

54TH IASA CONFERENCE AND 4TH ICTMD FORUM ISTANBUL, 11–15 SEPTEMBER 2023.

Having in mind their numerous intersecting interests, it is surprising that, until September 2023, the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA) and the International Council for Traditions of Music and Dance (ICTMD) did not have any joint meetings during the previous seven decades of their existence. The IASA is a professional association concerned with the care, accessibility and long-term preservation of the world's sound and moving image heritage. Its membership spans seventy countries representing a broad palette of audiovisual archives and personal interests, which are distinguished by their focus on particular subjects and areas, e.g. archives for all sorts of musical recordings, historical, literary, folkloric and ethnological sound documents, theatre productions and oral history interviews, bio-acoustics, environmental and medical sounds, linguistic and dialect recordings, as well as recordings for forensic purposes. On the other hand, the ICTMD is a scholarly organization that aims to further the study, practice, documentation, preservation, and dissemination of music and dance of all countries; it connects different cultures and thus fosters the peace of humankind. Many topics of these organizations are shared, concerning archival processing and archival sources about music and dance. This event was performed in a format that combined the onsite and online presentations of around 300 participants; it was organized by the Istanbul University, in the historical, but modernly equipped halls of its Rectorate.

As stated in the call for presentations, especially for the joint day titled “Collaborating to Preserve, Document, and Safeguard Traditional Music and Dance”, the topics included: “Digital preservation in sound and audiovisual archives: new collaborative tools and strategies”; “Metadata and curation”; “Migration and sound and audiovisual archives”; “Collaborative ideas to protect sound and audiovisual heritage at risk”; “Research and dissemination”; “Diversity, accessibility, and inclusivity in archives”; “The past and future of archival studies and audiovisual archives in Türkiye and the Turkic World”. The program comprised papers and panels, poster session, film screening session, workshops, professional visits and open meetings of the IASA committees and sections. The opening concert, organized by ethnomusicologist Abdullah Akat, provided us with a unique opportunity to listen to extraordinary skillful performances of Turkish and Turkic folk music.

The opening ceremony was enriched by the keynote lecture “Archival Collaborations Are Not Always Simple: Challenging Relationships, Structural Impediments, and Ontological Impasses in Efforts to Safeguard and Preserve AV and Related Heritage”, delivered by Anthony Seeger, a distinguished ethnomusicologist, Professor Emeritus of the University of California Los Angeles and the founder and curator of

Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, who served as the President and Secretary General of ICTMD and one of the founders of the IASA Research Archives Section. He pointed to several collaborations (and challenges) that emerged at the junction of these societies' activities and expertizes – among ethnomusicologists (i.e. researchers), archivists and performing communities.

My curiosity was sparked by presentations of historical sound recordings curated by ethnomusicologists in general, and this was a unique opportunity to see the holdings and digitization results from Türkiye and Central Asia: from the Turkic world (contributed by Fatima Nurlybaeva); Kyrgystan (Kanykei Mukhtarova et al.), Turkmenistan (Djamilya Kourbanova), Kazakshtan (Valeriya Nedlina), Azerbaijan (Sanubar Baghirova), Iraq (Farah Zahra), from the collections of Sri Lankan ethnomusicologist C. de S. Kulatillake (Kamani Samarasinghe), Ghanian ethnomusicologist Joseph Hanson Kwabena-Nketia (Judith Opoku Boateng), the Kyev Ethnomusicological Laboratory (Anastasiia Mazurenko, Okeksandr Kropyvnyi), the Tbilisi State Conservatory (Crystal Sanchez et al.), the Istanbul Technical University (Güneş Çetinkaya Şerik), the Orient-Institute (Will Sumits), the Hacettepe University Ankara State Conservatory (Cenk Güray et al.), the Ege University (Mehmet Öcal Özbilgin), some fascinating results in Czech phonograph cylinders digitization (Filip Šír), the Audiovisual Media Preservation Initiative of the Smithsonian Libraries and Archives (Dan Hockstein, Walter Forsberg), but also larger personal archives, such as ethnomusicological fieldwork of Turkic recordings (János Sipos) and private Balkan music-niche record company (Bernard Kleikamp). Several notable papers have shed new light on Harvard's Arab music recording collections (Peter Laurence), Turkish folk music sound archive in the Hungarian context made by Béla Bartók (Ferenc János Szabó) and 78 rpm Greek discography of Turkish music (Miltiadis Pappas), as well as on music of Ottoman Jewish migrants (Simone Salmon).

Furthermore, there were presentations that problematized of various music and dance sound and audiovisual archiving: from the Archive Challenge as a model of engagement in the performance of archived traditional music from the American Folklife Center (Stephen Winick, Jennifer Cutting), over the proposal for use of blockchain technology in archiving and curating of Southeastern European folk music (Hilal Baktaş, Belma Oğul), to the consideration of musical archives in cultural sustainability (Olca Muslu, Huib Schippers). In the spirit of the proclaimed focus on collaboration, several papers dealt with private archiving initiatives and possibilities with their networking with official institutions. Except for the research of Bulgarian diaspora collections (Dilyana Kurdova, Danieva Ivanova Nyberg) and a virtual archive of the Croatian minority in Austria (Marko Kölbl), there was the example of collaboration of academia with the private sector in the digitization of Uruguayan popular music (Marita Fornaro Bordolli). The intersection of the ICTMD and the IASA interests was also proposed based on the example of Croatian discography of electrically recorded 78 rpm gramophone records and the premises that the global archive of these sources should be collaboratively researched (Naila Ceribašić). Especially important was a panel dedicated to the use of historical sound collections in applied ethnomusicological work with indigenous and local communities (Marcia Ostashewski et al.).

Besides my talk “Challenges and Perspectives of Archiving Music and Dance of Migrant Communities in Serbia” where I presented current archiving of material collected from fieldwork with asylum seekers (funded by the APPMES project conducted within the Institute of Musicology SASA and funded by the Serbian Science Fund), I participated as the current Chair of IASA Research Archives Section. At our Open Meeting, we were delighted to listen to Shubha Chaudhuri’s invited lecture “Community Archiving”. Another paper from Serbia was from the Faculty of Music of the University of Arts, presenting a collection of Dragoslav Dević’s traditional folk music annual concerts at BEMUS from the 1970s (Ana Petrović).

Sound archiving was researched with materials beyond musical – from digital-born broadcasting archiving in Africa (Lynn Johnson), objects such as audio letters in Austria (Eva Hallama), to sound archives important for natural sciences, such as recordings of grasshoppers and crickets 1960s–1990s from localities worldwide (Toby Seay). Also, there were very useful considerations about parameters of film digitization (George Blood), emerging Artificial Intelligence issues in archiving (Rasa Bocyte, Johan Oomen), the South African Copyright Act (Ilse Assmann), and a very thought-provoking presentation about the translation of technical sound and audiovisual archiving standards to the challenging circumstances of Global South context, specifically in Brazil (Cadu Marconi, Marco Dreer).

Professional visits were the opportunity for guided tours through the Ottoman Archive (the primary repository for state archival documents in Türkiye related to the Ottoman Empire, with a highly systematic approach to paper restoration and digitization), the Istanbul Technical University Turkish Music State Conservatory Archive and Documentation Centre “Prof. Ercümen Berker and Prof. Ş. Şehvar Beşiroğlu” (where personal archives donated by Turkish musicians and music academicians, as well as historical sound materials about Turkish music, are deposited and systematically archived, with open access possibility) and Orient-Institut Istanbul (where the exhibition of sound and audio-visual materials from the Berlin Phonogrammarchiv and private archives was held). Except for that, there were practical workshops on community archiving, methods for sharing knowledge in sound and audiovisual archives, processing digital video, a Rapid Assessment Model in digital preservation, Open Editor for automatic transcription of AV materials. The presence of NOA and Aviary as gold sponsors was also noticeable to visitors.

The closing discussion led by presidents of these sister organizations, Tre Berney and Svanibor Pettan, emphasized the importance of this collaboration, with the hope that it will be the start of plentiful networking. For me as a member of both societies, with an interest in archival sources and processes in ethnomusicology and expertise in Balkan music, this event demonstrated the fruitfulness of collaboration, especially in terms of regional diversities of various experts. I hope that this will continue and expand, especially at the crossroads of sound/audiovisual archiving with popular music research, as well as of ethnomusicology with sound/audiovisual recording.