

ICTM Study Group on Sound, Movement, and the Sciences

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The Study Group on Sound, Movement, and the Sciences is united by a joint interest and research approach, which lies in the use of methods derived from the “hard” or “natural sciences” within ethnomusicology and/or ethnochoreology. Our chosen acronym is SoMoS, which in Spanish means “we are.” As our mission statement from 2018 explains, the subject of the study group is research of sound and/or movement using multidisciplinary approaches, combining ethnomusicology and/or ethnochoreology with elements from the wide spectrum of different sciences. These include, but are not limited to, fields such as statistics, mathematics, computer sciences, engineering, physics, cognitive sciences, medical science, and biology. We position ourselves first and foremost as ethnomusicologists/ethnochoreologists, but add to that methods borrowed from disciplines such as those listed above, sometimes

working in inter- or transdisciplinary projects together with experts from other fields. Ethnographic methods remain an important part of the research and lie at the core of respective projects. The title of the study group aims towards inclusivity; the term “movement” is used so as to be inclusive of work that explores dance as well as physical movement that is not typically described as dance, and the term “sound” is employed to include more than is culturally defined as “music.”

The ICTM world conference in Limerick in 2017 saw the genesis of this group, when several of the would-be members talked about the fact that although those within the ICTM using methods mentioned above might be relatively few, it would be important to have a forum and platform to share our knowledge, insights, methods, problems, ideas, and so forth, with others



Figure 1. Participants of the first SoMoS symposium held online, hosted by KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, 30 September 2020 (photo by André Holzapfel).

using similar approaches. From these talks grew the idea to formally establish a new study group within the ICTM. Idea led to action, and in September 2018 we had our first meeting at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Graz, Austria, and decided on the name “Sound, Movement, and the Sciences.” At this meeting the study group-in-the-making elected its initial officers: Kendra Stepputat as chair, Lara Pearson as vice-chair and Christopher Dick as secretary. The group was approved by the ICTM Executive Board shortly after. We held our first official symposium in September 2020, hosted by the KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, which included a wide variety of topics and presenters from four continents, made possible through an online symposium setting (figure 1).

Beyond sharing knowledge amongst SoMoS members, we see our group as an important tool for spreading information about research using methods from the aforementioned range of sciences in ethnomusicology and ethnochoreology both within the ICTM and beyond. Since our formation, the number of members has doubled. We hope that this trend continues, and that our membership base will become even more international and diverse.