

Kommission für Volksdichtung (KfV)

International Ballad Commission

Commission internationale pour l'étude de la chanson populaire

(Société Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore, S.I.E.F.)

www.KfVweb.org

Electronic Newsletter no. 1 (May 2001)

Minutes of the Business Meeting of the KfV, Budapest, 23 April 2001

1. Publication of the proceedings of the Budapest conference

At the beginning of the meeting Professor Gábor Barna made the very generous offer of publishing the proceedings of the Budapest conference as a special issue of the prestigious Hungarian folklore journal *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica*. The journal would be able to offer 250-300 pages, allowing 20,000 characters each if 35 contributors wish to publish their papers. A style sheet was circulated. Completed contributions should be sent to Ildikó Kríza by 31 August 2001 by e-mail, along with a hard copy and a copy on disk by post (the journal is able to handle all standard word-processing formats).

All those intending to publish their paper should inform the conference organiser, Ildikó Kríza, by e-mail immediately, so that we can estimate the space we will require.

Those present gratefully accepted the offer of publication in an internationally recognised journal and recorded the thanks of the Kommission to Professor Barna.

2. Greetings from absent friends

The following members who were unable to attend this year's conference relayed their greetings: Mary Ellen Brown, Stefaan Top, Anneli Asplund, Tom Cheesman, Kirsten Kearney, Simona Delić, Erich Wimmer. Larry Syndergaard sent a letter which was read out, and the Kommission wishes Ardis Syndergaard a full and speedy recovery from her recent illness.

3. Membership, newsletters, and website

All those who have helped supply missing e-mail addresses for colleagues were thanked. Isabelle Peere reminded members of the importance of informing her of any change of details, especially e-mail addresses.

Help is needed in attracting new members. The meeting was reminded that we are our own best ambassadors and members are encouraged to spread the word about the KfV.

Thanks go to Barbara Boock, Isabelle Peere, and Sigrid Rieuwerts for translating the newsletters into French and German.

The website is up and running in rudimentary form at www.KfVweb.org

Thanks go to Tom McKean for his work on this. Eventually the site will carry photos, sound clips as well as the Kommission's newsletters and other archive material.

4. Forthcoming meetings

2002: The conference for 2002 will take place in Leuven, Belgium, hosted by the Flemish centre for Folk Culture during the week of 22-28 July, to coincide with the Européade dance festival (which

will be the focus of an optional day excursion to Antwerp). Accommodation will be available in student rooms, and there are plenty of hotels in the town.

Suggested themes for the conference are:

Horror/sensation in ballads

Children's singing culture

Politics of ballad collecting and performance

Ballads and dance

Ballads and gender

Ecology and ethos of ballads

Classification

2003: Roger Renwick announced that arrangements for the 2003 conference in Austin, Texas, are underway. The conference will probably take place 24-28 June (accommodation available 23-29). The Centre for American History which holds the John Lomax materials has agreed to mount an exhibition, and the Humanities Research Centre is interested in contributing. Austin is dubbed the live music capital of North America. An excursion to San Antonio is proposed. Rooms should be available at \$70 per night, with the possibility of sharing to reduce the cost, and meals at around \$20 per day.

2004: Larysa Vakhnina extended an invitation on behalf of the Institute of Folklore and Ethnology in Kiev. A number of offers were made for future years, including South Africa 2005; Freiburg, Germany 2006; and Maine 2007. These options are under consideration.

5. Publications and archive

Nicolae Constantinescu was warmly congratulated on the speed with which he has produced the volume of proceedings of last year's conference in Bucharest. Tom McKean reported that work on the proceedings on 1999's conference in Aberdeen is progressing with a view to publication in autumn of this year.

Barbara Boock announced that the KfV archives are now in Freiburg and available for consultation.

Sigrid Rieuwerts spoke about the need to seek financial support for publications by the Kommission; the problem of publication in volumes titled 'Proceedings' not being counted by the academic authorities in some countries; and the issues of providing guidelines to editors and maintaining uniformity of format in publications of the KfV. Jamie Moreira proposed that Sigrid be officially elected as KfV Publications Officer with a brief to investigate these issues, seconded by Luisa del Giudice, and carried *nem. con.*

The KfV's proposed CD is making progress and anyone else who can offer recordings for inclusion is urged to contact Tom McKean or Luisa Del Giudice (all permissions must be cleared before use can be made of any recorded material)

The meeting closed with a reiteration of the Kommission's thanks to Ildikó Kríza for organising this year's highly successful conference and gifts were presented to Ildikó by Luisa Del Giudice, Barbara Boock, and Isabelle Peere.

Conference report

The 31st International Ballad Conference was hosted by the Institute of Ethnology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, and the European Folklore Institute, Budapest, and took place in the Hotel Classic in Budapest, 21-23 April 2001. The conference was ably, and single-handedly, organised by Ildikó Kríza, and special thanks go to her for making it possible. More than forty

colleagues attended from Hungary, Germany, Belgium, USA, Ukraine, Finland, Romania, England, Scotland, Wales, Slovenia, Mexico, Japan, Lithuania, and two countries not previously represented at the Kommission's meetings, Turkey and South Africa.

The conference was opened, in all three official languages of the Kommission, by Professor Dr Vilmos Voigt, who pointed out that this was the second time the conference had been held in Hungary, the previous occasion being the 9th conference, in Esztergom in 1978. Professor Voigt alluded to the changes that have taken place in ballad research, and folklore research at large, in the period since the Esztergom meeting, welcoming in particular the greater representation of female scholars. Copies of the proceedings of the earlier Hungarian meeting were available, and illustrate the great diversity of ballad scholarship that has evolved since the Kommission first addressed itself to the task of ballad classification. Professor Voigt pointed out, too, that thirty years ago scholars thought that traditional ballads were dying out, which we now know not to be true, and he also called for more comparative insights to come out of our work on different ballad traditions. Replying to the opening address, Luisa Del Giudice emphasised the importance of maintaining cultural diversity, for which there is a greater need than ever in the globalised world of the twenty-first century.

The conference was shorter than some of our previous meetings in order to allow colleagues to attend the SIEF meeting taking place immediately afterwards, but this did not stifle lively debate arising out of stimulating themes on ethics and moral issues in folk ballads (from incest and hunting to cannibalism); ballads and gender (F. J. Child maintained that ballads were preserved mainly through women); and the value of traditional ballads in contemporary culture. As usual, there was a very good mixture of papers, descriptive, analytical, and theoretical, setting high scholarly standards.

On the Sunday evening we visited the House of Hungarian Wines 'Magyar Borok Hazá' and were welcomed by Professor Dr Mihály Hoppál. Even the tasting of some excellent wines was eclipsed by the singing of Mária Petrás who treated us to a sample of the Hungarian ballad tradition. We finished the evening with a visit to a restaurant en masse, with the chance to see the city and the Danube by night, and then dancing and singing back at the hotel. The following evening many of our members departed to the SIEF meeting and those who remained had the chance to visit the neo-gothic Hungarian parliament building.

We were especially fortunate that, less than a year after the previous meeting in Bucharest, the proceedings of that conference were available in Budapest, and we extend our thanks to Dr Nicolae Constantinescu for producing the volume so rapidly. As ever, it was a highlight of the year to meet up with old friends from the ballad world and to welcome new ones. We look forward to doing so again in Leuven in 2002, but for the moment the final word of thanks must go to Ildikó Kríza for making this year's gathering both possible and so fruitful.

(Report and minutes submitted by David Atkinson)

Treasurer's report

Barre Toelken has handed over the post of KfV treasurer to Barbara Boock. The Kommission's funds, which stood at US\$563.81 (598,50 EUR), have been transferred to Germany. After collecting subscriptions from members at the Budapest conference and paying for production of the KfV leaflet, the balance of Kommission's funds stands at 1.434,90 DM (733,65 EUR). A payment of the equivalent of US\$20 is still outstanding for the website.

NEWS

During the general assembly of the SIEF meeting in Budapest, Luisa Del Giudice was elected to the new executive board, as representative of SIEF sections.

The SIEF board comprises:

President: Regina Bendix

Vice-President: Herman Roodenburg

Vice-President: Bjarne Rogan

Executive Board: Reginald Byron; Luisa Del Giudice; João Leal; Ülo Valk; Gisela Welz; and two ex-officio members, former leaders, Konrad Köstlin (outgoing president); Peter Niedermueller (outgoing general secretary)

Just as the Budapest ballad conference was ending, Sara Garcia heard that she had been granted a Fulbright Award to pursue interdisciplinary work on drought issues in the Chihuahua region of Mexico, in collaboration with Mexican researchers and teachers developing pedagogical programmes for children and adults. She expects also to have the opportunity to carry out some field research on corridos in Mexico.

Two important books by active members of the Kommission have been announced and may well have been published by the time you get this newsletter. These are:

William Motherwell's Cultural Politics, by Mary Ellen Brown (University Press of Kentucky www.kentuckypress.com), a literary/historical/ethnographic study of one of the key figures in the Scottish ballad revival and one of the most highly regarded of the early Scottish collectors.

Imagined States: Nationalism, Utopia, and Longing in Oral Cultures, edited by Luisa del Giudice and Gerald Porter (Utah State University Press www.usu.edu/usupress), a collection of essays on ways in which folklore and balladry have been employed in the construction of ethnic identities. A distinguished list of contributors includes the President of Latvia.

Heda Jason in Jerusalem has also sent news of the publication of *Motif, Type and Genre: A Manual for Compilation of Indices & A Bibliography of Indices and Indexing* (FF Communications www.folklorefellows.org), a practical guide for classification of folklore materials.

Editor's note

The more observant amongst you will have noticed that this is headed as the first issue of the Kommission's electronic newsletter. With some reluctance we have accepted that electronic distribution is the only practical means for us to circulate our newsletter, but I do urge any of you who know of colleagues in your own countries who do not have Internet access and who would like to keep in touch with the KfV to be willing to print off another copy and pop it in the post – a kind of 'buddy' system to make sure that no-one is left out. I hope that the rapid spread of electronic communications and decreasing costs will mean that this will not be an issue for long: it is not our wish to exclude anyone.

The appearance of these newsletters is entirely in your hands! Obviously the post-conference newsletter is something of a fixture, and conference announcements will be circulated as and when they come due, but I would like to be able to send out two or three newsletters per year so that all our colleagues can feel in touch with the Kommission. But in order to do so I need something to put in them, so please send me your news: publications, appointments, babies, ballads, whatever.

I would especially like to receive notice of publications by KfV members so that these can be circulated and subsequently archived on the website. In this way we can build up a handy, rapid reference bibliography. I don't imagine anyone is willing to commit the time required to maintain the kind of bibliography that the early KfV used to publish, but equally anyone who is familiar with the difficulties of retrieving specialised information from the supposedly comprehensive commercial databases will appreciate the usefulness of an on-line source of ballad references.

Isabelle Peere reiterates her request to keep her informed of all changes in your own or colleagues' e-mail addresses. Your co-operation will enable her to keep the membership list up to date and to make sure everyone receives the newsletters.

Finally my e-mail address appeared incorrectly in the programme for the Budapest conference; it is david@atkinson1724.freemove.co.uk

I hope to hear from you.

David Atkinson