



Interview / Entrevista / Entrevista

Svanibor Pettan. “The Idea of Creating an ICTM Study Group with Focus on Applied Ethnomusicology Was in My Mind for Years”

por Ana Flávia Miguel¹ (Universidade de Aveiro, INET-md)*

Svanibor Pettan is professor and chair of the ethnomusicology programme at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. His academic degrees are from the Universities of Zagreb, Croatia (BA), Ljubljana, Slovenia (MA), and Maryland, USA (PhD), while his fieldwork sites include former Yugoslav lands, Australia, Egypt, Norway, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, and USA. The prevalent themes are music, politics and war, multiculturalism, minorities, gender, and applied ethnomusicology. He was the first Yugoslav ethnomusicologist who conducted research for academic degrees outside of Europe (Zanzibar in 1982, Egypt in 1986-87).

Svanibor’s dynamic professional career included full-time posts as radio editor (1984-88), scholar in a research institute (1988-98), and professor at a conservatory-type institution (1995-2003), department of ethnology and cultural anthropology (2003-05), and department of musicology (2005-). Within the International Council for Traditional Music he served as national representative of Croatia and later Slovenia, Chair of the Programme Committee of the 38th World Conference, co-founder, Vice-chair and Chair of the Study Group on Music and Minorities, founder and Chair of the Study Group on Applied Ethnomusicology, member of the Executive Board, Secretary General, and Vice-President. He was member of the Council of the Society for Ethnomusicology, and twice President of the Cultural and Ethnomusicological Society Folk Slovenia.

Svanibor was visiting professor at the Universities of Zagreb (1993-96), Oslo (1994, 1996), Sarajevo (1998-2001), Washington (2004), Illinois (2006), Pula (2007-11), Tainan (2013), Split (2014), and Maribor (2017); visiting scholar at Wesleyan (2001), Brown (2010), Chicago (2012), and Griffith (2013); and external examiner at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of

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Limerick (2004-2006).

He gave over 90 invited lectures at universities or research institutes in Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, China, Croatia, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Hungary, India, Ireland, Japan, Kazakhstan, Macedonia, Montenegro, Nepal, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Thailand, Taiwan, Turkey, Ukraine, UK, USA, and Vietnam.

His membership in past or present editorial boards of scholarly publications include: Bloomsbury (ex Continuum) Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World (UK), Ethnomusicology Forum (UK), Etnomuzika (Ukraine), Glasba v šoli in vrtcu (Slovenia), Journal of Urban Culture Research (Thailand), Music and Arts in Action (UK), Muzika (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Muzikološki zbornik (Slovenia), Narodna umjetnost (Croatia), Pax Sonoris (Russia), Sound Ethnographies (Italy), Tradicija ir darbartis (Lithuania), Traditiones (Slovenia), The World of Music (Germany), and Translingual Discourses in Ethnomusicology (Austria).

Svanibor leads organizing teams of international annual symposia in Ljubljana (2000, 2006, 2008, 2011-) and the fundamental research project on minority musics in Slovenia (2017-20). He is recipient of the awards from Turksoy, Musicological Society of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and University of Ljubljana (including Life Achievement Award in 2018).

His immediate future plans are co-editing of the second edition of the *Oxford Handbook of Applied Ethnomusicology* in three volumes, co-editing of a major multi-author volume dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the ICTM, to do lectures in Japan in October 2018, a summer course in Canada in 2019 and a sabbatical in USA or Canada in 2019.

Ana Flávia Miguel: Can you please tell us how and why do you become an ethnomusicologist?

Svanibor Pettan: I come from a family of Western art musicians. My father was composer, musicologist and professor and my mother was music teacher. While still in the elementary general and music schools, I played art music on cello and performed in a popular music band with my schoolmates. My first contact with traditional (folk) music happened during my undergraduate study of musicology at the University of Zagreb in Croatia, Yugoslavia at that time. The class in ethnomusicology, taught by Professor Jerko Bezić, required an independent fieldwork project and I was lucky to bump into a village musician, Franjo Kirin, whose wisdom and musicianship sharply differed from what I have experienced before and made me enthusiastic about broadening my musical interests. Increasing

encounters with ethnomusicological literature helped me understand that ethnomusicology was much bigger than “studying traditional music at home”. Consequently, I conducted my bachelor’s research in Tanzania and my master’s research in Egypt, with a clear wish to broaden the scope of ethnomusicology in what was then Yugoslavia. Finally, thanks to encouragement and recommendation of Prof. Ankica Petrović from Sarajevo, who got her PhD under John Blacking’s mentorship in Belfast, I went to the United States to earn doctorate. My supervisor at the University of Maryland (UMBC) was Prof. Jozef Pacholczyk and the other professors were Mantle Hood, Philip Schuyler and Karl Signell (image 1).



Image 1. A picture taken after defense of Pettan’s Dissertation, together with his professors. From left: Pacholczyk, Signell, Schuyler, Hood. Baltimore, 1992.

The motto of the program was “music wherever whenever”, which enabled me to study various hybridities in music from all over the world and work with a variety of musicians, including those from marginalized communities. Research on interactions and creativity associated with Romani (Gypsy) musicianship in Kosovo in the Balkans became the topic of my dissertation and enriched in several respects my understanding of music. To sum up, Jerko Bezić, Ankica Petrović and Jozef Pacholczyk were the academics who allowed me to fly when it was necessary. Once I asked Prof. Pacholczyk, how could I ever pay him back for his generosity? His answer still resonates in my mind and affects my doings: “If you think that you got something valuable from me, just make sure to share your valuables with your students”.

AFM: What kind of jobs have you experienced in your professional career?

SP: I started as radio editor for traditional music in 1984, almost immediately after completing undergraduate studies, which allowed me to conduct field research on a regular

basis for weekly broadcasts. This was followed by a 10-years long scholarly position at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research in Zagreb and finally by the regular university teaching. I was gradually creating ethnomusicological courses at the University of Ljubljana, first at the Academy of Music, then at the Faculty of Arts, starting in the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology and ending in the Department of Musicology. For six years in the 1990s, I was commuting between Zagreb and Ljubljana, working at the institute and teaching at the principal universities in both cities, which meant almost three full-time jobs.

AFM. Which of your publications do you consider most important and why?

SP. Within the 1998 “trilogy”, which marked my departure from Croatia (edited volume *Music, Politics, and War: Views from Croatia*; issue of *The World of Music* journal with the theme *Music and Music Research in Croatia*; and CD *Croatia: Traditional Music of Today* in the UNESCO series), I would single out the first one, which anticipated the later growth of interest among ethnomusicologists in studying music and conflict. In Slovenia, which was seen as largely mono-ethnic by many of its inhabitants and scholars alike, I published several articles on multiculturalism and pointed out to minorities –“the Others from within” as I named them– including the edited volume *Music and Minorities* (2001). The same theoretical and methodological issues appear in my publications focused on Romanians, Europe’s largest minority group. I created not only books and articles about Romani musicians in Kosovo, but also a film, CD-ROM, and a picture exhibition. My next book/film will discuss cultural dynamics of their presence in Kosovo with four reference points: 1989, 1999, 2009, and 2019. Interest in applied ethnomusicology is a natural consequence emerging from my work with refugees and in musical practices of other underprivileged individuals and communities. I guess, thematic volume of *Musicological Annual* (2008), and co-edited volumes *Applied Ethnomusicology: Historical and Contemporary Approaches* (2010, with Klisala Harrison and Elisabeth Mackinlay), and *The Oxford Handbook of Applied Ethnomusicology* (2015, with Jeff Todd Titon) feature prominently in this thematic realm. A major publication, currently in process, is the ambitious volume celebrating the 70 years of ICTM, in which my co-editors are Naila Ceribašić and Don Niles. It emphasizes profound, though too often underestimated, importance of professional societies, such as ICTM, for our scholarship and our lives in general.

AFM. The International Council for Traditional Music is a very important organization for the study of music and for ethnomusicology. You are a very active and important member since 2009: ordinary board member (2001-2009), secretary general (2011-2017) and vice-president (2009-2011; 2017-2021). How do you describe your experience at ICTM (in general) and your experience as secretary general, in particular?

SP. I very much cherish ICTM and complement my ICTM memberships with memberships in several other societies and organizations. As its definition suggests, the Council encourages not only research, but also praxis, documentation, presentation and promotion of music and dance of all countries. To be its Secretary General is a particularly responsible position, which does take lots of time and energy, but on the other hand allows you to do improvements, of course in close cooperation with the Executive Board. And I was lucky to work most of the time in close cooperation with an excellent team, so-called Executive Group, consisting of President Salwa El-Shawan Castelo-Branco, Vice-presidents Don Niles and Razia Sultanova, and, on a day-to-day basis, multitalented Executive assistant Carlos Yoder. Maud Karpeles founded the Council on the ashes of World War 2 and her successors demonstrated amazing diplomatic skills in bringing the scholars from "divided worlds" together during the decades of Cold War. Their legacy was a major inspiration for me. And I truly enjoyed cooperating with the President Salwa El-Shawan Castelo-Branco and Executive Assistant Carlos Yoder. When and where did I become a member? As an undergraduate student in 1981, but the true active participation came several years later. I recall two very dramatic points. My first World Conference in Schladming in 1989 was marked by a scandal caused by the discovery of a hidden Nazi past of the then Austrian President Kurt Waldheim, who opened the conference. The second point refers to the World Conference in Rio de Janeiro in 2001, at which the then Secretary General Dieter Christensen abruptly stepped down, Anthony Seeger became his successor, and I was coopted to the Board instead of Seeger.

AFM. One of the memories I keep from the general meetings is the moment when you show the famous "map", mention the name of the new state members and the name of the countries that are not yet represented at ICTM. I noticed that since 2011 the map has been expanded. Why is it so important for you to fill in the map?

SP. You're right, the number of countries and regions in the ICTM World Network rose from 75 in 2011 to current 128. I made special efforts during my six years in the shoes of Secretary General to increase the "internationality" of the Council. Presence of scholars from new countries and regions enriches our shared access to knowledge and understanding of music as a truly universal phenomenon and at the same time stimulates research in the participating countries and regions. I wished to contribute to ICTM as to a healthy and much needed scholarly community marked by mutual respect and interest in exploring and celebrating various music and dance manifestations, and diverse research approaches worldwide. More remains to be done –and is already underway– in this sense in the Arab world, sub-Saharan Africa and –South America.

The 2015 ICTM World Conference in Astana (Kazakhstan) was the first in the territories of what used to be Soviet Union, the first in Central Asia, and the first in a predominantly Muslim

country. The 2019 ICTM World Conference in Bangkok (Thailand) will be the first in Southeast Asia. I believe, many of us would wish to see one of the upcoming World Conferences taking place in Latin America.

AFM: The special volume of SEM's journal dedicated to music and public interest (Titon 1992) plays a special role in the "first wave" (Harrison 2014) of applied ethnomusicology. In your opinion what's the biggest contribution of the articles published in this volume (Davis, Lomax-Hawes, Seeger, and Sheehy) for the development of what later was called AE?

SP: The editor of *Ethnomusicology* at that time and the initiator of the mentioned thematic issue, Jeff Todd Titon, told me that not the entire SEM membership was delighted about a volume dedicated to "music, the public interest, and the practice of ethnomusicology". SEM played a crucial role in the establishment of ethnomusicology as an academic discipline and jobs within the academia were considered the top choice. The mentioned volume provided a view to the other side of the discipline, non-academia centered, in which cultural relativism and the assumed role of a dispassionate researcher were challenged by the real-life needs for collaborative projects. At that time, in 1992, I completed my doctoral studies in Baltimore and returned to my war-torn country. While doing research on music, politics and war at home I started to think about how to use the acquired ethnomusicological knowledge and skills to help to the refugees and the internally displaced, suffering people. Later on, I used to attend meetings at SEM that led to the establishment of the special interest group and later section on applied ethnomusicology. I remember that their interest in "public sector" was very different from what I was doing at the time under the same label of applied ethnomusicology. I was an academic, not a "public-sector ethnomusicologist", claiming that any ethnomusicologist, regardless of his or her job position, can be a carrier of "applied ethnomusicology". The basis should be an ethnomusicology-informed research, upgraded by conscious intervention. Bess Lomax Hawes heard one of my presentations on work with refugees in 1995 and sent to me a long encouraging letter, not forgetting to state that my research was very unusual.

AFM: In 2003 Jeff Todd Titon organized the first conference on Applied Ethnomusicology at Brown University. You were one of the few Europeans attending the conference and presented a paper entitled "Two generations of Applied Ethnomusicologists: International Theory and Practice". A few years later, you and Jeff Todd Titon became major references in AE in USA and Europe, in SEM and ICTM, respectively.

Do you remember this conference? Can you briefly describe the ambience of a "first" conference on AE? Who are the two generations of AE?

SP: Jeff brought together at Brown a diverse and inspiring group of colleagues, some

active within and some outside of academia. It's interesting that two symposia with "applied ethnomusicology" in their titles, unrelated to each other, took place in that same year, 2003. The other one was organised in Venice by Italian ethnomusicologists. "Two generations" from your question refer to the Norwegian scholar Kjell Skyllstad and me. Kjell conducted an important three-year project titled *The Resonant Community* in some Norwegian schools and showed as early as 1993, how to efficiently use music to increase mutual understanding and respect among immigrant children from Africa, Asia and Latin America and their Norwegian schoolmates. The children's parents and teachers were also involved and affected by his project. In the mid nineties, Kjell invited me to a research and teaching stay at the University of Oslo and the two of us joined forces in the project Azra that benefited relations between the Bosnian refugees in Norway and the Norwegians. The 2008 volume of *Musicological Annual*, entirely dedicated to applied ethnomusicology, serves as a Festschrift for Kjell Skyllstad. In late June 2018 he celebrated his 90th birthday and just imagine, he is still active as editor-in-chief of the international scholarly periodical *Journal of Urban Culture Research* at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok (hosting institution of the ICTM World Conference in 2019) and regularly attends conferences worldwide.

AFM. During the ICTM's World Conference (2007) in Vienna, six participants from different continents (Samuel Araújo - South America, Svanibor Pettan - Europe, Patricia Opondo - Africa, Tan Sooi Beng - Asia, Jennifer Newsome - Oceania and Maureen Loughran - North America) presented the double panel "The politics of applied ethnomusicology: New perspectives". I would like to know how and why this group of people had the idea of creating the study group. What kind of concerns did you have? Were the different backgrounds and experiences of these six people a plus to the Study Group? If yes, How?

SP. The double panel on global politics of applied ethnomusicology was envisioned and put together by Samuel and me. Each of the panelists was involved in socially sensitive and engaged experiences, involving diverse communities and individuals in different settings such as for instance indigenous people, economically underprivileged youth, minorities, refugees. The panel was very well received. The idea of creating an ICTM study group with focus on applied ethnomusicology was in my mind for years. The foundational meeting in Vienna (see image 2) was anticipated by the symposium in Ljubljana in 2006 titled *Ethnomusicology and Ethnochoreology in Education: Issues in Applied Scholarship*. Here we can reproduce the original invitation to the founding meeting in Vienna in 2007, created by the ICTM Executive Assistant at that time Lee Anne Proberts.

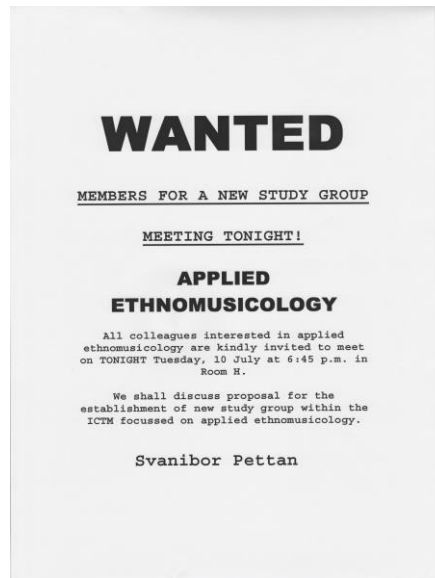


Image 2. A picture of the invitation to the foundational meeting of the ICTM Study Group on Applied Ethnomusicology at the World Conference in Vienna in 2007.

The meeting attracted as many as 44th World Conference participants of different generations and from various parts of the world, ranging from unknown ones (at that time) to the fully established scholars. My drafted definition of applied ethnomusicology was considerably altered thanks to one of the most memorable brainstorming. Expectations were high, and I think we all felt that the meeting was a start of something new and big in our discipline. SEM still had no definition of applied ethnomusicology at that time and we defined it as “the approach guided by principles of social responsibility, which extends the usual academic goal of broadening and deepening knowledge and understanding toward solving concrete problems and toward working both inside and beyond typical academic contexts”.

AFM: In 2009 I had the opportunity to attend an informal meeting with Bruno Nettl at University of Aveiro. At the end of this meeting, I asked him: “What do you think about Applied Ethnomusicology?” After a few seconds in silence Nettl answered me with a disturbing question: “Is that Ethnomusicology?” And you? What do you think about Nettl’s answer?

SP: I was teaching for a term at the University of Illinois in Urbana Champaign around that time and Bruno and I spent hours talking about different aspects of the discipline, including applied ethnomusicology. He was clearly reserved about it, but I did not find it disturbing. It just shows that those colleagues who think that all ethnomusicology is applied should think twice. For me, applied ethnomusicology is the extension of ethnomusicological research, which starts with the conscious decision of the researcher to cross the line between the research ending up with broadening and/or deepening of knowledge and its application

with clear aims and strategies. As you know, Jeff Todd Titon wrote critically about Bruno Nettl’s views about ethnomusicology, expressed in his writings, which simply lack the applied part. I can understand that anything reminiscent of “human engineering” was unacceptable for Nettl and I take his view into account.

AFM: Beyond the conceptual dilemma raised by the adjectivation, other critical voices consider that the designation “applied” emanates a certain academic colonialism (Dirksen 2012) in the sense that the researcher, legitimized by the academy, “leaves” the university to “apply” knowledge in solving a problem in a community. There are, however, other researchers who choose alternative designations. The analysis of specialized texts on the subject makes possible to understand that in some cases the applied designation is deliberately rejected and in other cases the researchers choose to “adjectivize” the profile of their research through the methodological approaches or the ideological and research positioning. Applied, participative, collaborative, active, engaged, practical, etc., are some examples of the different designations. Do you agree that the methodological approaches can be an important aspect to define the designation? What’s your opinion about the diversity of designations?

SP: At a recent panel at the symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Applied Ethnomusicology in Beijing, Anthony Seeger reminded me about the specific understandings of “applied” in the North American contexts.



Image 3. A picture taken at the 6th Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Applied Ethnomusicology in Beijing on 9th July 2018. From left: Zhang Boyu, Svanibor Pettan, Anthony Seeger, Huib Schippers, Yu Hui, Xiao Mei.

Still, when selecting this adjective for the Study Group, I had in mind the fact that many scholarly disciplines have their applied sections or even independent societies like e.g. the longstanding Society for applied anthropology, with the comparable aims. Inspired by

anthropologists Spradley and McCurdy, I proposed the division of applied ethnomusicology into action, adjustment, administrative, and advocate subcategories. I very much like the writings of Rebecca Dirksen, Klisala Harrison and several other colleagues, but at the same time try to be pragmatic and practical. Various alternative adjectives would not help us in addressing our shared or comparable concerns.

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Biography / Biografía / Biografia

Ana Flávia Miguel completed BMus – Piano (2004), a Masters in Music (Ethnomusicology) (2010) and a PhD in Music (Ethnomusicology) (2016) from the University of Aveiro, Portugal. Over the years she has conducted fieldwork in Portugal, Cape Verde, Italy, Brazil, Mozambique and South Africa. As a researcher, she is jointly responsible for the nomination file of Kola San Jon (Performative Practice of Cape Verde) as Intangible Cultural Heritage. She is the scientific consultant for the nomination file of Cantar dos Reis em Ovar as Intangible Cultural Heritage (in progress). She produced the Documentary *Kola San Jon* that won the Intangible Heritage Documentation Award at the 6th Folk Music Film Festival on November 27, 2016 (Nepal). She also won the award “Research Day’14” with the poster presentation entitled “Classifying heritage by (re)classifying identities: The inclusion of Kola San Jon in the Portuguese List of Intangible Heritage”. Her main domains of study include African Musics, Applied Ethnomusicology and Dialogical Practices in Ethnomusicology in studies about music in Cape Verde and music in Portugal. She is assistant editor of *El oído pensante* journal and editor of *Post-ip: Revista do Fórum Internacional de Estudos em Música e Dança* Journal. From 2005 to 2013 she had been Lecturer at the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança. From 2016 to 2018 she had been a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Ethnomusicology at the University of Aveiro. She is currently a Research Scholar in Ethnomusicology at the University of Aveiro.

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