

# Committee on Radio/Television and Sound/Film Archives

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From 1951 to 1983, the Radio Committee,<sup>1</sup> known from 1966 as the Committee on Radio/Television and Sound/Film Archives, was an important subgroup within the Council and, in some ways, a forerunner of study groups. This committee was a main agent in the establishment of a network between people involved in broadcasts containing folk music, especially in Eastern and Western Europe. Recording equipment in the early 1950s was mainly owned by radio organizations and thus, IFMC through the Radio Committee, contributed to an increased documentation of folk music. The radio corporations which were also linked to the committee by paying yearly fees were the main sponsors of the activities of the IFMC.

At its pre-conference meeting in 1951, the Executive Board considered a proposal by the director of the folk music department at Radio Zagreb,<sup>2</sup> recommending the establishment of a “special commission” of IFMC on folk music and broadcasting. The Board fully approved the proposal and decided to place it before the members during what would today be called the General Assembly. The Board also thought that the BBC might assist in convening a meeting of representatives of broadcasting organizations at the 1952 conference in London (EB minutes, 7th meeting, 6–7 Sep 1951:§94). Following a presentation by Paul Collaer (1952), the resolution was adopted by conference participants on 13 September 1951 (*BIFMC* 5, Nov 1951:16).

Before the 1952 conference, invitations were sent to broadcasting organizations and twenty-one such organizations attended the conference. The 1951 resolution was replaced by a new, expanded resolution to

establish a Radio Committee.<sup>3</sup> It was adopted by the General Assembly:

### 3. Folk Music in Radio

This Conference strongly recommends the formation of a Committee of the International Folk Music Council with the following terms of reference:

- (i) To collect information about the recorded folk music that is in the possession of broadcasting corporations and national institutions specializing in folk music.
- (ii) To co-operate with broadcasting corporations and national institutions specializing in folk music
  - (a) in the methodical recording of authentic material in the field of folk music, especially in countries or regions where this is not already being done;
  - (b) in the preservation in permanent form (e.g. by the making and preservation of matrices etc.) of this authentic material or of any other valuable material already in existence;
  - (c) in the dissemination of authentic folk music through the medium of sound and visual broadcasting and films, by facilitating:
    - (1) the preparation of radio programmes with suitable presentation,
    - (2) the exchange of material either “live” or recorded between these various organizations.
- (iii) This committee should meet at least once a year.

The Conference further recommends that this Committee should be as small as possible, and that the majority of its members should be at the same time members of the International Folk Music Council and representatives of broadcasting organizations.

Acting on this resolution and on further recommendations proposed by the General Assembly the Executive

1 While commonly known as the Radio Committee, it actually enjoyed a variety of names, including: Radio Commission (1951), Radio Committee (1952–1961), Radio and Record Library Committee (1961–1966), and Radio/Television and Sound/Film Archives Committee (1966–1983), as detailed below.

2 Presumably Nikola Sabljär (*BIFMC* 5, Nov 1951:5).

3 One possible reason for the 1952 resolution was to reinvigorate the Board’s initial enthusiasm for such a body. Following the 1952 conference, the Board minutes refer to a “Radio sub-committee” (EB minutes, 10th meeting, 20 Jul 1952:§117). Pakenham (2011:227–228, 230) observes that the commission was established in 1951, but was “implemented” in London in 1952.

Board subsequently adopted the following additional resolution:

- (a) That in accordance with the resolution submitted by the Conference, a Radio Committee be appointed consisting of:
  - M. Paul Collaer (Belgisch Nationaal Instituut voor Radio-Omroep)
  - Mlle. C. Marcel-Dubois (Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires, Paris)
  - Dr. S. Michaelides (Cyprus)
  - Maestro G. Nataletti (RAI, Radio Italiana)
  - Miss Marie Slocombe (B.B.C., London)
  - A representative of Radio Zagreb with power to appoint up to two additional members.
- (b) That Miss Karpeles as Secretary to the Council be ex officio a member of the Committee and should convene its first meeting.
- (c) That radio organizations and other institutions concerned with folk music be invited to give an annual contribution to the Council so as to enable it to make an allocation towards the work of the Radio Committee.
- (d) That the Committee should work in close co-operation with existing organisations such as the European Broadcasting Union in order to avoid duplication of work. (BIFMC 6, Sep 1952:7–8)

The Radio Committee held its first meeting the same year, 12–13 November 1952, at UNESCO House in Paris. The report from this meeting, inter alia, says:

The Committee recommended the Council to bring to the notice of radio organizations the importance of reserving in their programmes the use of the term “folk music” to *authentic* folk music, as provisionally defined by the International Folk Music Council at its 1952 Conference.

In order to facilitate such programmes, the Committee recommended that the Council should encourage co-operation between broadcasting organizations and folk music experts.

The European Broadcasting Union has agreed to make these wishes known to its members and to include in its Information Bulletin particulars of folk music programmes available for international relay.

Other matters which are under consideration are:

- (a) The issue, under the auspices of the Council, of an edited recording of the World Festival of Folk Dance and Folk Song which the International Folk Music Council is organizing in the Basque Country.
- (b) The possibility of seeking the co-operation of broadcasting organizations in arranging an international series of “live” or recorded performances presenting the authentic folk music of each participating country. (BIFMC 7, Sep 1953:15)

Karpeles would remark that the establishment of the Radio Committee was one of the most important

steps taken by the Council (BIFMC 7, Sep 1953:16), and Claudie Marcel-Dubois “praised the audacity of Council in having implemented the resolution proposed by the Yugoslav National Committee at the 1951 Assembly in Opatija” (ibid.:17).

It was decided that the theme for the 1954 programme in the international series should be “Folk music associated with the summer solstice,” followed by “Shepherds’ songs and instrumental music” (1955), “Folk music connected with wedding ceremonies” (1956), “Harvest and threshing songs and music” (1957), “Traditional folk instruments” (1958), “Children’s songs” (1959), etc. These programmes, continuing to at least 1966, were distributed to radio stations by the UNESCO Radio Division.

At the 1953 IFMC Conference, there was a new report on the activities of the Radio Committee:

Miss KARPELES considered that the appointment of the Radio Committee was one of the most important steps that had been taken by the Council. Good work had already been achieved and considerable financial assistance had been received from interested radio organizations. She said that UNESCO had sent a recording unit to Biarritz and Pamplona and the recordings made by them would be distributed to broadcasting organizations ... A questionnaire concerning authentic folk music records had been sent to the gramophone libraries of radio and other organizations. One hundred and six replies had been received and the data would be included in the International Catalogue of Folk Music Records which the Council was preparing on behalf of UNESCO. (BIFMC 7, Sep 1953:16)

At the 1955 conference, there were three sessions with papers and discussions arranged by the Radio Committee. It was reported that seventeen radio organizations now were corporate subscribers to IFMC. It was observed that the international exchange of records was hampered by customs regulations throughout the world, and that IFMC should bring this matter, in so far as it concerns folk music, to the attention of UNESCO, through whose intervention customs exemptions had already been granted in many countries in respect of “serious records” received by learned institutions, and that UNESCO should be begged to urge on all governments the necessity of extending such exemption to recordings of authentic folk music received by radio institutions (BIFMC 9, Oct 1955:13).

A new feature of the *Journal of the IFMC* in 1955 and 1956 was the inclusion of a section devoted to radio. Then, from 1957, a section eventually called “Radio Notes” began appearing in the BIFMC. It appeared once a year until 1965, then for apparently the last time in 1970. Members of the committee and later just the chair and/or secretary were listed on the covers of the *JIFMC* (1954–1968) and *Bulletin* (1957–1983), further showing the importance of this committee.

By 1957 radio corporations started to appoint liaison officers to IFMC. Gradually the broadcasting of folk music was seen as a way of promoting understanding between peoples. The European Broadcasting Union started to publicize the reports of the IFMC Radio Committee in its *Bulletin*. In 1958, the Organisation Internationale de Radiodiffusion organized a meeting of experts to discuss folk music in radio.

In 1960, twenty-seven radio corporations were subscribers to the IFMC, a reconstitution of the Radio Committee was made, and a new set of rules giving more power to representatives of radio organizations were implemented:

1. The Radio Committee shall consist of representatives of radio organizations which are corporate subscribers of the Council, and two members appointed by the Executive Board, together with the secretary and treasurer as *ex officio* members.
2. Its terms of reference shall be to make recommendations to the Executive Board on the following matters:
  - (a) The collection of information about the recorded folk music that is in the possession of broadcasting corporations and national institutions specializing in folk music.
  - (b) Co-operation with broadcasting corporations and national institutions specializing in folk music:
    - (i) in the methodical recording of authentic material in the field of folk music, especially in countries or regions where this is not already being done;
    - (ii) in the preservation in permanent form (e.g. by the making and preservation of matrices, etc.) of this authentic material or of any other valuable material already in existence;
    - (iii) in the dissemination of authentic folk music through the medium of sound and visual broadcasting and films, by facilitating the preparation of radio programmes with suitable presentation, and the exchange of material either “live” or recorded between these various organizations.
3. The Committee shall normally meet at least once a year. (*BIFMC* 18, Sep 1960:18)

In 1961, the name of the committee was changed to the Radio and Record Library Committee (*BIFMC* 20, Jan 1962:12); in 1966 the Executive Board approved its renaming as the Committee on Radio/Television and Sound/Film Archives (EB minutes, 34th meeting, 25–26 and 30 July:\$460).<sup>4</sup>

The importance of the committee within the Council can, perhaps, be somewhat gauged by how prominently it was displayed in the front pages or covers of the two primary Council publications. Between 1954 and 1968, the *JIFMC* either listed all committee members (1954–1961) or its secretary (1962–1968); and even more extensively in the *Bulletin*, all committee members were initially listed (1957–1961), followed by just the secretary (1962–1983). These listings appeared on the same page with members of the Executive Board.

Meetings of the committee were generally annual, usually in conjunction with IFMC conferences, and consisted of papers and presentations of radio programmes and films followed by sometimes very lively discussions. During these meetings quite a few cooperation projects and exchanges of programmes were born.

On 12–15 September 1965, a well-attended meeting of the Radio and Record Library Committee<sup>5</sup> took place in Stockholm, Sweden (figure 1), a year in which no IFMC conference took place. Although not an official delegate, I worked at Radio Sweden at the time and sneaked into quite a few of the sessions. Among other things, the honorary president of the IFMC, Maud Karpeles, made a long, informative presentation on developments regarding the preservation, study, dissemination, and practice of folk music during the past sixty years. There is a detailed report from this meeting in the *Bulletin* (*BIFMC* 28, Jul 1966:12–21).

Indeed, reports of most committee meetings are documented in *Bulletins*, some being very lengthy indeed. For example, in 1968, another separate meeting of the committee took place in Copenhagen, Denmark, with many papers and presentations of recordings and films followed by lively discussions (*BIFMC* 33, Oct 1968:23–52).

During the following years, the committee held meetings both during Council conferences and separate from conferences. A working group consisting of Matts Arnberg (Sweden, chair), Ankica Petrović (Yugoslavia), Ate Doornbosch (the Netherlands), and Olive Lewin (Jamaica, secretary) was appointed in 1973. At the IFMC conference in 1975, the committee decided to make an inventory of folk music—a written index of what is available for exchange purposes and information concerning radio/television organizations, sound archives, film archives, and museums. This project was accepted by the European Broadcasting Union. The committee also held a trial rostrum with presentations of folk-music programmes, which was very successful, and it was decided to regularly organize such events (*BIFMC* 47, Oct 1975:25–28).

<sup>4</sup> This sequence differs somewhat from that presented in the *Bulletin* (*BIFMC* 30, Apr 1967:6), but is based on Board minutes.

<sup>5</sup> The fourth meeting of the committee with that name.





**Figure 1.** A scene from the 4th meeting of the Radio and Record Library Committee: Maud Karpeles, Olof Rydbeck, Marie Slocombe (?), and Matts Arnberg. Stockholm 1965 (photo from Matts Arnberg's archive, courtesy of Svenskt visarkiv).

The first regular rostrum of folk music took place in Budva, Yugoslavia, 26–30 May 1976. There were four categories of presentations: (1) sound recordings of authentic folksongs for one or more voices without any use of studio effects; (2) similarly, for one or more traditional folk music instruments; (3) sound recordings of arrangements of folk songs with or without instrumental accompaniment, using any appropriate composition technique and radiophonic effect; (4) similarly, for one or more instruments. It was decided to hold a rostrum every other year (*BIFMC* 49, Oct 1976:11–12). By now, the committee had grown into a quite powerful and partly independent body within the IFMC.

During the following years, a dispute between International Music Council (IMC) and the IFMC Committee on Radio/Television and Sound/Film Archives brewed over the Folk Music Rostrum. The rostra had become quite successful, and IMC tried to take them over. The conflict escalated. Furthermore, communications with the Executive Board had become sporadic. At the 1983 Board meetings—held in New York, before and after the world conference—it was noted that no report from the committee had been received since 1980,<sup>6</sup> but a “summary” of two meetings by committee leaders was received before the Board meeting. During the world conference, there was a special meet-

ing with a number of radio/television representatives and some Board members.

The committee was now felt to be too focussed on only a small part of Europe, in contrast to the very international outlook of the Council itself. Although it was certainly recognized as an important source of income for the Council, the predominant feeling was that the committee was now out-of-touch with the newly established ICTM, not in communication with the Board, and essentially obsolete in relation to functions, needs, and even name. A motion was moved and passed dissolving the committee, but then toned down a bit, to say that it would be dissolved as presently constituted (EB minutes, 61st meeting, 7 Aug 1983:§1050; 62nd meeting, 13 and 15 Aug 1983:§1082).<sup>7</sup>

The announcement to members through the *Bulletin*, however, focussed on the conflict over the rostra, and the following somewhat confusing decision:

The Board affirmed its willingness to organise Symposia in conjunction with all IMC/UNESCO Radio/TV Rostra, but at the same time decided to return [*sic*] responsibility for the “European Folk Music Rostrum” to the IMC. Consequently, the Board dissolved its ‘Committee on Radio/Television and Sound/Film Archives’ as no longer congruent with ICTM objectives and policies. (*BICTM* 63, Oct 1983:20)

Yet, responsibility for the folk-music rostra had never been with the IMC.

<sup>6</sup> Published in *BIFMC* 57 (Oct 1980:15–17), but following complaints from the executive secretary of IMC, the editor of the *Bulletin*, Secretary General Dieter Christensen, withdrew the last four paragraphs because they contain “serious errors and false allegations, and draw on a document of a confidential nature” (*BIFMC* 58, Apr 1981:20). These paragraphs are comments on UNESCO’s lack of financial support for IFMC activities and its representation of IFMC.

<sup>7</sup> Supplemented by detailed transcripts of Board discussions at these two Board meetings (ICTM Archive MS 10017, series 5, folder 3), presumably transcribed by Executive Secretary Nerthus Christensen, from which she later produced the minutes.

It was also reported that the “Secretary General was charged to pursue with IMC/UNESCO and with cooperating broadcasting organisations the prospects of an ICTM-initiated service for the exchange of programmes of traditional music among regional radio unions” (ibid.). The writer of this entry was a member of the ICTM Executive Board from 1983 and, as far as I remember, the question of exchange of programmes of traditional music was never discussed in Board meetings again.

This seems a rather unfortunate ending to a committee that had been a major part of Council activities for over thirty years. In 1966, when the Council’s continued existence was very much uncertain, IFMC founder and honorary president, Maud Karpeles, observed that the two most important activities of the Council were its journal and the radio committee; if at all possible, they must be kept going (Advisory Committee minutes, 15th meeting, 21 Apr 1966:§142). And in her autobiography, Karpeles would observe that “one cannot over-estimate the importance of radio and television in furthering the aims of the Council” (Karpeles [1976]: 235).

As a separate body within the Council and with a specific focus, the committee is somewhat an early precursor of study groups, which ultimately became very numerous and important parts of the Council, yet the committee never became a study group itself, instead maintaining its own individuality. One of the main differences between the committee and study groups was that the committee never really studied anything. Instead, it was mainly a network of professionals involved in making radio and television programmes with and about traditional music.

The change of secretary general and the Council’s change of name in 1981 were to herald significant changes in some Council activities. Seen as a relic of former times, the Committee on Radio/Television and Sound/Film Archives was one of the casualties.

## References cited

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