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Chordophone Politics in a Musical Lusophone Atlantic: Inquiring Connections and Autonomies

[session IIB10]

Some musical instruments, and specifically some chordophones as the viola and the cavaquinho, have travelled and spanned in Portuguese-speaking contexts around the Atlantic Ocean at least from the 17th century, establishing a visible presence in different musical cultures and regions. In mainland Portugal, in the archipelagos of Madeira, Azores, Cape Verde and in Brazil these old instruments acquired a great variety of new designs, musical uses, new materials, tunings, techniques, repertoires and social statutes that reached the present. In spite of the great geographic distances between the communities that maintain this kind of highly portable instruments in autonomous “musical ecosystems” they were connected in some point of their histories. The chordophones in a musical lusophone Atlantic can be observed as “sites of meaning construction” and as “a part of political economy attuned by, or the outcome of, a range of associated ideas, concepts and practical skills” (Dawe 2003). Many historical records about viola and cavaquinho in Brazil link them to popular classes or even to the slaves and their amusements (Vilela 2005). Connections of these instruments to written music are known in Portugal since the 18th century (Morais 2013). Nowadays in certain contexts some of these chordophones have conquered a place in institutional local propaganda, being cherished by official support and taught in schools, giving rise to new repertoires, artists and luthiers, as are the cases of “cavaquinho minhoto” and “viola beiroa” (mainland Portugal), “viola caipira” and “cavaquinho brasileiro” (Brazil); “viola terceirense” (Azores), “cavaquinho cabo-verdiano” (Cape Verde), “rajão” (Madeira) to name just a few examples. In this work I propose to examine some global questions of musical connections between the lusophone communities and the autonomy of chordophones’ universes, and explore through four specific cases sensitive issues as gender, impact of tourism, transmission of lutherie knowledge and identity. All the data used for this presentation was collected within the scope of AtlaS – Sensitive Atlantic research project.

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PANEL ABSTRACT

In New Disguise: Changes in the Traditional Music and Dance Culture in Hungary

[session IE06]

In 2022, it is 50 years since the dance house movement officially started in Hungary, and 15 years since postsecondary folk music education began at the Liszt Academy of Music, Budapest. The dance house movement radically changed previous approaches to folk music as its young enthusiasts, in collaboration with such researchers as György Martin, Imre Olsvai, and Lajos Vargyas, aimed to transfer folk music to an urban environment, while retaining its original function as accompaniment for improvised dancing. As dance houses multiplied, so did stage performances in the new spirit, and soon the genre of folk music became part of the world music market. Papers of the panel investigate the impact of these secondary contexts on traditional dance and music, and aim to interpret and describe the processes of formation and deformation in detail. We are interested in delineating, by a scholarly method, the boundaries beyond which elements of traditional culture lose the defining features of their identity, and appear already as products of a movement or of a market, often endowed at the same time with the political content of a certain space of power.