

The Tango-Danceability of Music in European Perspective

Abstracts of the Panel Presented at the Joint Meeting of the ICTM National Committees Hungary and Austria, Budapest Mai 2016

“The Tango-Danceability of Music in European Perspective” is an FWF (Austrian Science Fund) sponsored project hosted at the Institute of Ethnomusicology at the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz. Currently being in its first year, the total duration of the project will be four years. The main focus of the project is on the interrelation of music and movement in the tango argentino social dancing as currently practiced on a cosmopolitan, international level. While the basis for an understanding of this music-dance relation is an indepth analysis of sound and movement structures, social and cultural aspects influencing this relationship are taken into account as well.

The project is innovative in several aspects; first of all, it is allocated in the area of choreo-musicology, incorporating approaches from the two disciplines of ethnomusicology and ethnochoreology. Second, it makes use of methods in qualitative and quantitative data analysis, including computer based data evaluation and acquisition, without neglecting established methods and questions in the field of ethnomusicology and ethnochoreology.

In this panel, three members (Mattia Scassellati, Christopher Dick, project leader: Kendra Stepputat) of the project team will present their individual focus and works in the project, thereby giving a thorough overview of the project and its main elements.

Mattia Scassellati

The Italian influence on tango argentino

From the end of the 19th century to the beginning of World War I large numbers of people from Europe decided to leave behind a struggled existence and poverty to search new opportunities on the American continents. Especially the area of the delta of Río de la Plata attracted a high percentage of Italian migrants. Most of them settled down in Buenos Aires, the city of the nowadays worldwide spread phenomenon of tango. Their presence in this area undeniably shaped its socio-cultural circumstances, including language, architecture, literature, and music. Since very little research was done about this topic, the aim of my MA thesis is to focus on the Italian influence in the process of the creation of tango at the beginning of the 20th century underlining possible musical connections to Italian folk music. Positive results could offer new insights about the origins of tango turning the spotlight on an essential part of Argentinean history that is Italian immigration. In my presentation I will expound the structural content of my MA thesis and illustrate the current state of the research.

Christohper Dick

Motion Capture Research for Music Dance Interrelationship

Trying to understand the intricate relationship of movement and music demands knowledge of all its constituting parts on several levels of granularity. From the overall form of the music, to the smallest rhythmical facet, each aspect defines how dancers realize the sound and move. Especially in the field of dance the factors determining this connection can happen within fractions of a second. To understand these events and how musical parameters let dancers recognize music as 'danceable', Motion Capture (MoCap) can help by capturing movement in 3D space together with the music. This allows to reconstruct a performance down to the level of microseconds, which then can be re-related to musical parameters. In what ways MoCap technology can support ethnomusicological research, and what kind of problems arise with movement analysis in the special case of tango argentino, will be the topic of this presentation.

Kendra Stepputat

Tango Argentino in Europe – European Tango in Argentina?

Tango Argentino as a socially practiced dance and music culture has been established in Europe roughly 100 years ago. It made its way from Argentina to Paris, further on to all major European capitals and beyond, causing the creation of new music and dance styles like the ballroom tango or Finnish tango. The tango argentino also had a strong impact on fashion vogues, and its images and klischees have become a steady part of European popular culture in the 20th and 21st century. The term “argentino” signifies of course that this dance and music culture was born and nurtured in Argentina, in particular in the capital Buenos Aires. Yet, on many levels, historically, socially and culturally, European influences have shaped the genesis and development of the genre. In fact, a constant back and forth between Europe and Argentina of tango trends and vogues is recognizable. In this presentation, I want to show, that a research focus on tango argentino as practiced in Europe gives fundamental insights into the current international state of tango argentino practice. The main focus of my presentation will be on the tango development in the late 20th and early 21st century, taking into consideration tango tourism both to Europe and to Argentina as well as international social network structures among tango dancers that connect both places into a dynamic whole.

Curricula Vitae

Kendra Stepputat

is senior lecturer (senior postdoc) at the Institute of Ethnomusicology, University of Music and Performing Arts Graz (KUG). She has an M.A. degree in Comparative Musicology, Communication Science (Free University Berlin) and Southeast-Asian Studies (Humboldt University Berlin), and received her PhD in Ethnomusicology at KUG in 2010 with a dissertation on Balinese kecak.

Mattia Scassellati

is student research assistant at the Institute of Ethnomusicology, University of Music and Performing Arts Graz (KUG). He is participating in the research project Tango-Danceability of Music in European Perspective and pursues an MA in ethnomusicology concentrating on the relationship between Italian popular music and Argentine tango. In 2015 he obtained the bachelor's degree in musicology with a thesis about the aesthetics of the tarantism phenomenon in southern Italy.

Christopher S. Dick

studied Musicology at the University of Vienna, finishing with a work on new possibilities of movement analysis (Motion Capture), based on the case of capoeira. Main research interests lie within the analyses of human motion, music and movement relationship, Brazilian art forms, and the methodology of technical/computer aided analysis of music and dance. Currently inscribed in computer science at the University of Vienna, he will be senior research assistant in the Tango-Danceability of Music in European Perspective project starting June 2016.