

The International Association for the Study of Popular Music
L'Association internationale pour l'étude de la musique populaire

PROPOSED SITE OF THE
FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULAR MUSIC STUDIES

The question of the site of the Fourth International Conference on Popular Music Studies was first discussed by the Executive Committee at its Ottawa meeting (March 29 and April 1, 1985). There was strong feeling among the Executive Committee that, since the first three international conferences had been held in Western, industrialised nations, a move to either a Socialist or Third-World nation for the fourth conference would be appropriate. After some discussion, the Committee decided to approach Klevator ABO, IASPM's Ghanaian member, to explore the possibility of holding the fourth conference in Ghana.

As a result of enquiries made by Klevator, we are now in a position to report that there is very considerable interest among such Ghanaian institutions as the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana, and the Musicians' Union in hosting the Fourth International Conference on Popular Music Studies in Ghana in 1987. The advantages for the Ghanaian Government are world exposure for Ghanaian popular music (the Executive Committee feels it worth mentioning in this context that the official attitude of many African governments is not as elsewhere: popular music is the only form of music that many African governments are proud of), and the opportunity for Ghanaian institutions and individual musicians to draw on the expertise of IASPM and its members in further developing Ghanaian popular music. As is the case in many other 'Small' countries, the Ghanaian music industry faces very considerable difficulties and could, as a result, benefit a great deal through face-to-face exposure to IASPM, its members and Services.

The circumstances surrounding an IASPM conference in Ghana would, of course, differ considerably from those surrounding IASPM's other three conferences. Firstly, there would be absolutely no question of the Ghanaian Government assisting conference delegates with travel. Additionally, given the strict austerity measures in force in Ghana, the Ghanaian Ministry of Culture would wish to have, immediately following this meeting, a very clear idea of our proposals concerning the conference so that it may apply for funds as soon as possible.

Further, it is likely that an IASPM conference held in Ghana would have to take on a very different complexion than those held hitherto. A conference held in Ghana could only be successful if held as part of a music festival featuring African music and musicians. This means not only that the conference would be longer, but that it should be prepared to discuss issues relating to popular music as they are conceived and understood by African musicians. Such issues are formulated in ways that may seem foreign to many commentators living in the 'developed' world. In order to focus the conference in an appropriate fashion, it is suggested that the conference theme be: 'The Place of Africa in the World of Popular Music'.

Holding the conference in Ghana would doubtless present problems for IASPM. Firstly, IASPM committees responsible for organising the conference would have to work very hard to raise travel funds for as many members as possible. The Executive Committee clearly does not wish to oversee the organisation of a conference that could only be attended by those members with access to sufficient levels of institutional and private funding. Secondly, since it is likely that fewer IASPM members will be able to attend a conference held in Ghana than are attending the present conference in Montreal, it may become necessary to involve many IASPM members indirectly, either through branch and area conferences and the international conference theme held shortly before the international conference itself, through simultaneous links with branch and area meetings made possible by the media, or both. Additionally, since the international conference provides the setting for the General Meeting at which IASPM decides matters of policy, it will be necessary to ensure wide consultation on important matters before the conference, as well as utilising to the full provisions in IASPM's Statutes and Rules of Procedure for proxy voting.

There is little doubt that mounting a conference in Ghana will prove a challenge for IASPM in two ways. Firstly, it is the impression of the Executive Committee that IASPM is not currently in a position to provide the kind of help and services that would make an IASPM conference an attractive proposition both for the Ghanaian Government and individual African musicians. However, it is the feeling of the Executive not only that providing this kind of assistance (advice on contracts, royalties, union matters, marketing etc.) is com-

mensurate with the aims of the Association, but that the Association should actively develop the capacity to provide such services over the next two years. It is evident that IASPM does not hold unified and collective views on many of the difficult issues raised through the matters on which it might provide advice, and that providing such advice would therefore necessitate a thorough thinking-through of these issues in a manner beneficial both for the Association and its members. Secondly, holding a conference in Ghana will of necessity force the Association to collectively face certain questions concerning the nature of its conferences. Although it is the sense of the Executive Committee that the Montreal Conference has moved some distance towards resolving many of the issues raised at Reggio Emilia, it is equally the Committee's feeling that there is quite some way to go in organising conferences that are effective in ensuring full and meaningful communication both between members and between the Association and the musicians and musical life of host cultures.

In short, the Executive Committee would like to suggest to the membership that holding a conference in Ghana would be a constructive undertaking both for IASPM and its many prospective members in Africa, and would as a consequence like to move a motion that the Fourth International Conference on Popular Music Studies be held in Ghana.

Finally, the Executive Committee would like to move a vote of thanks to Klevor ABO for the work he has already completed in Ghana on IASPM's behalf.