

REPORT ON THE 25TH ICOM GENERAL CONFERENCE

To ICOM-UK Grant Committee

London, 20th September 2019

Prof. Gabriele Rossi Rognoni (g.rossirognoni@rcm.ac.uk)

I wish to express my gratitude to the Board of ICOM-UK for the support towards my participation in the 25th ICOM General Conference in Kyoto. The grant covered the largest part of travel and accommodation and was instrumental in triggering further funding from CIMCIM – the ICOM International Committee of Music Museums and the Royal College of Music.

I travelled to Japan about ten days before the conference, which enabled me to visit collections and strengthen professional ties in Tokyo and Nara, before completing my trip in Kyoto, Osaka and Hamamatsu.

I then participated in the conference as delegate from my institution as well as Chair of CIMCIM – on the Board of which I served for 15 years in different capacities – and chair of this year's programme committee, which included the Director of the Hamamatsu Museum of Musical Instruments (Kazuhiko Shima), the Curator of Musical Instruments of Yale University (Christina Linsenmeyer) and the Associate Conservator for Musical Instruments of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Jen Schnittker).

As IC Chair I attended the ICOM Advisory meeting on the 1st September and the separate meeting of International Committees. I also attended several formal sessions and informal discussions on the new Museum definition, which the CIMCIM Board unanimously decided not to endorse after extensive discussion with its membership.

The CIMCIM programme (<https://bit.ly/2kVWu5VA>) included over 30 papers from delegates from 19 countries, including five countries from ICOM categories 3 and 4 (Azerbaijan, Burkina Faso, China, Indonesia, and Chad). Over 50 proposals had been received and selected by the programme committee. The programme focussed on education in Music Museums and was organised in sessions on sound spaces, higher education and professional training, ancient traditions, and making and sustaining museums and traditions. A joint session was organised with CIDOC – the International Committee on Documentation and an away day with ICME – the International Committee of Ethnology Museums. This was generously hosted by MINPAKU – the National Museum of Ethnology based in the outskirts of Osaka. A full day was spent in Hamamatsu, the Japanese centre of musical instrument production (Yamaha and Kawai) and the seat of the Hamamatsu Musical Instrument Museum, which holds the largest specialised collection of musical instruments in the country. A further morning was spent visiting one of the oldest string factories anywhere in the world, active since the 17th century and specialising on silk strings for traditional Japanese instruments.

I endeavoured to promote the conference and ICOM UK's support through several tweets – several of which specifically included the handle @UK_ICOM – LinkedIn and Facebook, and several of the tweets and posts have been recirculated by colleagues and other institutions involved.

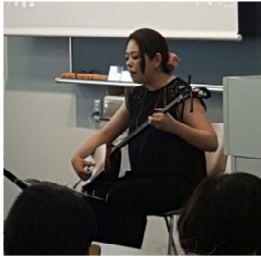
Day 1 (1st September)



The day included attending the Advisory Meeting, followed by the separate meeting of ICs.

They were followed by the CIMCIM Board Meeting which closed the activity of the past Board, elected in Milan in 2016, and agreed on a set of recommendations for the new Board to carry on.

Day 2 (2nd September)



The day included the opening ceremony and plenary session in the morning. They were followed by the first CIMCIM paper session, held at the Inamori Memorial Hall, which I chaired. It was opened by a musical introduction on the shamisen and a keynote paper on the new challenges of representing sound in museum displays and it included six papers focussed on new music museums and displays. These included two museums in Namibia, the new Chi Mei Museum in Taiwan (China), the Bluegrass Hall of Fame Museum in Kentucky, a new interpretation plan for the Musical Instrument display of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and a sound installation in Switzerland.



A second paper session focussed on higher education and professional training.

I was also delighted to attend the welcome party in the evening, which provided some fascinating glimpses – if somehow disturbingly domesticated – of Japanese traditions.

Day 3 (3rd September)

After the morning plenary sessions, the day included the CIMCIM General Assembly and elections of the new Board. This was attended by about 50 CIMCIM members and presented the activity of the past triennium. The Assembly also accepted



an invitation to hold the 2020 CIMCIM Meeting in London, with a post conference in Edinburgh, and the organising committee – which I'll chair together with Mimi Waitzman – will be in touch with ICOM UK in the next weeks to discuss involvement.

The day was closed by the Extraordinary Plenary Meeting on the Museum Definition, which proved somewhat disappointing due to the lack of space for actual debate on the matter at stake – reduced to two short interventions at the end – and was instead dedicated to the presentation of various papers already published in vol. 71 of *Museum International*.

Day 4 (4th September)

The morning started with the visit to Tobaya silk string factory. One of the oldest string factories still active anywhere in the world, and in general one of the oldest running workshop related to musical instruments. A group of 15 CIMCIM delegates was welcomed by the owned – the 6th generation in his family to run the business – and offered a memorable behind-the-scene tour of the making process from cocoon to top-quality string.

The afternoon included a five-paper joint session with CIDOC on documenting the tangible and intangible

Day 5 (5th September)



The day was hosted at MINPAKU, in Osaka, and included a special tour of the display, storage space, and temporary exhibition facilities. In the afternoon, the Museum Director-General Kenji Yoshida and Kazuhiko Shima – the Director of the Musical Instrument Museum of Hamamatsu – gave two major keynotes on the role of museums in preserving tangible and intangible musical traditions, followed by a panel discussion on which I sat with the chair of ICME – Dr. Viv Golding – and the head Curator of the Museum Taku Iida.

Day 6 (6th September)



Twenty-five delegates from CIMCIM travelled to Hamamatsu by train. The morning was spent visiting the collection of the Hamamatsu Musical Instrument Museum, one of the largest public music collections in Japan. It includes about 3,000 instruments, including a substantial collection of European keyboard, as well as large ensembles from most Asian countries.

Two special tours were then hosted by Yamaha – both in their museum display and inside the factory – and Kawai piano factory. Over 1,400 people currently work for Yamaha, 1,000 of which making musical instruments. Although the numbers of production are covered by secret, the production is staggering and the break-down/specialisation of construction phases far exceed that which I found in any other factory that I visited before.

After a traditional concert on shakuhachi and koto, I closed the day with a separate meeting with several Chinese delegates to finalise the details of a major research/cataloguing project that we shall be leading together over the next months.

I then travelled to Tokyo and departed the following day.



I look forward to providing further details and images, should the Board require them, and remain yours faithfully

Gabriele Rossi Rognoni

Prof. Gabriele Rossi Rognoni

Chair of Material Culture and Music
Curator, Royal College of Music Museum