

EUROPEAN FOLK NETWORK

REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE on 17 & 18 NOVEMBER 2021

Hosted by the Hungarian Heritage House, Budapest.

The conference was attended in-person by 39 representatives from 22 European nations. In addition 29 other people were registered for the event and they were able to access the livestream of all sessions along with all other members of EFN.

17 November 2021

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Lazlo Kelemen, General Director of the Hungarian Heritage House, welcomed everyone to the House and to the conference. He was delighted to be able to host EFN's second in-person conference – the Heritage House was a founding member of the network and a strong supporter of its aims and vision. Lazlo told the conference that, after serving for many years as General Director, he would be retiring from the Heritage House at the end of the week of the conference, so it was a perfect opportunity for him to introduce his successor, Miklos Both, who members would meet later in the conference.

David Francis, Chair of the EFN Board and Director of Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland, thanked Lazlo and colleagues from the Heritage House who had made so many excellent arrangements for the conference. Due to the uncertainties caused by the Coronavirus pandemic the decision to make this in-person event had been made unusually late – but everyone had worked remarkably quickly and efficiently to make it happen. David also thanked members of the EFN Board and Interim Administrator Nod Knowles for their part in organising the conference.

David welcomed members of EFN and others to the conference, whether in-person or online. He thanked the Heritage House for making it possible to livestream the entire event. The programme of speakers and discussions give everyone the opportunity to think about and to discuss some of the important issues of our time, as well as to experience Hungary's rich traditional culture.

NORDIC GREEN TOURING

Finnish Folk and Jazz in the Key of Green

Raisa Siivola & Maria Silvennoinen

Producer-Publicist and Executive Manager, Jazz Finland

While the pandemic put almost all live events to a halt, it also gave time to for Jazz Finland restructure their values and take steps to improve the resilience of the jazz and folk music community in the future. To ensure the welfare of the marginalized art itself and the professionals working in the branch, they believed that the whole industry would need to strive towards more sustainable practices and structures.

Jazz Finland as an organization, wanted to be at the vanguard of change. In 2020–2021 Jazz Finland coordinated a pilot project, titled Nordic Jazz Comets, where Nordic jazz clubs and festivals and jazz ensembles pulled together to study and promote greener touring and events. In 2022–2023 the project would continue, with a focus on the local communities and social justice.

Raisa and Maria presented the background and details of Jazz Finland's approach to green issues and posed questions that all promoters and artists would have to address in their future work.

FOLK MUSIC FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Folk_ME - Folk Music Education for Future Generations

Miklos Both

Director of Poliphony project and General Director of the Hungarian Heritage House

Miklos introduced Folk_ME - Folk Music Education for Future Generations - an innovative education project which targets public education. The project's main output was a newly developed digital toolkit, which integrated traditions into a wider context creatively in high school education. Inspired by the Polyphony Project's research and online archive the project offered a solution to help save disappearing European folk heritage. The methodology integrated international educational approaches which allowed extensive usage of a toolkit that the project had developed. Folk_ME was a Hungarian partnership between the Polyphony Project, the Hungarian Heritage House and the Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute for Musicology.

DISCUSSION GROUPS

Conference attendees each chose a group for discussion sessions.

Green Touring discussion group report

Prompted by the presentation from Jazz Finland, the group discussed various aspects of environmentally responsible changes that festivals, artists, tour organisers and audiences could consider.

No event/venue/organiser might be perfectly carbon neutral and there would always be things to criticise, but the group believed that people should set their own goals and objectives and work towards them, step by step.

They considered some examples of how music and festival management could be greener and the list included:

Recycling garbage in festival. Offering local – organic food and cooking food themselves. Encourage camping – staying overnight. Ensure local transport, provide car-sharing. Artists could provide a “green” rider – not buying excess things, no plastic water bottles etc. Promote recycling on festival grounds. Use old banners to make bags, purses, merchandising. Involve children. Run on-site campaigns. to leave the place in a better/cleaner state than it was found.

They believed that huge festivals would give difficulty being green – green is small-scale. And live music was about coming together, as opposed to a digital experience.

In terms of touring, the group considered the proposition ‘How to get musicians from Finland to Portugal the greenway?’ They could create multiple gig tours and refuse to accept exclusive rights for a gig in any areas. Flights were the biggest challenge for a sustainability strategy but venues/festivals could create a network committed to enabling green touring and information exchange.

There was the idea that people might stop focusing on traveling artists and their carbon footprint, but rather focus on how the audience, which is a huge number of people, could behave in a greener way. The relevant issues about audiences included: traveling to/from the venue or event (car-sharing, public transport); what they eat (local, organic, vegetarian) what they use (less plastic, less waste, recycled cups etc); and where they stay (camping, hotels etc.)

Other discussion groups focussed on **Education** and **Dance Development**.

THE HUNGARIAN DANCE HOUSE MOVEMENT

Embracing tradition, theory, and practice: the first 50 years of Táncház

Dr. Soma Salamon

Programme Editor and Consultant for Folk and World music, House of Hungarian Music

The long-time recognized, Táncház movement, along with the related UNESCO-labeled method of revival, would celebrate the 50th anniversary of its inauguration in 2022. No doubt, this past half century should be considered as a great success story, regarding the efficient grafting of traditional music and dance into urban environment as an actualized form of entertainment. Soma notes that in his presentation, his aim was to underline the unique academic fundamentals of the Hungarian revival and to introduce the international context of the táncház. He would attempt to interpret and evaluate some of its peculiar phenomena, especially regarding the rural-to-urban transmission within the movement.

DANCE HOUSE EVENING

FONO MUSIC HOUSE, Budapest

After a fine meal at the Fono Music House from a menu of traditional Hungarian recipes, conference attendees enjoyed a full evening of music and dance in the spirit of the Dance House movement. With music from a truly traditional band everyone was also given practical instruction in various traditional dances.

18 November 2021

EFN AGM BOARD ELECTION

The formal Annual General Meeting of the network had been held online on 15 March 2021. At that meeting it was agreed that the first elections for Board members would be postponed until there could be an in-person meeting.

In accordance with the EFN constitution, a call was made in advance of the Budapest conference for candidates who wished to stand for election to the Board. The inaugural Board members were required to stand down at the point of this first election but were eligible to stand for election.

Six candidates were nominated for election (for a possible nine places on the Board). The candidates were:

Daina Zalane (Lauska, Latvia); **Araceli Tzigane** (Mapamundi Musica, Spain); **Eric van Monckhoven** (Music4You, Italy), **David Francis** (Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland); **Danny KilBride** (trac Cymru, Wales); **Angela Hont** (Hungarian Heritage House).

Since there were fewer candidates than the number of available places, the meeting agreed that a ballot was not necessary and all six candidates were elected to the Board for a three year term, dependent on the arrangements they would make for the rotation of Board membership as specified by the Internal Regulations.

THE FUTURE FOR AUDIENCES - IN PERSON AND ONLINE

Tom Besford

Chief Executive, English Folk Expo

Devastation, said Tom, can be a driver of innovation; the past two years had seen digital and online audiences play a vital role in enabling musicians to continue to perform live music. As we began to emerge from the pandemic, what will be the future for our audiences who have migrated into a digital realm? Was digital here to stay? Would audiences return in full to in person live music? Tom had delivered a range of online activity for English Folk Expo throughout the pandemic and in this presentation he reflected and considered the future of our online and in person audiences within specialist genres such as folk music.

DISCUSSION GROUPS

Conference attendees each chose one of the groups for discussion sessions.

Online v In Person; Commercialisation of tradition; Regional cooperation.

There was also a group for non-members of EFN

In this session, in-person and online, Interim Administrator Nod Knowles presented a summary of EFN's aims, vision, plans and history for those who were not yet members of the network.

BALKAN MOST - TRADITIONAL ARTS IN THE BALKAN REGION

Bridge for Balkan music

Andras Lelkes

Chief Executive Office, Hangveto

Introducing the MOST project, Andras explained that the mission of MOST was to boost the music market of the Balkans, by connecting and supporting actors of the world music scene; artists, managers, festivals and institutions. MOST was building a bridge connecting the Balkans and the global music market, a bridge made up of personal connections, experience and exchange.

DISCUSSION GROUPS

Future work and planning for EFN

Conference attendees broke into groups for discussion sessions, contemplating the plans and priorities for EFN. The discussions considered various issues – one of which was the potential for a **European Folk Day**.

Amongst ideas for a European Folk Day were that it could possibly be set on 22 September, the Autumn Equinox. It should be local, national and international – and it must have a distinct European identity.

There were several areas of activity which could be explored. It would be necessary to develop a communication plan, a unified visual image, logo, hashtag, simple, clear guidelines – and a hashtag #EuropeanFolkDay. The risk of repeating 'folk' clichés must be avoided. The Folk Day could be themed differently each year – for example, dances, lullabies etc. The message would be: 'celebrate your own, local knowledge, grassroots culture'. EFN members could offer city councils to join, organise dances, concert; the Day could involve schools, programmes for children, families. EFN and its members could create an exchange of songs, dances: learn the songs of another country or a twinned school; ask musicians to create small recordings and post them online.

Initiatives could be created – for example 'ask your grandmother for a song!' or 'play and dance in the streets.'

THANKS AND CLOSE

Miklos Both, the incoming General Director of the Hungarian Heritage House and David Francis, Chair of the EFN Board agreed that the conference had been full of productive ideas and discussions. They thanked all the speakers who had provided a wealth of information and ideas – and the conference attendees who had contributed to discussion groups and EFN future planning. David thanked Miklos for the opportunity to enjoy and admire the Heritage House and for all the generous support and Hungarian hospitality. He thanked Angela Hont, Veronika Varga and the entire Heritage House team who had made the conference so well organised and enjoyable.

TOUR OF THE HUNGARIAN HERITAGE HOUSE ARCHIVE

After the formal end of the conference, attendees were invited to visit the Heritage House's archive. The archive held a fascinating range of papers, recordings, photographs, films and other material documenting Hungarian local, regional and national traditions.

Find out more about the archive via <https://hagyomanyokhaza.hu/en/archives>

HUNGARIAN TRADITIONAL CONCERT

At the Hungarian Heritage House, with:

Agnes Enyedi & Soma Salamon duo; Magos Folk Band;

Babra and the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble

As a perfect end to a traditional network conference, the Heritage House presented a breath-taking series of performances by groups of musicians and dancers, showcasing the remarkable skill of Hungarian performers and the equally remarkable vibrancy of Hungary's traditional culture.