywords “music” and “minorities” took place in 1985 in Zagreb. The key person was Jerko Bezić, the representative of the host institution: *Zavod za istraživanje folkloru Instituta za filologiju i folkloristiku* (currently, Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research). “Those whom he

invited to take part in this historical conference included his colleagues from Yugoslavia, from neighbouring countries (Austria, Hungary, Italy), and from Germany ... Most presenters tried to point out interethnic connections” (Pettan 2012:450). Bezić (1986) was responsible for a publication following this conference.

I was privileged to attend that conference, which was my first international conference. As a young PhD student with no international experience, what I remember best was the personality of Bezić, who was the most integrative figure of the whole event. Due to a lack of professional translators, he actually did all translations himself, as he was fluent in Serbo-Croatian, Slovenian, Italian, English, and German. He actually did a lot of intercultural communication by taking on this role. For me, being in the process of writing my dissertation on a minority, the Burgenland Croats, it was a crucial experience to see that minorities could be a topic for a whole international conference. There were similar problems and approaches at an international level and mutual understanding amongst colleagues from different regions due to their shared experience of studying minorities. Probably unconsciously, the idea for my later activities was born there and was also due to the personal contacts I made during this experience.

Much later, when I had started to do research on Roma music in 1989 (see Hemetek 2006), I actively contacted some of the people I had met in Zagreb, as I felt rather alone with this research topic in Austria. One of the first was Svanibor Pettan, who at that time was based in Croatia, and Anca Giurchescu in Denmark, both of them doing research on Roma music and dance. I found them within the ICTM, the largest international network of ethnomusicologists worldwide.

Within my institution, the Department of Folk Music Research and Ethnomusicology (at that time, the Institute for Folk Music Research), I received support from its founder and at that time its director, Walter Deutsch, to do research on minorities, as well as international networking. In 1990, a conference was organized by the department called “Volksmusik

ethnischer Gruppen.” In 1994—with the help of the former Austrian ICTM Liaison Officer Emil Lubej—we managed to organize the international symposium “Traditional Music of Ethnic Groups / Minorities,” which resulted in the publication *Echo der Vielfalt / Echoes of Diversity* (Hemetek 1996), with twenty-three contributions representing a wide range of themes and countries. The symposium, as well as the publication, was the point of departure for the establishment of an ICTM Study Group on Music and Minorities.

The whole process went slowly, probably because of the political implications associated with such a topic. In order to make things move more quickly, I asked some colleagues to participate in a roundtable on the topic at the ICTM world conference in 1997 in Nitra. It showed the diverse approaches and wide range of topics that we considered to be part of the discussions of such a study group:

Max Peter Baumann (Germany): Indigenous peoples as minority groups and immigrants in Germany

Anca Giurchescu (Denmark): Migrant communities and the problem of identity in Denmark

Svanibor Pettan (Croatia): Refugees and their integration through processes of applied ethnomusicology

Eva Fock (Denmark): Youngsters of Pakistani, Moroccan, and Turkish backgrounds and their musical identities

Iren Kertesz-Wilkinson (UK): The Gypsies as a minority the world over

Jerko Bezić (Croatia): Experiences in international cooperation and minority groups.

The panel was very well attended. When we finally spoke about the plan to establish a study group, the audience supported this idea enthusiastically and signed a letter to the ICTM president (at that time, Anthony Seeger) and Executive Board, from which I quote here because I think the argument is still very much in accordance with the aims of the study group:

Let me begin with some background information: throughout the world, minorities and majorities form out of contrasting relationships to one other. The Study Group understands minorities to mean underprivileged groups within national states: migrants, refugees, autochthonous/ethnic groups, indigenous peoples and religious communities, among others. Underlying the relationship between minorities and majorities lies the same imbalance of social and economic conditions, an imbalance that accounts for many similar situations on an international level ... The Round Table discussion, held on June 26 and entitled “Ethnic Groups/Minorities,” was attended by 60 colleagues, and the idea of forming a Study Group met with great interest and was strongly supported. (letter to the Executive Board, 27 June 1997)

The answer was that the EB had “tentatively” accepted the study group. What they asked for was further dis-

cussion of terminology. This discussion took place in 1998, again in Vienna, and involving a smaller group of people. The outcome was a less political definition of the term “minorities”: “Groups of people distinguished from the dominant group for cultural, ethnic, social, religious or economic reasons.”

Finally, the study group was ready to hold its foundation business meeting during the ICTM world conference in Hiroshima in 1999. Information on operating procedures, terminology, as well as on elections had been sent to those who had expressed interest. During this meeting, the operating procedures were approved (still in use, see website),<sup>1</sup> as well as the definition of the term “minority.” The first elected officials of the study group were: Ursula Hemetek (chair), Svanibor Pettan (vice chair), and Anca Giurchescu (secretary). Pettan extended an invitation to hold the first study group symposium in Ljubljana in 2000, which was accepted. The following themes for this symposium were also approved: Music and dance of minorities: Research traditions and cultural policies; Music/dance and identity in minority cultures; Minorities in Slovenia and neighbouring regions (figure 1).

The group had eighty members at that time, which was quite large for a newly founded body compared to other ICTM study groups. The minutes of the business meetings were regularly published in the *Bulletin*. It also was decided to hold business meetings every year: this means also during world conferences, which turned out to be successful in terms of spreading information about the study group among the membership of the ICTM.

## History II—Being: The study group’s activities

The first study group symposium was held in Ljubljana, Slovenia, 25–30 July 2000. I quote from my report in the *Bulletin*:

The first Study Group Meeting of our very young Study Group was organised ... by Svanibor Pettan and hosted by the Institute of Ethnomusicology at the Scientific Research Center of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Hospitality and organisation was marvellous and presentations of inspiring papers were followed by good discussions ... As expected, most papers focused on identity, on the relationship between music and identity. Many colleagues from Slovenia did research on the minority situation “at home.” One minority, the Roma, a minority world-wide, became the topic of a whole day. (Hemetek 2000:24)

I also noted in my report that the study group was growing rapidly; there were already 110 members. In the business meeting, the study group decided to be active

1 <http://ictmusic.org/group/music-and-minorities>.





**Figure 1.** Svanibor Pettan and Ursula Hemetek, during the study-group symposium at the University of Music and Performing Arts, Vienna, July 2018 (photo by Carlos Yoder).

during the world conference in Rio (2001), and that the next location for our symposium would be Lublin, Poland, upon invitation of Anna Czekanowska. That the symposium resulted in an edited volume of the papers is crucial in my mind, since this was our first study group book (Pettan, Reyes, and Komavec 2001). It contains many articles that continue to be cited frequently.

I am convinced that this good start with a symposium, as well as the resulting publication, added a lot to the further fruitful development and success of the study group, because it served as a model for subsequent symposia. The model of the social programme, including many musical events as well as an excursion day, would also be repeated by subsequent local organizers.

In the following section, I will only outline some main characteristics of the biannual symposia up to 2020. All the information about programmes is available on the study group's website.

The second study group symposium was held 25–31 August 2002 in Lublin, Poland, organized by Anna Czekanowska, Piotr Dahlig, and Jacek Piech. One of the themes was theory and methods. It was promoted for the first time in Lublin, and it reappeared quite often in the programmes of subsequent symposia, but there were never many paper proposals for this topic. Everyone felt the need to deal with it, but only a few

finally did. Of course, it is crucial to develop theories and methods for a newly established direction in ethnomusicological research. That is why I will dedicate more attention to this subject below.

The topic “Interethnic problems of borderlands” was chosen by the local organizer as it seemed crucial for Poland and its history. During this conference, the topic of religious minorities appeared, although it had not been mentioned in the call for papers. During the business meeting, the chair and vice chair were re-elected. The publication following this conference did not appear as quickly as the first one, but came out in 2004 (Hemetek et al. 2004) and was launched at the third symposium, which took place 27 August – 3 September in Roč, Croatia.

The Roč meeting was organized by Naila Ceribašić, Irena Miholić, and other ethnomusicologists from the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research from Zagreb, as well as local people from Roč. This location was quite an experience, because it is actually a small village, and it was difficult to accommodate all the participants in private rooms and a small hotel nearby. The meeting was held in the local primary school building, which caused some problems for technical equipment, but Miholić managed to solve them all. The atmosphere of the small village, especially during the evening concerts on an open-air stage in front of the church,

was unforgettable for me. Although the meeting only attracted about forty participants, the study group at that time already had 170 members.

In this symposium, applied ethnomusicology appeared as a topic for the first time and turned out to be very successful. Of course, it was crucial as sociopolitical engagement was very much connected to minority research for many colleagues. From the discussions during this meeting, one panel for the upcoming world conference in Sheffield in 2005 developed: “Applied ethnomusicology and studies on music and minorities: The convergence of theory and practice,” which subsequently resulted in an article (Hemetek 2006). Gender issues appeared for the first time in some papers, although they did not yet feature as a topic. For both these directions in ethnomusicology—that is, applied ethnomusicology and gender—there are now very active study groups, which proved to somewhat overlap with minorities. Joint meetings were organized later with both of them (in 2010 and 2018). The publication following the Roč symposium was edited by Naila Ceribašić and Erica Haskell (2006).

During the 2005 world conference in Sheffield, a change in the study group’s board members took place. Anca Giurchescu resigned as secretary, and Adelaida Reyes was elected.

The fourth study group symposium took place 25 August – 1 September 2006 in Varna, Bulgaria, and was organized by Rosemary Statelova and her team. The topic of hybridity appeared here for the first time and definitely had an impact on subsequent discourse. It was further developed in presentations at later conferences. Race, class, gender, and education were now explicitly named as topics for the first time.

The discussion on terminology and on the mission statement was very important and lively. The final outcome was a slightly changed definition: minorities are “groups of people *distinguishable from the dominant group for cultural, ethnic, social, religious, or economic reasons*” (changes indicated in italics). And there was also a new mission statement:

The Study Group focuses on music and minorities by means of research, documentation, and interdisciplinary study. It serves as a forum for cooperation among scholars through meetings, publications, and correspondence.

Both texts were replaced by new ones at the 2018 business meeting in Vienna. For twelve years, they served their purpose, although discussions were ongoing and sometimes controversial. The publication following the Varna conference (Statelova et al. 2008) was presented at the fifth symposium that was held 24 May – 1 June 2008 in Prague, Czech Republic, and organized by Zuzana Jurková and her team. For the first time in the

history of the study group, the symposium had a keynote speaker: Bruno Nettl. One reason for asking him was his biographical connection to Prague. He was born there and lived in the city before his family fled from the Nazis to the United States in 1938. Unfortunately, he could not attend the meeting in person due to sudden illness, but his keynote was presented and also included in the subsequent publication edited by Jurková and Bidgood (2009). As the conference took place at the same time as the famous Khamoro Roma music festival, the social programme consisted of many Roma music events. Roma music also featured as one of the topics.

This was one of the largest study group symposia, featuring more than sixty presentations. Elections took place during the business meeting, and all officials were re-elected. During that meeting, an invitation for the next study group symposium was extended that met with surprise, but also enthusiasm: Vietnam, namely the Institute of Musicology in Hanoi, offered to host the next symposium in 2010. This was to be our first study group symposium outside Europe. In the course of its preparation—due to the strong connection to applied ethnomusicology—it ultimately turned out to be the first joint study-group meeting in the history of ICTM.

The sixth symposium was held in Hanoi, Vietnam, 19–30 July 2010, and was organized by Lê Văn Toàn, the director of the Institute for Musicology, and his team. I quote from the call for proposals, because it shows the innovation in the development:

Since its official recognition by the International Council for Traditional Music in 1997, the Study Group on Music and Minorities has met biennially in Europe. In 2010, for the first time, the Study Group will be meeting in Asia from July 19 to July 30. Doubling the significance of the event is the meeting of the Applied Ethnomusicology Study Group, which will take place in tandem with that of the Music and Minorities Study Group in Hanoi. While each Study Group will have its own Program Committee, its own themes and separate symposia (Minorities: 19–24 July, Applied: 27–30 July) a joint session is planned on Halong Bay, a UN World Natural Heritage site (25–26 July). (<http://ictmusic.org/group/music-and-minorities>)

There were enough proposals for the joint session which could be presented in unique sessions: participants spent two days on boats in Halong Bay. The model of a joint meeting proved to be successful, and other study groups followed this example.<sup>2</sup> For the first time, the publication following the event was not published by the local organizer because of organizational problems. It was finally issued in an online ver-

<sup>2</sup> Svanibor Pettan at that time served as chair of the Study Group on Applied Ethnomusicology and vice-chair of the Study Group on Music and Minorities.





**Figure 2.** Participants of the 10th symposium of the study group. Vienna, July 2018 (photo by Carlos Yoder).

sion (Hemetek 2012), again presented at the following study-group symposium.

At the 2011 ICTM World Conference in St. John's, a new executive committee was elected. Svanibor Pettan, who had been the vice chair of the study group, assumed the position of ICTM secretary general and was replaced as study group vice chair by Adelaida Reyes. The new secretary was Terada Yoshitaka.

The seventh symposium was held in the Academic College of Zefat, Israel, 7–12 August 2012, and was organized by Essica Marks and her team. Reappearing topics were methodology, as well as education. An influential, new topic was the representation of minority musics in film and video, allowing critical as well as affirmative approaches. The experience of living for a week in one of the “holy cities” and one of the orthodox centres of Judaism, which at the same time hosts one of the most progressive colleges offering courses on Arab music (where the conference was held), was quite an experience for many of us. There were fewer presentations than in Hanoi, but the publication contained a good number of papers, some of them important for further discussion (Hemetek, Marks, and Reyes 2014). For the first time, a double-blind peer-reviewing process was applied, which became the model for future publications.

The eighth symposium was hosted by the National Museum of Ethnology (Minpaku) in Osaka, Japan, 18–24 July 2014, and was organized by Terada Yoshitaka and his team. The theme of gender and sexuality reappeared. Novelties were topics like cultural politics and tourism, and, for the first time, new research was included as a category. There was a noteworthy keynote by Ricardo Trimillos. At the business meeting, all of the incumbent officials—Ursula Hemetek (chair), Adelaida Reyes (vice chair), and Terada Yoshitaka (secretary)—were re-elected unanimously. The proceedings were published after several years (Hemetek, Naroditskaya, and Terada 2021).

The ninth symposium was held 4–10 July 2016, at the Université de Rennes 2, Brittany, France, organized by Yves Defrance and his team. New themes were local and national languages—a topic which was very important for the local organizer due to the political situation in Brittany—and minorities within minorities. The proceedings were published in 2019 (Defrance 2019).

The business meeting at the 2017 ICTM World Conference in Limerick, Ireland, brought a new leadership team. As I was appointed ICTM secretary general during this conference I resigned as study group chair. The secretary, Yoshitaka Terada, resigned as well. Elections were held with the following results: Svanibor Pettan (chair), Adelaida Reyes (vice chair), and Hande Sağlam (secretary).

For the tenth symposium, the study group revisited Vienna, where it had all started in 1994. The symposium was held 23–30 July 2018 and was the second joint meeting in the history of the study group, this time with the Study Group on Music and Gender. The hosting organization was once again the Department of Folk Music Research and Ethnomusicology at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, the department that I chair. Most of the department's staff were active in the organization (Nora Bammer, Marko Kölbl, Martina Krammer, Hande Sağlam, and myself). The meeting was one of the largest in the history of the study group: 70 active participants (lecturers and chairs) plus around 60 listeners, from 39 countries and 6 continents. This is remarkable, even for an ICTM event, and speaks of the attractiveness of the topics and the event location (figure 2). The themes featured important discourses as a reaction to political circumstances, such as “music and migration—dislocation and relocation.” Terminology also reappeared as a topic.<sup>3</sup> A peer-reviewed publication is expected in 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Terminology had been discussed at the ICTM world conference in Limerick in 2017 in a remarkable panel organized by Adelaida Reyes. As a follow-up, this subject was chosen as a theme for the symposium. Again, few proposals on the topic

Due to discussions during the conference, the definition of the term “minority” was changed in the business meeting of the study group:

For the purpose of this Study Group, the term minority means communities, groups and/or individuals, including indigenous, migrant and other vulnerable groups that are at a higher risk of discrimination on grounds of ethnicity, race, religion, language, gender, sexual orientation, disability, political opinion, and social or economic deprivation.

The Study Group focuses on music and minorities by means of research, documentation and interdisciplinary study. It serves as a forum for cooperation among scholars through meetings, publications and correspondence. (<http://ictmusic.org/group/music-and-minorities>)

During the business meeting at the 2019 ICTM World Conference in Bangkok, Thailand, the themes for the next symposium were discussed and the location of Uppsala, Sweden, was announced. Later on, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the symposium planned for July 2020 had to be postponed to October 2021. I also introduced the newly founded Music and Minorities Research Center (MMRC) at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna. The MMRC is, of course, closely connected to the ICTM study group. I quote from the minutes:

In 2018, Prof. Ursula Hemetek was awarded the Wittgenstein Prize for her outstanding research and exceptional academic work, particularly in her groundbreaking work in researching minorities’ music. The award’s aim is to extend the research possibilities of the awardee and her team within a five-year time frame. For this purpose, ... at this point, MMRC has established its Advisory Board and has its home team. MMRC’s aim is to create a structural basis for ethnomusicological research of minorities. (Study Group on Music and Minorities 2019:2–3)

## Terminology, theories, and methods

Terminology, namely the definition of the research “object”—minorities—seemed to be crucial from the very beginning and has continued to be so. Adelaida Reyes kept reminding us: “our definition is always the most useful one for the time being, but the discussion process is ongoing” (pers. comm.). She was also the one who strongly argued that great attention should be paid to migration, as “migration creates one of the largest, if not the largest, human groups out of which minorities emerge” (Reyes 2001:38), and to the relationality of the term, because without a dominant group there are no minorities: “these require a minimal pair—at least two groups of unequal power and most likely culturally

distinct, both parts of a single social organism” (Reyes 2007:22).

Reyes also argues why minority research did not emerge earlier in the discipline, and she sees its emergence as being connected to the field of urban ethnomusicology:

in a scholarly realm built on presumptions of cultural homogeneity, there was no room for minorities ... The conditions that spawn minorities—complexity, heterogeneity, and non-insularity—are “native” not to simple societies but to cities and complex societies. (Reyes 2007:22)

I think it is important to note that when this study group came into existence, the field was prepared for such activities insofar as certain old theories of the discipline had already been abandoned. Urban ethnomusicology was already established, and we did not have to do pioneering work to challenge old-fashioned models like a supposed “homogeneity” of musical cultures. Heterogeneity and hybridity have proven to be important theoretical models within the study group’s discourses.

One field of controversy was connected to “authenticity” and had much to do with the different concepts of folk-music research in search of “national” musical expression, on the one hand, and modern ethnomusicology, on the other. These discourses were also connected to Roma music. In an article called “Encounter with ‘The Others from Within’: The Case of Gypsy Musicians in Former Yugoslavia,” Svanibor Pettan interlocks the object of research with the research tradition and methodology itself. In my interpretation of his article, there is a clear dichotomy between conservative folk-music research and modern ethnomusicology. And these are personified in the objects of research. The Roma have been living in the territory of the former Yugoslavia for decades, but are still defined as the “other.” Pettan suggests that because of their lack of a sense of national belonging, because they adopt any music that can be used creatively and therefore have no “national” musical idiom, Roma musicians personify the counterpart to what conservative folk-music research is searching for. He argues:

Dispersed all over the world, having no nation-state of their own, and even lacking a strong sense of belonging to a national (Gypsy) body, Gypsies seem to personify conditions that are as far as possible removed from conditions a (conservative) folk music researcher would wish for his or her own ethnic group. Gypsy musicians do not perform one “Gypsy folk music” and even do not necessarily distinguish between own and adopted music. (Pettan 2001:132)

In my experience over the years, conservative folk-music research, as noted by Pettan, although present at the beginning, has disappeared from the study group’s papers.

Doing research on marginalized groups was not that new, as I have mentioned above. But dealing with paral-

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were submitted, but one paper in particular by Naila Ceribašić functioned as an incentive for discussions in the business meeting.

rels, with certain repeated patterns, comparing different groups and thereby gaining insight into mechanisms of discrimination and how to react musically, that *was* rather new. The fact that music might play a special role for marginalized groups, and that there might be parallels worldwide, was an approach which was considered a novelty.

Concerning methods, applied ethnomusicology seems to have become increasingly influential in studies on music and minorities—especially concerning the socio-political aspects. The ethnomusicological concept of dialogical knowledge production has also become more important, and decolonizing knowledge production is gaining in influence, functioning as a theory and as a method. The broadening of the scope of themes and approaches is also mirrored in terminology.

Although the first-suggested definition of minorities tried to include discrimination as the common denominator by using the term “underprivileged” (see above)—which was not accepted by the Executive Board due to it being too “political”—I think the definition suggested in 2018 is more precise and much broader, but still very much in concordance with the original suggestion. The naming of categories such as gender, sexual orientation, and disability underlines the sociopolitical relevance of these discourses.

I am convinced that the lively discussion process will go on within this forum, and I will be happy to be part of these very inspiring discourses. In its twenty years of existence, the ICTM Study Group on Music and Minorities has proven that minorities are a relevant topic in ethnomusicology, and I am sure it will develop in new, probably as yet unexpected directions, because there is great potential here for adding to the discourses of the discipline.

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