

Kommission für Volksdichtung (KfV)

International Ballad Commission

Commission internationale pour l'étude de la chanson populaire

www.KfVweb.org

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(editor: David Atkinson)

This year's conference in Stellenbosch, South Africa, marked the KfV's first foray into the Southern Hemisphere. Matilda Burden and her small team presented an unfeasibly broad range of South Africa's dramatic cultural and geographical diversity in a very short space of time – extraordinary! Academically, we were fortunate to have a number of new faces, in particular those representing South African, Zimbabwean, and Kenyan song cultures, which enlivened debate and reinforced our sense of the communicative storytelling power of song. I hope that through these and future links the KfV can help diversify and broaden our understanding of song cultures and of each other.

Tom McKean

Minutes of the KfV Business Meeting

Held at Markötter Venue, Stellenbosch, South Africa, 18 October 2013, at 11.30

Present

Chair: Tom McKean, KfV President

25 members were present, including Vice President Marjetka Golež Kaučič and Treasurer Ingrid Åkesson

1.

The President bid the participants welcome and opened the meeting.

2.

Greetings and regrets from absent members.

3.

The meeting observed a minute's silence for two recently deceased members, Sheila Douglas (Scotland) and Gerlinde Haid (Austria).

4.

A. Treasurer's report

The Treasurer announced that the KfV has a fairly healthy balance of €1875 in hand.

B. Publications

Cardiff 2008 and Terschelling 2010 will probably be ready by next year's conference in Pécs (June, 2014).

Faro 2011 and Akyaka 2012 are still in process.

No report on the progress of the Minsk 2009 volume is at present available.

It was emphasized that the funding of conference publications is always the responsibility of the conference organizer.

C. Other Conferences

The Vice President reminded those present of the 2015 SIEF conference in Zagreb.

Larry Syndergaard introduced the International Congress in Medieval Studies to be held 8–11 May 2014, at Western Michigan University (wmich.edu/medieval/congress).

While submissions for that conference have already closed for 2014, proposals for 2015 are welcome, and do not necessarily have to be confined to the Middle Ages.

5.

A proposal was made and carried that the period served by the President and the two Vice Presidents should be limited to two 5-year terms.

6. Future conferences

Next year's conference will be held in Pécs, Hungary, 22–28 June 2014, and the following year in Pristina, Kosovo. Some offers for later conferences have been made, but others are welcome.

7. KfV Fellows

Anneli Asplund (Finland) and Larry Syndergaard (USA) were unanimously elected as KfV Fellows.

8. Previous Proceedings

The proceedings of previous conferences are gradually being made available on the internet, and copies of those which have not yet been uploaded can be ordered by contacting the President. Anyone having difficulties obtaining past publications should contact the executive, who will try to help.

9. Closing

Everyone warmly thanked Matilda Burden and her team for organizing and running an exceptionally successful conference (including the weather), and the meeting agreed unanimously that the KfV would grant her a small sum, to be agreed by the Executive later, for the extra expenses of this year's conference.

Gerald Porter (Acting Secretary)

Conference Report

The 43rd International Ballad Conference of the KfV convened in the beautiful and historic university city of Stellenbosch in South Africa, 13–19 October 2013. The conference itself was also historic: the first in the Southern Hemisphere, the first on the African continent, and the first in South Africa. And our 36 registrants were international in a new and welcome sense: thirteen were from African nations.

Unsurprisingly for our always diverse commission, the 27 papers of the conference covered a broad spectrum of scholarly approaches and subject matters, reflecting ‘*Volksdichtung*’ as well as the narrower ‘Ballad’ among our official names. The majority spoke to the conference theme, ‘Social Issues in Songs and Ballads’, at least implicitly, and ten or so more explicitly. Attempts to categorize our studies are always difficult because most papers involve multiple kinds of discussion; my own accounting sees the greatest collective emphasis on individual ballads or ballad types, interpretation, and genre, with more seldom but nonetheless valuable comparative studies and discussions of international connections, individual singers, performance, gender, and repertoire. Four papers treated music and ten South African and other African matter.

A measure of the value of these studies is that questions and comments were numerous and the ensuing discussions illuminating. I found it particularly valuable that the papers on African subjects asked me to think about the remarkable cultural mixtures and complexities found in these fast-evolving nations, an expansion beyond the inevitable tendency towards a Eurocentric point of view that I bring to the Kommission.

While this discourse was properly the core of the conference, as typical KfV pilgrims we found much to learn and enjoy in the excursions that our committed organizer, Matilda Burden, had set up for us. In and near Stellenbosch, this included a tour of the historic city centre led by Matilda, wine-tasting visits to two estates in the surrounding winelands, a traditional *braai* (barbecue) with superb entertainment by the Cape Minstrels troupe and the Kuyasa Kids, and an illuminating experience, new for most of us, a visit to a major monument to one of the eleven national languages, Afrikaans. We also enjoyed a rare double concert by the Stellenbosch University Choir and the Tygerberg Children’s Choir, both of international stature.

Ranging further, to the south coast, we toured the impressive Harold Porter Botanical Gardens, walked above the remarkable scurrying inhabitants of the Stony Point Penguin Reserve, and then fetched up at Hermanus harbour, where Matilda had engaged the Whale Crier, who sounds the locations of nearby whales on his kelp horn. (Really!) And he had fascinating activity to report, as we watched whales rolling, spouting, and breaching below us just off the harbour.

Our week culminated in the conference dinner, where we expressed our warm but inadequate thanks to Matilda Burden for her labour-intensive but remarkably efficient job of organizing and managing this conference and all the supporting activities. This included thanks to her ever-available assistants Marinus Burden and Sumarie Ellis, and a different kind of gratitude for crucial institutional support from the South African Society for Cultural History and the University Museum, University of Stellenbosch.

For twelve of us lucky enough to have four additional days, Matilda had added a second organizational triumph, a ‘Post-Conference Tour’ of south central and south-western South Africa, by van and Matilda’s own car (organizer and chauffeur in the bargain!). Space won’t allow anything like a full itinerary, but when I say it included ostrich farming, the southernmost tip of the continent, a private organ recital,

spectacular mountain and canyon scenery, an international-destination cave complex, an Art Deco-furnished hotel, an overnight stay with Matilda's family on their farm, and several variously scenic districts, you will have an impression both of the richness of our experience and of Matilda's pride in her country. Son Henning Burden was our patient, capable, and indeed indispensable driver, 'arranger', and cultural interpreter.

Larry Syndergaard

News and Publications

Luisa Del Giudice and Nancy Van Deusen, eds, *Performing Ecstasies: Music, Dance, and Ritual in the Mediterranean*, Claremont Cultural Studies, gen. ed. Nancy Van Deusen (Ottawa: Institute for Medieval Music, 2005). Electronic version available now: <<http://luisadg.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Performing-Ecstasies-VOLUME-LuisaDelGiudice.pdf>>

Maria Hnaraki, *Sing In Me, Muse, and Through Me Tell the Story: Greek Culture Performed*. ISBN: 978-0927379-16-8 <http://zorbapress.com/?page_id=1052>

Georgina Boyes, "'They Went with Songs to Battle": Songs as *lieu de memoire* of the Great War', in *The Low Countries* published by the Flemish/Netherlands cultural association, Ons Erfdeel, April 2014. <<http://www.onserfdeel.be/en>>

Drago Kunej, and Urša Šivic, eds, *Trapped in folklore?: studies in music and dance tradition and their contemporary transformations*, (Musikethnologie, Bd. 7, vol. 7). Zürich; Berlin: LIT, 2013. 222 pp., ilustr., note. ISBN 978-3-643-90232-0. [COBISS.SI-ID [35680301](#)]

Marjetka Golež Kaučič, '*Fantje se zbirajo ---*': *vojna in vojaki v slovenski ljudski pesmi* / 'Boys are gathering---': war and soldiers in Slovenian folk song (Zbirka/Collection Folkloristični zvezki/Volumes in Folklore Studies, 1). Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU, 2013. 127 pp., ilustr. In Slovenian language with summary in English. ISBN 978-961-254-445-4. [COBISS.SI-ID [267528960](#)]

CD: **Mojca Kovačič and Peter Vendramin**, eds, *Zajuckaj in zapoj = Shout and sing* (Iz arhiva Glasbenonarodopisnega inštituta). Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU, 2013. 1 CD, stereo. ISBN 978-961-254-478-2. [COBISS.SI-ID [268627456](#)]

Thomas A. McKean, ed., *Songs of People on the Move*, BASIS vol. 8 (Trier: WVT, 2012).