

# The Secretariat under Ursula Hemetek: Vienna, Austria, 2017–2021

## *Ursula Hemetek*

I was appointed secretary general of ICTM by the Executive Board in June 2016, and assumed this role during the closing ceremony of the 44th ICTM World Conference in Limerick, July 2017. Since then the Secretariat has been located at the Department of Folk Music Research and Ethnomusicology of the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna. The rector of the university, Ulrike Sych, extended a warm welcome to ICTM twice: at the aforementioned conference in Limerick and during a welcome symposium organized in Vienna in September 2017. The university contributed to the ICTM budget in terms of infrastructure and by covering the travel expenses of the secretary general.

The transition from Ljubljana to Vienna was smooth and without costs. This was possible because of structural changes that had taken place during the mandate of my predecessor, Svanibor Pettan, namely, to secure the independence of the Council as an international NGO registered in Slovenia. The fact that all ICTM paperwork (related to the NGO, bank accounts, PayPal, digitized documents, etc.) was separate from the University of Ljubljana made all the difference, and kept options open. Therefore, we were able to move the Secretariat's office to Vienna, with the paperwork remaining in Slovenia. This means that Carlos Yoder, the executive assistant since 2011, could continue his work and contribute his rich experience (figure 1).

For the official opening of the Secretariat, an international symposium featuring invited papers was organized by the Department and the University: "Musics matter! Ethnomusicology and its socio-political relevance today" (28–30 September 2017). The articles from the symposium were published in an edited volume titled *Ethnomusicology Matters: Influencing Social and Political Realities* (Hemetek, Kölbl, and Sağlam 2019).

### **Development of the Council**

All of the following achievements were decided by the Executive Board (EB), as the EB is the governing body

of ICTM. Since 2013, Executive Board Committees have been installed to share responsibilities on many issues. The secretary general is responsible for the operations of the Secretariat, as well as for the implementation of these decisions. Therefore, there is a strong involvement of the Secretariat in many of these decisions as well, because the Secretariat is responsible for managing the Council's finances.

### **DEMOCRACY AND TRANSPARENCY IN ICTM**

The new Statutes were ratified on 11 December 2017, and published on the website. It is important to note that the role of the Secretariat is mentioned and defined in the Statutes for the first time. These Statutes very much further transparency.

A step towards increasing the involvement of the membership into decision-making was taken by means of a "General survey of ICTM members," launched on 6 November 2018, for the first time in the history of ICTM. A second survey was conducted in November 2020, in which 351 of the 1,070 eligible participants responded to the questions. One of the results of the second survey was the decision to let the membership vote in the General Assembly 2021 on a possible name change of ICTM after forty years.

Elections were held twice during my mandate, in 2019 and 2021. Participation in the elections strongly increased, due in no small part to implementing a third-party, online-only election platform. In the 2019 elections, 49% of eligible voters participated, while in the previous election (2017) only 38% had done so. In 2021, the percentage of participation increased again to more than 55%

### **ETHICS AND DECOLONIZATION**

The "Declaration of ethical principles and professional integrity," adopted by the Council and published in the website in July 2019, offers a reference point for ICTM members and for all who work with us and who encounter our work. Additionally, a lively discussion about decolonization of the discipline started following



**Figure 1.** Ursula Hemetek and Carlos Yoder in front of the library of the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna on 19 February 2020, the last in-person meeting before the pandemic (photo by Carlos Yoder).

activities of the Black Lives Matter movement. The outcome was an “ICTM statement and activities in view of decolonization of music and dance studies.” A new format of scholarly discourse in ICTM was created in order to contribute to these goals: the ICTM Dialogues (discussed below).

## PUBLICATIONS

The *Yearbook for Traditional Music* began being published on our behalf by an academic publisher in 2019. The transition was prepared in collaboration with the responsible EB committee, and the contract was signed on 26 June 2018 with Cambridge University Press. Since then, two volumes have been published by CUP, and this has turned out to be a very successful partnership. A transition to publishing two volumes per year was intensively discussed, and finally approved, by the EB for the future.

A new EB committee for ICTM Publications was appointed to work with study groups and other ICTM entities in their production of publications that are to carry the ICTM logo.

A new section was added to the ICTM *Bulletin*, entitled “Secretariat and Executive Board,” which includes a message from the president and from EB committees.

## STUDY GROUPS

As study groups are the most active bodies in ICTM, a new way for supporting them was established to assist participants in study-group symposia.

The Secretariat liaised over the course of three months with the EB Committee concerning the Maud Karpeles, Young Scholars, and Other Funds, regarding the possibility of funding participation in the symposia. Such assistance was first applied to the Study-Group-in-the-Making on Music and Dance in Latin America and the Caribbean (Salto, Uruguay, May 2018), the Study Group on Mediterranean Music Studies (Essaouira, Morocco, June 2018), and the Study Group on African Musics (Legon, Ghana, August 2018). It was decided that a total of sixteen people would be funded to attend the Salto symposium, five for the Essaouira symposium, and two for the Legon symposium. From this experience, the Secretariat and the EB Committee for Funds created a proposal to establish a biennial Study Group Allowance, which was approved by the Executive Board at its 2018 meeting; it was launched in 2019. Due to the pandemic, study-group symposia stopped or were held online from March 2020, so the last symposium funded by the allowance was that of the Study Group on Music and Dance in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Chiapas, Mexico, in March 2020. The situation improved in 2021, therefore, an application to assist the symposium of the Study Group on Mediterranean Music Studies, to be held in September 2021 in Morocco, was approved by the EB Committee for Funds.

Two new study groups were established in 2018: on Music and Dance in Latin America and the Caribbean; and on Sound, Movement, and the Sciences. A Study Group on Global History of Music followed in 2019, and a Study Group on Indigenous Music and Dance in 2021.

The Secretariat facilitated the running of electronic elections for the following study groups: Music and Dance of Oceania (2017); Ethnochoreology (2018); Music and Dance of the Slavic World (2018); Historical Sources (2018); Sound, Movement, and the Sciences (2019); Music, Gender, and Sexuality (2019); Music and Dance in Latin America and the Caribbean (2020); Performing Arts of Southeast Asia (2021); and Music and Minorities (2021).

## WORLD NETWORK

The World Network is essential for ICTM’s international representation, and the quality of this network has to be under constant evaluation. In 2019 a formal agreement of representation between liaison officers and the Council was created, that both the secretary

general and all newly appointed representatives must sign before a liaison officer is appointed for three years.

As of June 2021, the Council is officially represented in 120 countries or regions (see more at <https://www.ictmusic.org/world-network>).

#### FORA AND COLLOQUIA, AND DIALOGUES AS A NEW FORMAT

The 3rd ICTM Forum “Approaches to research on music and dance in the Internet era” was held in collaboration with the Society for Ethnomusicology; the International Musicological Society; the International Association of Music Libraries, Archives and Documentation Centres; the International Association for the Study of Popular Music; and the Society for Traditional Music of China on 11–14 July 2018 at the Central Conservatory of Music, Beijing, China.

The 25th colloquium was held from 29 November to 1 December 2018 at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, Shanghai, China on the topic “Double reeds of the Silk Road: The interaction of theory and practice from antiquity to contemporary performance.”

The 26th colloquium was held on 9–12 October 2019 at the Centre for Sound Communities, Cape Breton, Canada, on the topic “Songs and stories of migration and encounter.”

The 27th colloquium was held on 28–30 December 2020 at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, Shanghai, China, and online due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The topic of the colloquium was “Drums and Drum Ensembles of the Silk Road.”

A new format for interactions was also developed: “ICTM dialogues 2021: Towards decolonization of music and dance studies.” This format is held exclusively online and is very innovative in several aspects. It is curated by Tan Sooi Beng and a programme committee. The twenty-four events throughout 2021 started in January and aim at the following:

- (1) critically rethinking theories and methods that have been imposed by hegemonic powers and too often accepted as “universal”; and (2) recognizing and empowering Indigenous and other local epistemologies and ontologies. Decolonizing approaches aim to decentre power hierarchies such as those between researcher/researched, academic/non-academic, university/community, theory/practice, centre/periphery, and Global North/South. Decolonizing approaches also urge researchers to engage with relations of power and socio-political issues such as race and ethnicity, class, and gender and sexuality ... Can we develop new collaborative forms of knowledge production and artistic creation that will engage culture bearers in research and in teaching and learning about music and dance? (<https://www.ictmusic.org/dialogues2021>)

Experience has shown that this works very well, and the ICTM Dialogues seem to be setting a precedent for further scholarly meetings in ethnomusicology.

#### WORLD CONFERENCES

The Secretariat is very much involved in the preparation of world conferences. The first and eventually only one for the Vienna Secretariat was the 45th world conference in Bangkok in July 2019. To assist in the preliminary stages of world-conference planning, the Secretariat created protocols outlining the technical and content requirements for successfully holding meetings such as the opening ceremony, the General Assembly of members, and closing ceremony. It also provided technical assistance for the world-conference programme committee concerning the evaluation of proposals.

The world conference in Bangkok proved to be the largest in the history of ICTM and was extraordinary in every respect. Lisbon was approved as the location for the 2021 world conference. Due to the outbreak of the pandemic in February 2020, the decision was taken to postpone the world conference to 2022, but to still hold the subsequent one in 2023. This decision changed the whole calendar of ICTM-events and also affected study groups. The EB decided to only hold the General Assembly and the elections in 2021.

#### UNESCO

The Council’s relationship with UNESCO has been managed by EB member Naila Ceribašić for many years. In 2017, a new EB committee was formed to deal with UNESCO matters, chaired by Naila and joined by Salwa El-Shawan Castelo-Branco, Marie Agatha Ozah, and Svanibor Pettan.

#### FINANCES AND MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

As shown by [figure 2](#), the first three years of my tenure as secretary general (2017–2019) were marked by a steady increase in the numbers of both paid and complimentary memberships.

Year	Paid memberships	Complimentary memberships	Total
2017	1,139	53	1,192
2018	1,231	73	1,304
2019	1,321	59	1,380
2020	1,046	67	1,113

**Figure 2.** Number of paid and complimentary ICTM memberships during 2017–2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a tremendous effect on every aspect of the Council’s operations, among

them the reversal of the upward trend in membership numbers in 2020. However, I am content that despite the high number of cancellations and postponements of scholarly events originally scheduled for 2020, the Council managed to keep its expenditures to a minimum, resulting in a positive, if smaller, yearly balance (see figure 3).

Year	Total revenues (€)	Total expenditures (€)	Total balance (€)
2017	91,810.33	78,128.41	+13,681.92
2018	85,354.56	73,290.67	+12,063.89
2019	93,864.96	74,940.29	+18,924.67
2020	70,315.92	62,468.74	+7,847.18

**Figure 3.** Revenues, expenditures, and balance during 2017–2020.

## In conclusion

After my four years as secretary general, I can say that I was fortunate to inherit the Council in a very good shape. The Secretariat was so well-organized that it would not have made sense to change the whole procedure by building up new structures. To continue working with the previous executive assistant proved to be a wise decision. The geographical distance between the location of the Secretariat and the executive assistant, only 500 kilometres, proved to be no problem at all. Later, when the pandemic changed everything, Zoom became our main means of communication, not only

for Carlos and me but also for EB and Committee meetings with members from all parts of the world (figure 4). We all have learned to bridge distances, be it 500 or 5,000 kilometres, via digital media. Face-to-face meetings have turned into online meetings. Like it or not, this is a fact, and all of us involved in ICTM have had to learn much during this period. ICTM has survived this crisis, thanks to its membership and to the dedication of every single Board member. According to the ICTM Statutes, it is quite clear that the secretary general is not the decision maker. Close cooperation with the EB is crucial for the work of the Secretariat.

I am grateful to have been able to learn a lot during these four years, for example, concerning diplomacy, financial operations, and international affairs. I pass on the Secretariat to my successor Lee Tong Soon in good shape. Carlos Yoder will continue in his position as executive assistant, which will guarantee continuity of the Secretariat's operations and another smooth transition. It has been an honour to serve the ICTM as secretary general, and I certainly noticed that it is a time-consuming responsibility. But serving an institution like ICTM is worth all the energy that must be invested.

## Reference cited

Hemetek, Ursula, Marko Kölbl, and Hande Sağlam. 2019. Eds. *Ethnomusicology Matters: Influencing Social and Political Realities*. Wien: Böhlau.



**Figure 4.** Virtual meeting of the Executive Board in September 2020, the new reality of meetings during the pandemic. (top row) Don Niles (vice president), Carlos Yoder (executive assistant), J. Lawrence Witzleben, Tan Sooi Beng; (2nd row) Catherine Foley, Salwa El-Shawan Castelo-Branco (president), Naila Ceribašić, Marie Agatha Ozah; (3rd row) Silvia Citro, Brian Diettrich, Louise Wrazen, Ursula Hemetek (secretary general); (bottom row) Lee Tong Soon, Svanibor Pettan (vice president), João Soeiro de Carvalho, Marcia Ostashewski (photo by Carlos Yoder).