

IAML 2022 Conference Report

By Laura Jacyna

On July 24, 2022, the IAML Congress 2022 commenced with an opening reception held in the courtyard of the National Library of the Czech Republic in the city of Prague. It was a beautiful summer Sunday evening and a gorgeous setting for the beginning of the conference experience. After speeches from the organizers and hosts of the conference, I was able to meet colleagues whom I had only emailed, attended Zoom meetings with, or met in MLA conference online social events, in person for the first time. Everyone was able to chat and mingle over a fantastic reception of beer, wine, cheese, meat and vegetable dishes, and sweets to kick off the conference.

The plenary session gave an overview of the different Czech museums and institutions dedicated to “The Big Four,” the four most well-known Czech composers: Antonín Dvořák, Bedřich Smetana, Bohuslav Martinů, and Leoš Janáček, and the completed or ongoing work into the creation of the complete Critical Editions by these composers. Immediately after, I went to a session about outreach activities and was inspired by the projects and events created by the public librarian presenters in collaboration with other institutions. Their outreach activities included: hosting pre-premiere talks with members of the stage teams of opera performances of the Moravian-Silesian National Theatre, Open Mic nights in collaboration with art schools and conservatories, programs with expressive therapy, art therapy, and/or active and passive music therapy, workshops for parents and children in collaboration with the Filharmonie Brno, a project for people with early-stage dementia, and performances of works composed by young people. The range of activities from these public library institutions in the Czech Republic and the Netherlands was very exciting to see.

A session entitled: *Producing, selling, and archiving sound recordings in the Czech Republic and Croatia* covered the history of the Czech phonographic record market and its relationship to Croatia’s phonographic record market over the years in different political climates. The first presentation discussed how four periods of social and political changes impacted the cooperation between the Czech Republic and Croatia on early recorded sound production. The second specifically discussed the Prague phonography retailers and the mappings of the beginnings of the

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Czech wax cylinder and shellac record markets. The last presentation was about establishing the Czech(oslovak) National Sound Archive which does not exist... yet. The presenter's passion and enthusiasm for this project exuded through this presentation, and at the end they gave out copies of their book on how to catalogue vinyl records using their labels.

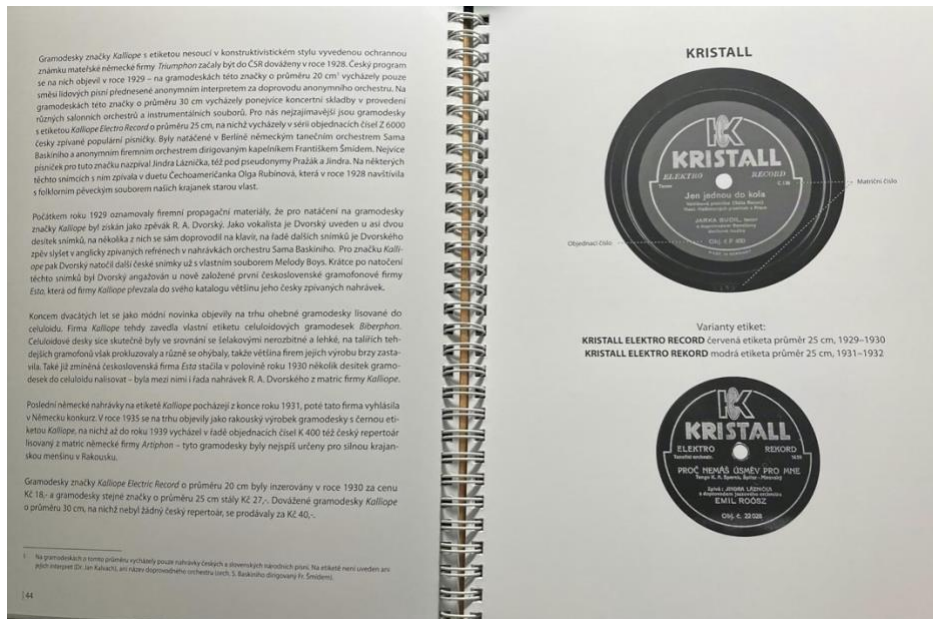
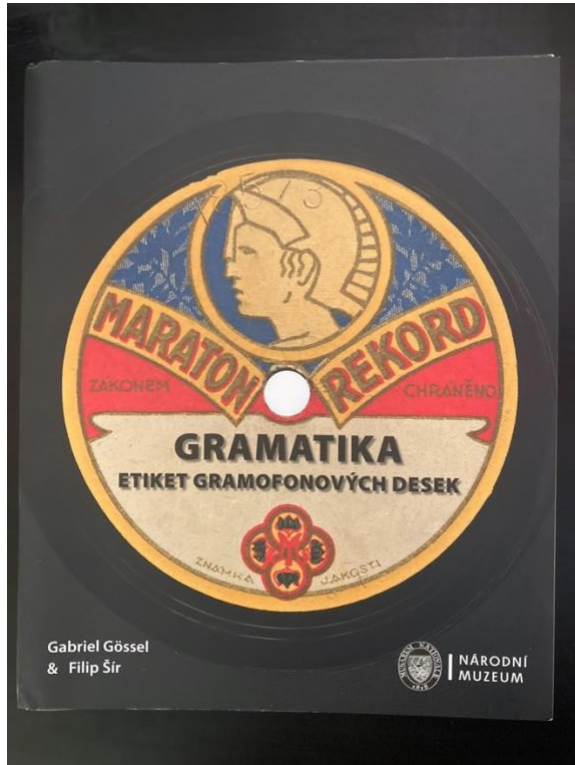


IMAGE 1. PHOTOS OF A CZECH BOOK ABOUT CATALOGUING VINYL RECORD LABELS. PHOTO CREDIT: LAURA JACYNA.

Conference sessions were often held at the same time, with the third room, or Hall C, being a chapel known as the Mirror Chapel (see Image 2). While I did not know it at the time, the Mirror Chapel is one of the attractions people come to see in Prague, and apparently, there were often groups of tourists who could not make their pilgrimage to the chapel because of our sessions. However, it was not an ideal conference presentation space, as it was very reverberant, and it could be quite challenging to hear presenters (depending on their adjustments), and these difficulties were amplified when an online speaker's presentation echoed throughout the space.



IMAGE 2. PRESENTATION IN THE MIRROR CHAPEL. PHOTO CREDIT: LAURA JACZYNA.

Tuesday morning began with a session devoted to ontologies and open linked data repository platforms related to music libraries. There was a lot of discussion about different levels of representation and the function of an instrument or ensemble. One presentation looked specifically at the categorization of ensemble versus performer and their function in polyphonic music, particularly how ensembles are often classified in the same way as instruments. The semantics of linked data triples are very exact and granular, as ambiguity is not desired in computation, and so the ambiguity presented of an instrument and ensemble in the same category is a complication that will need to be addressed by the music cataloguing and linked data community.

A standout presentation for me was: *Where are the 'other' scores? Addressing the lack of diversity in South African sheet music collections of the University of Cape Town*. With the current interest in decolonization and transformation, this presentation introduced the question of 'where are the other scores' (i.e., scores by composers of colour and women composers)? The discussion included

the marginalization of Black scholars, the historical lack of funding available to them, and how the publishing industry acted as a form of gatekeeping. Excerpts of some of the music by these composers from the University of Cape Town were presented, such as a *Cello Concerto* by Priaulx Rainier (South African woman composer) and *Thambo Lenyoka* by Mzilikazi Khumalo (South African Black composer). These works were absolutely gorgeous, and I was shocked that these are not more widely known. This presentation also made me reflect on how none of the other presentations, including the ones that followed, explicitly discussed, or mentioned anything related to equity, diversity, or inclusion (except perhaps a poster or two).

My conference highlight was an excursion to The Bohuslav Martinů Institute (see Image 3). My group began our journey by going through the centre of Prague in a historical tram that was reserved for our group. When we arrived at the Institute, we were presented with a shorter piano concert of works by the Big Four Czech composers. We were then treated to coffee, wine, watermelon, and other refreshments. After a bit of a reprieve, we went into the main room of the Institute, which holds copies of all known materials related to the works of Martinů and his life. Anyone researching Martinů is always welcome to research at the Institute.



IMAGE 3. ZOJA SEYCKOVA AND ALEŠ BŘEZINA SHARING INSIGHTS AT THE BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ INSTITUTE. PHOTO CREDIT: LAURA JACYNA.

For a long time, the Institute focused on accumulating materials from people who knew Martinů and keeping an eye out for related materials in auctions. Now, they are working on what will eventually be a 150 volume Critical Edition set of Bohuslav Martinů's complete works. They have also created a [database](#) of their existing holdings. Our hosts, who work at the Institute, patiently explained and answered all our questions. This was a fascinating look at a research centre that is

solely dedicated to the life and works of one composer and what goes into creating complete critical editions of a composer's lifetime of works.

There were several presentations on projects about rediscovering composers from the Netherlands. An interesting presentation entitled: *Forbidden Music Regained: Collaborative Approaches to (Re)discovering Music* discussed a project about Dutch composers who were persecuted in WWII and whose works were lost during the war. The project is a collaboration between the Leo Smit Foundation, the Dutch Music Institute, and Donemus Publishing to digitize and engrave works by these composers. They also have education projects focused on these Dutch composers and are working to have their works presented in festivals. Someone from Donemus Publishing gave this presentation, and another presentation about the project was given by the Dutch Music Institute as well.

Another fascinating presentation about forgotten Dutch composers was entitled *Sounding the Archives: Podcasts as Carriers for Archival Storytelling*. For this project, the Netherlands Music Institute collaborated to create a podcast of a variety of radio plays by several unknown Dutch composers, alongside a selection of interviews with musicologists and musicians. A selection process for choosing radio plays was conducted with experts from the field, and the scores and scripts' availability were considered. The radio drama music was partially reconstructed, and new digital orchestral parts were created and recorded. The podcast was broadcast via FM radio, web radio, and podcast platforms. What was impressive was how they were able to fund such an immense project. It turns out that they were able to do this project with no expense! The performers were already paid a salary by their orchestra, and with COVID, did not have playing opportunities and were so "bored" that they volunteered to play, showcasing a way this project was able to take advantage of an opportunity created by the pandemic. The radio station they collaborated with had funds to produce the podcast, and interviewees offered their contributions for free. This project showed how collaboration between institutions and people can lead to impactful and successful projects and find new and accessible ways to promote previously unknown works.

On Thursday, the 9th International Conference on Digital Libraries for Musicology was held in association with IAML 2022. Presenters demonstrated their projects, such as one project building the content search system of symbolic music repositories centred on features and their future goals of incorporating both Optical Music Recognition (OMR) and multimodal data and the formalizing and standardizing of editorial and encoding practices. Another project discussed the segmentation and automatic transcription of Norwegian Hardanger fiddle folk tunes using a software program called SeFiRe, which they found not to be refined enough for their usage. Other presentations discussed FRBR (Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records) groupings, and there was an entire session of projects related to FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable). A highlight was a presentation by my former McGill school colleague Marthe Thomae on her research

project digitizing choir books in Guatemala, mostly from the 16th century (see Image 4). Her presentation exemplified a DIY (do-it-yourself) approach to digitization, highlighting the resources used, and gave practical insights on best practices for digitization with a minimal budget.



IMAGE 4. MARTHE THOMAE PRESENTING ON MAKING A DIY BOOK SCANNER. PHOTO CREDIT: LAURA JACYNA.

With the 50th anniversary of Iannis Xenakis this year, it was refreshing to go to see a session dedicated to this often-overlooked composer and learn about archival projects of his music. At the Centre Iannis Xenakis, [UPI Sketch](#), a sound composition application/software using sound gestures, was created to be used in both educational and professional contexts. It is inspired by UPIC, Xenakis' computer music composition tool, which numerous other composers have used.

I also found a presentation about music librarians providing academic writing support interesting, as it relates to similar instruction I facilitate at my institution. Some of their challenges and deliberations were relatable, such as whether to offer workshops versus drop-in times, and the struggle of getting students to attend. The presenters noted that musicians often don't think they need academic writing skills, and the librarians plan to offer future sessions to demonstrate where writing becomes applicable in a music-related career.

A huge shout out to the Czech branch of IAML who had to re-organize the conference not one, not two, but three times! A lot of work and considerable effort; they were fantastic hosts, resulting in a very successful conference. Till next time!