

# **Report on the 28th Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Ethnochoreology**

**Korcula, Croatia, 7-18 July 2014.**

By Liz Mellish

The 28th Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Ethnochoreology was held on the island of Korcula, on the Adriatic coast of Croatia between July 7<sup>th</sup> and July 17<sup>th</sup> 2014. This Symposium was the largest to date in the long history of this Study Group and brought together over a hundred scholars from more than thirty countries throughout the world, ranging from senior researchers who had been members of the Group for many years to international students for whom this was their first meeting.

The Symposium was hosted by the Croatian Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research (IEF) together with the Korcula Tourist Board. This was the second time that the Ethnochoreology group had met on the island of Korcula; the first was for the 21<sup>st</sup> Symposium fourteen years previously in 2000. The local organisers were Elsie Ivancich Dunin and Iva Niemčić (IEF), whose expert organisational skills ensured that the comprehensive programme ran smoothly and efficiently throughout. During the months preceding the Symposium updated information for participants was posted on a dedicated website as it became available (<http://korcula-2014-ictm.info/>).

Papers were invited covering the two themes of 'Dance and Narrative' and 'Dance as Intangible and Tangible Cultural Heritage'. Both these themes had relevance to Korcula Island, and its unique heritage of sword dancing with spoken text, that is registered as intangible cultural heritage with Croatia's Ministry of Culture. The high number of applications for the Symposium presented a logistical challenge to the programme committee chaired by Irene Loutzaki, assisted by Barbara Alge, Ivana Katarinčić and Kendra Stepputat, who expertly arranged the individual presentations into coherent sessions focussing on sub-topics within the Symposium themes, whilst taking into account individual constraints on participation.

## **Opening session**

The Symposium opening ceremony on the evening of Monday 7<sup>th</sup> July was covered in the local press. The participants were welcomed by the Mayor of Korcula, Vinko Kapelina, who expressed his pleasure that Korcula had again been chosen as the venue for this major international gathering. He especially thanked Elsie Ivancich Dunin (honorary citizen of Korcula) who had worked together with the Korcula Tourist Board on the local organisation. The participants were then welcomed by László Felföldi, Chair of the Ethnochoreology Study Group, who thanked the Mayor of Korcula and the Korcula Tourist Board for hosting this Symposium, and Tvrtko Zebec, Director of the Croatian Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research (IEF) and the Director of the Tourist Board of the City of Korcula, Hana Turudić. After a welcome drink the participants watched an exhilarating Moreška sword dance performance in Korcula old town.

## **Presentations**

The venue for the Symposium presentations was the conference room in Hotel Marco Polo situated close to Korcula old town. This comfortable room was only just large enough to accommodate the large number of participants, and the many non-presenting participants, partners and families some of whom attended the sessions, whilst others only joined for the ethnographic excursions.

Following the long established principle from previous symposia of the Ethnochoreology Study Group the presentations took place in one programme with no parallel sessions. This enabled all attendees, including senior researchers, newly established academics and current students to listen to all of the presentations and contribute to the stimulating discussion that followed each paper.

The first of the two Symposium themes, 'Dance and Narrative', was tackled during the first week of the Symposium, from Tuesday July 8<sup>th</sup> until Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> July, with a break on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> for a well deserved excursion to the island of Lastovo. The papers on this topic were divided into twenty-one sessions and included fifty-two papers, with one panel. Due to the high numbers of presentations there is not space to give a detailed summary or highlight specific presentations in this report. The second Symposium theme, 'Dance as Intangible and Tangible Cultural Heritage' was covered during the latter part of the Symposium, between Monday 14<sup>th</sup> July and Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> July. This included ten sessions with a total of thirty papers including two panels. In addition to the papers submitted under the two Symposium themes, there was also one paper covering current research, two ethnographic film premieres, and eight presentations by current students that were given during three sessions dedicated specifically for student presentations. The established members of the Study Group were pleased to welcome young researchers including several of the current Choreomundus - International Master in Dance Knowledge, Practice, and Heritage students, and also three local researchers from Korcula, whose participation enabled them to experience the wider community of dance academics. The only regrets were the unavoidable absence of key figures from the older generation of Study Group members, Anca Giurchescu and Adrienne Kaepler.

## **Business meetings**

The (rather lengthy) business meeting took place on July 13<sup>th</sup> (and was continued between sessions on the following two days). László Felföldi as current chair of the Study Group gave a report on the activities of the Group since the last Symposium in Limerick, Ireland 2012. As this was his last meeting as chair on the completion of his term of office, he was given strong collective thanks by all present. Catherine Foley was welcomed into the role as the new chair, and she promised to take on the challenges presented by the ever-growing number of members of this group. Offers to host the next Symposium were discussed and it was agreed that this would be held near Graz, Austria in July 2016. Many suggestions were made for possible themes for this meeting and after extensive discussion and rounds of voting these were narrowed to 'Dance and the Senses' and 'Relocated Dance Cultures and Dances'.

The proceedings from the 2012 Symposium in Limerick were distributed to the delegates. Elsie Ivancich Dunin announced that the call for papers for this Symposium Proceedings would be circulated soon, with the intention of completing the publication by the time of the ICTM World Conference in July 2015.

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Sub-study groups held meetings where their coordinators gave reports on their aims and past activities and proposed activities in the future were discussed. These included the sub-study groups on fieldwork methods, dance and ritual, 19<sup>th</sup> century-derived round dances, movement analysis, and music and dance relationships.

### **Associated ethnographic programme**

The Symposium sessions were interspersed with a rich ethnographic programme so the participants were able to experience the intangible cultural heritage of Korcula Island for themselves. Korcula Island has a unique heritage including two types of sword dancing, single sword, village *kumpanija* groups and double sword *moreska* groups. During the eleven days of the Symposium the participants watched performances of *moreska* sword dancers in Korcula town, attended the Korcula sword dance festival with local participating groups from Korcula and Lastovo islands and a visiting group of stick and shield dancers from Algemesi (near Valencia), Spain who are registered on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list, and attended the ceremonial opening of an exhibition of the 'Kumpanija' sword dance from Pupnat village in the Korcula Town Museum. Three evening visits were arranged to the villages of Smokvica, Blato, Pupnat, for sword dance (*kumpanija*) performances and discussions with the members of these groups. On Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> July an all day excursion to the nearby island of Lastovo included a performance of its carnival sword dance, and viewing a documentary of František Pospíšil's 1924 filming of Lastovo's carnival sword dancing. The Symposium participants were also treated to a workshop of nineteenth century couple dances from the village of Čara on the evening of Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> July. The final gala dinner on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> July also doubled as an early birthday celebration (and thank you) party for Elsie Ivancich Dunin.

### **Concluding sessions**

The Symposium was brought to a close on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> July with concise summaries of the two Symposium themes given by Yolanda van Ede, Chi-Fang Chao, Siri Maeland and Miriam Phillips during which they highlighted numerous valuable points made and questions raised that stimulated thoughts for future meetings and collaborations.

The organisers were especially pleased and honoured that Svanibor Pettan, Secretary General of the ICTM, was able to join the Group for the latter part of the Symposium. During the closing session he spoke briefly, thanking all those present for making him very welcome and saying that he hoped to be able to come to future meetings. A final farewell was said to Laszlo Felföldi as outgoing Chair and Catherine Foley made her initiation as incoming Chair by singing a song in Irish. Elsie Ivancich Dunin gave the final closing words by thanking the local hosts, the Korcula Tourist Board and the staff of the Marco Polo Hotel.

For many of the participants the Symposium was not totally over as on the following day, Elsie Ivancich Dunin had arranged a specially organised post-symposium excursion to the "upper village" of Mrćevo in the mountainous hinterland of Dubrovnik. The event allowed taking part in an enactment of a traditional village wedding including participation in Lindjo dancing.