

EUROPEAN FOLK NETWORK

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2022 MANRESA 7-9 OCTOBER 2022

In collaboration with
Fira Mediterrània de Manresa



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EUROPEAN FOLK NETWORK

REPORT OF THE EFN ANNUAL CONFERENCE

7 – 9 OCTOBER 2022 – in MANRESA, CATALONIA

EFN's third annual conference was hosted in October 2022 by Fira Mediterrània de Manresa and took place in the historic city of Manresa during the annual Fira showcase event. With thanks to their support from the city, the Catalan government and Institut Ramon Llull, Fira Mediterrània generously provided EFN and its members with hotel accommodation, a variety of meeting and conference spaces and access to the entire Fira showcase programme featuring a host of musicians and dancers from Spain and across Europe.

The conference programme concentrated on the interests and concerns of EFN members. Alongside two sessions with expert panels and an 'Open Mic' opportunity for individual members to present their own projects, the majority of the conference sessions were devoted to discussion groups in which all of the delegates were able to share ideas and information.

Welcome

The programme began on Friday 7 October with a welcome reception sponsored by representatives of Pla de Bages, the wine denomination of the local region. Delegates had the opportunity to meet one another and hear from EFN Board members and representatives of Fira Mediterrània.

The full day programme on Saturday 8 October was opened by EFN Board member and Vice Chair Daina Zalane who welcomed EFN delegates as well as those professionals from Spain and elsewhere invited by Fira Mediterrània who were also welcome to join conference sessions and experience EFN for themselves.

EFN, Daina noted, was a rapidly growing network, regularly attracting new members from the traditional arts sector across Europe. The network was clearly satisfying a need amongst those working in the sector for opportunities to meet, share and collaborate with colleagues from other countries and traditions. EFN was a community of friendships and common interests and was working to raise the collective profile of traditional music, dance and storytelling in Europe. The conference was the ideal opportunity for members to participate directly in the work and future direction of EFN and Daina looked forward to hearing from delegates and sharing ideas in the sessions that were about to follow.

Panel sessions

The morning programme included two panel sessions which featured invited guest speakers. Thanks once again to Fira Mediterrània and its supporters, both sessions were covered by simultaneous Spanish/English interpretation transmitted through headsets available to everyone in the venue.

Panel on intergenerational issues

Speakers: Juan Antonio Torres, Unni Lovlid, Tina Jordan Rees. Moderator: Araceli Tzigane

The panel concentrated on their own experiences in finding out about traditions and learning them. They turned to the question of how to pass traditions on to the next generation and considered the problems and advantages of doing this at the present time. They discussed the benefits and disadvantages of formal, conservatoire-style learning and of informal learning from local community or family.

Speaker Tina Jordan Rees presented a short set of slides to outline her experience as a young musician learning about traditional music and to summarise the issues of passing knowledge to the next generation.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/15MM2ncldYnwlAiriqdL-Kb1T3txhVq-/view?usp=sharing>

Juan Antonio Torres spoke of his experience as a young man, exploring and learning from tradition bearers about Spanish traditions such as jota and how he and his group Viguela have taken these forms forward in their performing careers.

<https://www.mapamundimusica.com/viguela/en/bio/>

Unni Løvlid described growing up in a small village in west Norway and learning traditional singing directly from the older tradition bearers in the community and then studying at the Norwegian Academy of Music where she is currently the leader of the traditional music course. Her international career has been founded on exploring contemporary ideas in music which still have Norwegian traditions at their core. <http://elen-music.com/portfolio/unni-lovlid/>

Delegates were able to follow up and discuss the ideas and views of the panel members in the subsequent discussion groups on the subject.

Panel on showcases

Speakers: Balazs Weyer, Minna Huuskonen, Linda Dyrnes, Steven Vanderaspolden.

Moderator: Nod Knowles

The panel's subject was the increasing number of national and international showcases happening today in so many areas of music and arts and their purposes in export or profile raising. They discussed whether showcases are still useful and effective for artists and bookers, how they are organised and the problems, benefits and disadvantages that they bring.

Linda Dyrnes described the annual Folkelarm event in Oslo which combined invitations to professionals from the national and international sector with open access to the performances as a festival for local audiences. As a relatively intimate but well established showcase Folkelarm aimed to raise the profile of the music and the performers and provide them with opportunities for more bookings.

The VONK showcase festival in Ghent, explained Steven Vanderaspolden, was a new event created by the Flemish organisation Muziekmozaiek. Its purpose was to raise the profile of high level professional folk artists from Flanders with national international bookers but also to raise awareness of the breadth of traditional music in the region. The showcase included performances by amateur community and school groups as well as professionals.

Minna Huuskonen spoke as an agent and promoter who had presented artists at showcases and also attended them to find artists for her promotions. She believed that it was necessary to choose which showcases to attend carefully as they were often expensive and time consuming to attend and there was no guarantee that they would prove successful for a promoter or an artist. Minna believed that the more information that could be provided by the showcase in advance would make the choice easier: on the artistic programme, the potential for a live music experience, the delegate list and the support available for artists who did receive work and invitations as a result of their performance.

Balazs Weyer had organised showcases but had also experienced them as a booker. There were often reasons to criticise the way that showcases were organised but it was nevertheless essential for artists to be seen and heard by international professionals in live performance. An important ingredient in planning was for the organiser to issue information well in advance and to choose the professionals to invite with interests that matched the kinds of artists performing.

Balazs also noted that a new platform – Upbeat - had very recently been established for showcase organisers with the aim of pooling information and methodologies and measuring the impacts of showcase activity.

The panel discussion and questions from the audience covered a series of issues including: the fees and expenses showcase artists were paid; how invitees were selected; the criteria for selecting 'export ready' artists; and the need for follow-up assessment of the value of bookings generated for showcased artists.

Delegates were able to follow up and discuss the ideas and views of the panel members in the subsequent discussion group on the subject.

'Open Mic' session

After the pleasure of a lunch at the restaurant of the nearby Kursall Theatre and an enjoyable concert by the new project led by piper Ricard Ros delegates came together for short presentations by EFN members about their own ideas and projects.

<https://firamediterrania.cat/en/show/2022/ros-ros>

Johanna Sauramaki spoke eloquently about climate change and the music scene and the need for everyone in the sector to become more environmentally sustainable.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/12TvwwuMRkdJfEQrnu-sGBa35MQOx_OF0/view?usp=sharing

Carol Main of Live Music Now Scotland presented a video of the project Traditional Tunes For Tiny People bringing folk music to the very young.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYrw-4na_WU

Andrea Murzi gave a presentation on the European Music Council (of which EFN is a member) and its work.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EgZZVLJfRvaiCaloJ_f-XolzJsGrqr1L/view?usp=sharing

Gaelic musician and organiser Brian O hEadra gave delegates information on the North Atlantic Song Convention to which he is a contributor.

<https://www.northatlanticsong.com/>

Louise Migne and Balthazar Montanaro presented the range of projects and interests covered by the Compagnie Balthazar Montanaro.

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/17U8kfil_k9V1ucGsJ0c54C8gu3M1yAft/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=118430189689417064630&rtpof=true&sd=true

Discussion groups

At the heart of the conference – as it is at the heart of EFN - was the opportunity for members to meet, discuss ideas and share mutual interests. The small group discussion sessions provided members with that opportunity – on the subjects of Intergenerational issues and the European Folk Day – in which all delegates participated – and in specific interest groups which delegates chose as most appropriate for themselves. Each group was moderated by a Board member of EFN.

European Folk Day discussion groups

The proposal to create a pan-European Day for folk music, dance and storytelling had been initiated in a previous EFN conference and was enthusiastically pursued by delegates in Manresa. Members saw the discussion sessions as a way to pool ideas that could be used in future planning for the Folk Day as a practical EFN project. The range of ideas and aspects of a Folk Day that was covered in discussion was so extensive that it was made into a separate document to begin the process of planning for an inaugural event in 2023.

In summary, the subjects covered in the discussion groups included:

Raison d’etre & ethos: to make the Folk Day a flagship event that shifts perceptions and raises awareness of the traditional arts through collective action.

Timing: To find an appropriate day in the year that can be joined by everyone and will give everyone time to plan. (The initial idea of a pilot day on 23 March was subsequently changed to 23 September – the autumnal equinox - to allow planning from early 2023.)

Possible roles for EFN: EFN could act as a central point, encouraging participation, coordinating communication and gathering links to all participants and their activities.

EFN possible marketing/PR actions: The creation of a common promotional identity and advocacy through the media and social media.

Suggestions for participants: The list of what people and organisations could do to participate was as far reaching and diverse as the EFN members themselves and the traditions they represented. The opportunity to participate should be as free and wide as anyone could wish.

Intergenerational issues discussion groups

Discussion groups followed on from the panel discussion on these issues. The range of ideas and perceptions from each group was wide enough to preclude any definitive conclusions but is best represented by a brief selection from the notes and quotations as recorded by the moderators:

“The situation varies considerably between countries and also the various spheres – dancing, singing, music making, storytelling – are in different situations.”

“There are many challenges in diverse societies – how to pass down other cultural traditions in a fragmented society? There is the challenge of cultural identity versus national identity.”

“Tradition is necessary for a community to thrive. Young people can get lost without access to their own culture.”

“Traditional arts of music and dance and storytelling are part of the heritage of specific communities. Inside each community, the role of the family as tradition bearer is important.

“We often assume that young people have access to an older generation of tradition bearers. This is not always the case.”

“Preserving a tradition is not enough, it must serve a need, make our community better.”

“It needs cooperation between organisations at a European level, to identify what exists.”

Some traditions are strong but in many countries there is no traditional music in the academy system, it is learnt only in the amateur field.

There are good examples of inter-generational exchanges, such as the dance houses in Hungary, or the experience of Ethno World camps where young musicians from various countries and music traditions meet, practice and exchange repertoire and compositions.

If traditional music is becoming a middle class activity we need to support work that reaches all and deliberately reaches excluded communities.

Musicians in schools programme really engage young people and address issues of accessibility and affordability.

Interest group discussions

As part of EFN's strategy to bring smaller groups of members who share the same interests together to examine their own issues in the sector, the 2022 conference programme included four specific discussion groups.

Artists, managers, bookers group: Moderator Eric van Monckhoven

The meeting brought together participants from Finland, Spain, Catalonia, Madeira, Sicily and Flanders. The question was: is it possible to cooperate? If yes, were there some examples of good practice?

The discussion started on the different roles of artists, managers and bookers. Some people cover all the roles, others only one. From the managers point of view, it was important to start from the artists' need to build a proper marketing and booking strategy. In that function, the manager was building a network to support the artist and create the opportunities for recordings and live performances and there was clearly cooperation at various levels.

In the case of booking agents, cooperation seemed more difficult. For self-managed artists, the demand was more about having guidelines from a kind of facilitator/mentor to navigate the music industry ecosystems. Because folk music involved both amateurs and professionals, and was not always money-focused but more people-centered, artists often had more connections than managers and bookers. Their dilemma was about deciding to go more mainstream to earn a living or to go more grassroots to keep in touch with the community and the bearers of the tradition.

National organisations group: Moderator Linda Dyrnes

The subjects discussed by this group included a discussion on how to can get more people to study folk music and dance, and also on rare instruments.

The group agreed that national organisations could share experience and best practices as well as knowledge and good ideas. They could, for instance, share insights about the UNESCO Convention on intangible heritage. The Norwegian centre for folk music and dance, was a UNESCO NGO and could help with this.

National organisations might be able to prepare for partnerships and applications for funding. Mapping projects could be undertaken together and each country could share their results.

It was clear that there were different communication channels for different member groups in EFN.

It was agreed that national organisations should now meet regularly at the annual EFN conference and share what they have been doing over the previous year.

Showcases group: Moderator Steven Vanderaspolden

A group of showcase organisers discussed this topic and agreed that, as a basic principle, people should be encouraged to attend showcases.

They noted a number of concerns that they shared in organising effective showcases which included:

The number of concerts must be in equilibrium with the quality of the attendance.

It was necessary to find new buyers from outside the ‘usual suspects’. Some showcases had a person on the team whose task it was to hunt for delegates.

Self-representing artists, they believed, should have the possibility to be a delegate, to be part of the networking opportunity.

Delegates expect two major things from a showcase festival: the shows had to be of a high enough level and the quality of the network possibilities had to be high enough in order to give people the feeling that attending the showcase festival was value for money.

The group noted that a very interesting read for everyone dealing with showcase festivals was a paper published by the European Commission in 2020: Music Moves Europe. European Music Exporting Strategy.

Educators group: Moderator Danny KilBride

The group of committed educators covered agreements on fundamental principles as well as suggestions for practical development.

“Education,” they believed, “should not be reduced to training professional performers. Music was social and we should be aware of traditional music’s primary purpose: to bring communities together - play together, sing together, dance together, share stories together.

Education was not only for children – for example reminiscence projects for dementia.

But education in traditional subjects should be embedded into our national curricula as a core part of identity and not via add-on funded projects.

The wider value of music and traditional arts in education should be reinforced. It would be useful to gather an evidence base of the associated benefits of social confidence, inclusion and well being, which could work into a larger schemes of working in schools, with low income families and those with special needs.

The traditional sector had to raise the discussion to a higher level in order to grow influence and build traditional arts into the pillars of sustainability: economic, social, environmental and cultural. University departments and others could be encouraged to adopt culture as a regenerative tool and an argument for sustainability.

Other ideas from this all-too-brief focus on a very big subject included the possibility of building work with young people as a themed activity into every project and the use of testimonials from tradition bearers which could be translated into many European languages. The list of needs and opportunities continued (but was by no means concluded) by the importance of empowering teachers, the potential of creating resources with alternative ideas learned from the isolation period during Covid and ways to supply young people with simple affordable musical instruments.

Thanks

In concluding the formal part of the conference, Daina Zalane thanked the Fira team – Anna, Lidia, Eulalia and Jordi and their colleagues – and those who supported and supported the conference and the Fira Mediterrània de Manresa, including Institut Ramon Llull and the wine producers of Pla de Bages.

Daina also thanked all EFN members who had attended and given so much time and thought in discussions. The conference had been remarkably productive and EFN would be seeing the results of the thinking and planning in the coming year.

The location and host for the 2023 conference would be announced soon and EFN invited others to come forward with proposals for hosting the conference in future years.

Finally, very warm thanks were due to the wonderful artists who had made such an impression on delegates through their performances in the Fira Mediterrània showcases. And as the formal part of the conference closed delegates could still look forward to much more music, dance and spectacular performances (including castells - the astonishing human towers) during the evening and the following day, as well as a tour of the historic city of Manresa.



DELEGATES at EFN CONFERENCE 2022

Salla	Ahvenjarvi	Haapavesi Folk Music Festival
Cigdem	Aslan	Artist
Tom	Besford	English Folk Expo
Anastasia	Betron	Compagnie Baltazar Montanaro
Johan Einar	Bjerkem	Stiftinga Hilmar Alexandersen
Roger	Bouwens	Toernee Mondial
Vincent	Caruana	CEER - University of Malta
Lize	Colson	VI.BE
Piero	Cremaschi	Festival Producer
Juan Antonio Torres	Delgado	Artist, Vigüela
Bojan	Djordjevic	World Music association of Serbia
Carol	Duran Moreno	Centre Artesà Tradicionàrius
Linda	Dyrnes	FolkOrg
Juan Antonio Vazquez	Franco	Mapamundi Música / Mundofonías
Mila	Georgieva	Bulgarian Music Association
Rolf	Gulla	FolkOrg
Jan	Harrison	Scandimoot
Catriona	Hawksworth	Creative Scotland
Angela	Hont	Hungarian Heritage House
Minna	Huuskonen	Minnamurra Music Management & Agency
Clare	Jennings	The Armagh Rhymers
Tina	Jordan Rees	Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland
Phil	Keen	Scandimoot
Danny	KilBride	Trac Cymru
Nod	Knowles	European Folk Network Administrator
Ellen	Krageberg	Norsk Senter for Folkemusikk og Folkedans
Andrew	Lambert	Kilfenora Traditional Music Festival
Unni	Lovlid	Norwegian Academy of Music
Carol	Main	Live Music Now Scotland
Simon	McKerrell	Researcher, Artist
Louise	Migne	Compagnie Baltazar Montanaro
Baltazar	Montanaro	Compagnie Baltazar Montanaro
Andrea	Murzi	European Music Council
Brian	O hEadra	Artist
Eva	Omagbemi	Riksförbundet för Folkmusik och Dans
Bela	Pap	Alt Productions
Antonio	Pinto	Associação Xarabanda
Hans	Quaghebeur	Muziekmozaiek vzw
Julien	Regi	FAMDT
Marc	Reusen	The Celtic Art Gallery vzw
Marc	Reusen	The Celtic Art Gallery vzw
Anna	Romanin	Associazione Culturale Folkgiornale
Johanna	Sauramaki	Saura Booking Agency
Dirk	Seymus	Linkwadraat vzw

Ana	Sors	Salto Music / EXIB Música
Mirena	Staneva	Bulgarian Music Association
Rosario	Tribastone	Artist
Araceli	Tzigane	Mapamundi Música
Eric	van Monckhoven	Music4You/World Music Lab
Steven	Vanderaspolden	Flemish Folk Network
Jarmila	Vlckova	AMITY
Alexander	Walter	WOMEX
Balazs	Weyer	Hangveto
Daina	Zalane	Lauska