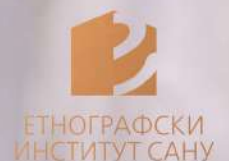


Кореографија
традиционалног плеса
на сцени: Кризе,
перспективе
и глобални дијалози

The Choreography of
Traditional Dance on Stage:
Crises, Perspectives and
Global Dialogues



Кореографија традиционалног плеса на сцени: Кризe, перспективе и глобални дијалози

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Београд, 2024.

The Choreography of Traditional Dance on Stage: Crises, Perspectives and Global Dialogues

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Кореографија традиционалног плеса између локалног и глобалног – уводна разматрања

Апстракт: Зборник радова *Кореографија традиционалног плеса на сцени: кризе, перспективе и глобални дијалози* настао је као резултат низа конференција одржаних у оквиру етносамита ТрадицијаНова, у организацији Ансамбла народних игара и песама Србије „Коло“. Овај рад, насловљен и као уводно разматрање, представља теме о којима се дискутовало на поменутих конференцијама, те отвара простор за нова преиспитивања у пољу традиционалног и савременог плеса на локалном и глобалном нивоу. Основне теме овог текста чине *уметничке транспозиције* традиционалног плеса на сцени (односно однос између уметничког плеса, његових дискурса и пракси, са дискурсима и праксама традиционалног плеса), као и питање наслеђа (heritage) у оба ова плесана жанра. На крају, циљ нам је и да истражимо теоријске и практичне проблеме, недоумице и изазове који се јављају у доменима професионалне сценске презентације традиционалних плесова у југоисточној Европи, те да повежемо ове дискусије са глобалним токовима и дискурсима о плесу, уметности и наслеђу.

Кључне речи: традиционални плес, савремени плес, локално, глобално, наслеђе, уметничка транспозиција

Увод

Зборник радова *Кореографија традиционалног плеса на сцени: кризе, перспективе и глобални дијалози* дуго је био у припреми. Настао је као резултат низа конференција одржаних током етносамита ТрадицијаНова, у организацији Ансамбла народних игара и песама Србије „Коло“. Радови у зборнику иницијално су представљени као презентације на конференцијама, а потом су, путем дугогодишњих поновљених сусрета, дијалога и сазревања, прерасли у текстове. Иако су конференције првобитно биле оријентисане на локалну и регионалну

сцену кореографије традиционалног плеса¹ и њене изазове, присуство научника који се баве традиционалним плесним сценама Украјине, Ирске, Израела и Кине отворило је могућност глобалног повезивања тема, приступа и дискусија, па и њихове „шароликости“. Ипак, када се пажљиво сагледају сви прилози у овом Зборнику, јасно је да се издвајају и одређене опште теме и питања. Једно од њих је питање уметничке транспозиције традиционалног плеса на сцени (односно, однос између уметничког плеса, његових дискурса и пракси, и дискурса и пракси традиционалног плеса) као и питање наслеђа (heritage) у оба ова плесна жанра. Ово је основни мотив Зборника.

Савремени уметнички плес је позоришна форма која је еволуирала тако да одражава, дискутује и критикује сопствену културну, политичку и естетску историју. Међутим, то је разнолика пракса и често се развија кроз посебне стилске карактеристике, вокабуларе и идиосинкразије појединачног кореографа и/или плесача. Насупрот томе, традиционални плес се понекад поставља на сцену и изводи за публику, али је првенствено партиципативна пракса која се налази унутар локалних или регионалних заједница. Постоје, наравно, и додири међу овим праксама, како каже Сара Вејтли: „Обе плесне форме брину се, додуше на различите начине, за сопствено очување“ (Whately 2022, 172), односно обе ове праксе опстају и развијају се у дискурсу наслеђа, што неминовно доводи до парадигматских промена, нових трендова и изазова у овим формама.

Реконструкција и цитирање историјских плесних комада, као и претварање плесне сцене у место за архивирање плесне историје, постали су главни трендови у савременом плесу. Чини се да су савремени кореографи оставили за собом непрекидну тежњу ка стварању нових плесних трендова и уместо тога се упуштају у дијалог сапрошлошћу (в. Elswit 2014). Док се „авангарда“ у западном сценском плесу некада сматрала оличењем „новог“ и веровало се да је другачија од плесних форми које се сматрају обележеним традицијом, ова разграничења сада доводе у питање и историчари и плесни уметници (Franko & Richards 2000; Burt 2003). Поврх тога, реконструкције све више дестабилизују разлике између уметничког и академског поља, истичући перформативну природу „бављења историјом“ и представљају начине истраживања који укључују предавања, текстове и документацију у сценском окружењу и извођачком контексту. Историја, као и чин сећања, данас се сматра процесом који конституише, стапа, поново поставља и стално модификује свој објекат, истовремено стварајући нове моделе и медије комеморације. Према Ивон Харт (Yvonne Hartd) (Hartd 2012) прошлост је „игралиште“ за садашњост – што подразумева појам историје подстакнут критичком историографијом, која такође рефлектује наративне структуре имплицитне у разумевању историје плеса (в. White 1990; Bal, Creve & Spitzer 1999). Истовремено, питање архива и начина чувања плесног знања све више долази у фокус академског бављења студијама плеса. У књизи *Archive and Repertoire*, Дајана Тејлор (Diana Taylor) сугерише да репертоар доводи у питање конвенционална средства за чување прошлости. За њу, репертоар „изводи отелотворено памћење: представе, гестове, оралност, покрет, плес, певање – укратко, све те радње које се обично сматрају ефемерним, непоновљивим знањем“ (Taylor 2003, 16). Ове физичке културе су изостављене из стандардне културне историје и могу се схватити као оспоравање устаљених појмова о архиву. Занимљиво је да термин репертоар има другачију

¹ Или „кореографије наслеђа“ (heritage choreography) како ову форму назива Филип Петковски (в. Petkovski 2023).

конотацију у свету плеса. Овде он означава оно што је ушло у канон, оно што је институционализовано и чему је дата могућност да настави да живи на сцени или да се овековечи на часовима плеса.

Дакле, савремени плес пролази кроз извесну трансформацију – окреће се плесној историји, традицији и наслеђу, где се историја схвата као нешто што је, са једне стране, неухватљиво, а што истовремено обликује наше животе и наше стварности. Управо у овим новим трајекторијама савременог плеса, ситуирана је и ова збирка текстова, настала као резултат дугогодишњих промишљања транспозиције традиционалних плесних репертоара у савремени уметнички плесни контекст. Како смо већ истакли, ове дугогодишње дискусије одвијале су се у оквиру Етно Самита ТрадицијаНова, који је организовао Ансамбл народних игара и песама Србије „Коло“, првенствено фокусиран на локални² научни и уметнички контекст. Дискусије у оквиру ових скупова, искристалисале су низ питања о аутентичности (наслеђа) и кореографском ауторству, као кључним чвориштима дебате о транспозицији традиционалног у уметничко. Међутим, занимљиво је повезати локалне дебате са широм глобалном расправом о овом проблему – односно са начинима на које глобалне плесне и академске сцене артикулишу поменута питања. Овде ћемо повезати локални са глобалним контекстом на два начина. Прво, отворићемо питање *World dance-a*, као једног од начина давања простора „традиционалним“ репертоарима да деле исти временски и просторни оквир са (западним) уметничким плесом. Друго је питање наслеђа (херитаге) и начина на које овај појам мења традиционалне појмове *фолк* (народно) и *етничко* кроз призму, данас увреженог, појма *традиционално*. Питање наслеђа у плесу, у једном делу, захтева робусну дискусију о аутентичности, јер је питање аутентичности у плесу прилично раширено за одређени аспект проучавања наслеђа. У широком спектру плесних студија, питање аутентичности се често посматра кроз сочиво поређења два плеса, где се један сматра аутентичном верзијом другог, који је трансформисана верзија првог. Са друге стране, питање наслеђа у плесу покренуло је и бројне студије о дигитализацији архива плесног наслеђа и ово чини растуће поље сусрета плесне и информатичке науке (в. Aristidou et. al. 2022; Rallis et al. 2020).

World dance

World dance је, такорећи, симптом плеса под глобализацијом (в. Foster 2009). То је појам који се односи на интеграцију новооткривених плесних територија у свет плеса какав познајемо, отварајући (стари) свет плеса ка ревитализацији, али и ризику да ће се „нови“ плес и плесачи борити за легитимитет и ресурсе у ширем пољу плеса (Savigliano 2009, 169).

Најтемељнија збирка текстова која истражује овај појам из различитих позиција, јесте *Worlding Dance* (2009), уреднице Сузан Фостер (Susan Leigh Foster). Фостерова преиспитује овај појам из позиције некога ко ради у академском контексту, где се он нашироко користи. Тако, она каже: „Многи од нас који предају на програмима где се курсеви различитих плесних традиција нуде под рубриком ’*World dance*’, питају се на шта се тачно овај термин односи...“ (Foster

2 Под локални подразумевамо подручје Југоисточне и Источне Европе.

2009, 1). Према Фостеровој, замена термина „етничко“ за „светско“ на UCLA³ и у различитим праксама етикетирања, као што су музичка индустрија и уметничко програмирање, еуфемистички функционише како би се прикрило колонијално наслеђе расних и класно заснованих хијерархизација у уметности. Етнички плесови – замишљени као локални, а не трансцендентални, традиционални, а не иновативни, једноставни, а не софистицирани, производ људи, а не генија – оживљавају се и трансформишу у производе различитих култура из целог света. Термин „*World dance*“ указује на неутрално компаративно поље у којем су сви плесови производи подједнако важних, дивно разноликих, једнако моћних култура. Назив уметности као „светске“ такође обећава максималну изложеност обиљу новог и егзотичног. Ипак, кроз ово преименовање, колонијална историја, која је произвела етничко, наставља да функционише (Foster 2009, 2).

Марта Савиглиано (Marta Elena Savigliano), из исте позиције као Фостерова, скреће пажњу на очигледну чињеницу да *World dance*, као рубрика, има ефекат спајања плесача који се не идентификују као „светски плесачи“ и „гомилања“ плесних пракси које обично нису повезане једна са другом. *World dance*, дакле, као категорија плесова, означава специфичан „свет“ плесача и плесних пракси, који се изнова инкорпорирају у свет плесова и заслужују пажњу поља *World dance*-а, поља које одржавају научници, критичари, водитељи, спонзори, практичари и гледаоци/потрошачи плеса, првенствено лоцирани у Сједињеним Државама и Европи. *World dance* је класификација која се примењује на новооткривене плесове и плесаче који су, иако се све време баве плесом тамо у свету, сада другачије посматрани, како би се уклопили у плесне колекције под глобализацијом (Savigliano 2009, 165-66). У ствари, наставља Савиглиано, „традиционални“ плесови, пре него „модерне“ (тј. под утицајем Запада), хибридлизоване верзије, склонији су да постану део светског плесног тржишта (Savigliano 2009, 167).

За разлику од Фостерове, а на сличном трагу као Савиглиано, Ивана Катаринчић проблематизује синтагму *World dance*, поредећи је са термином ворлд мусиц. Тако, она тврди да „комплексност конструкције [*World dance*] и њезина проблематичност произлазе из начина њезине употребе те посебно из потенцијално имплицитног пресликавања значењских ознака (боље проблематизованог) појма *world music* из којег се наметнуо сувремен и повијесни контекст плесне терминологије проблематике етничког у плесу“ (Katarinčić 2015, 328). Према Катаринчићевој, најкомплекснија проблематичност појма *world dance* у његовој је асоцијацији на *world music*, где се представе и терминологија везани за традицију промишљања етничке и фолк музике некритички преузимају у пољу *World dance*-а.

Према су поменуте студије значајне за разумевање проблема и замки у вези с термином *world dance*, као и за сам процес именовања и обележавања нечега овим термином, оквир поменутих дискусија је широк и готово неупотребљив у локалном контексту. Оне се ослањају на Фукоову идеју класификације појмова и ствари које су увек повезане са односима моћи и виде сам чин класификовања плесова у *world dance* рубрику као наметање категорија једног (западног) хегемонау односу на друге мањинске гласове и праксе. Имплицитан је, у овој критици, и негативан став према глобализацији као процесу, где се она једнозначно разуме као наметање западних вредности остатку света.

³ University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), где Фостерова предаје и који је први у наставни план увео појам *World dance*.

World dance у локалним контекстима

Научници су до сада признали да би свака антрополошка анализа глобализације требало да избегава узимање дискурса претње здраво за готово. Уместо тога, предлажу преусмерење фокуса проучавања локалних прилагођавања глобалним културним феноменима, како анализа не би пала у искушење да сложени и вишестепени процес глобализације дефинише као апстрактно чудовиште (в. Ina & Rosaldo 2007). Било да научници прихватају статично или динамично гледиште, они се углавном слажу у једној тачки: процеси глобализације се најбоље посматрају у локалним случајевима, где прилагођавања или одговори на глобализацију имају облик видљивих економских, културних и друштвених процеса. Међутим, остаје питање: шта се сматра релевантним „локалним“ нивоом за анализу? Ово питање расправља Рафаел Бланшиер у свом тексту о историји транспозиције традиционалног монголског плеса (*Bii bielgee*) у савремени уметнички и глобални контекст, где адресира и локалне расправе о кореографисаном (неаутентичном) насупрот (аутентичном) „чистом фолклору“ и глобалне расправе о штетности категорије World dance.

Бланшиер (Blanchier), на примеру Монголије, описује две паралелне традиције: руралну и урбану праксу, која се назива *Bii bielgee*, тврдећи да у савременом контексту ниједан облик не гура други на ивицу изумирања, већ да се, напротив, они међусобно подржавају у својој потреби да буду представљени на међународном плану. Ова потреба може се видети и као потреба локалних плесних култура да буду укључене у категорију *world dance*. Друго, одређивање шта је довољно локално представља специфично питање. У случају Монголије, како Бланшиер показује, приустни су и кореографисани фолклор, развијан под утицајем Совјетског савеза након Другог светског рата,⁴ и руралне праксе, повезане са номадским начином живота. Оба приступа представљају традиције које се међусобно помажу и претендују на простор у националним и глобалним оквирима. Сажимање и суживот ових традиција, према Бланшиеровом мишљењу, поспешују креативни развој поменутих форми.

Синергијом ових традиција, монголски плес показује велику креативност. Да би се придржавали нових глобалних стандарда и естетике, те да би одговорили на променљиве укусе монголске публике, уметници усвајају иновативне стратегије комбинујући монголску „суштину“ плеса, која се углавном налази у *Bii bielgee*, са новим трендовима, попут модерног, џез и савременог плеса или поп елемената ритма, гесте и стила (Blanchier 2018, 9).

Монголски кореографи усвајају глобалне моделе не само плеса, већ и идеје какав треба да буде савремени уметник који тежи да наступа на националној или међународној сцени. Ако је космополитизам „замишљена веза коју људи осећају да имају са широм транслокалном или међународном заједницом, али која се манифестује на изразито локалне начине“ (Marsh 2009), онда су они, као што је то био и творац *Bii bielgee*, кореограф Севцид, уметничка космополитска елита Монголије (Blanchier 2018, 12). Ово локално разумевање улоге плеса и улоге кореографа у „превођењу“ прошлости и традиције у тренутне, савремене контексте, кореспондира са трендом на глобалној плесној сцени у евоцирању плесне прошлости.

⁴ У много чему, оно што се назива *ardin bujig* („монголски народни плес“) може се описати као сценска, кореографисана и професионална верзија *Bii bielgee* и других локалних плесних форми, недавног изума, развијеног под техничким утицајем балета и естетског начина приказивања народних плесова ансамбла Мојсејев (Blanchier 2018, 2).

Тако, на пример, бројни уметници и фестивали све више приказују дела која се баве прошлошћу, откривајући потенцијал за саморефлексиивност плеса у дијалогу са плесном историјом. Овде спадају и реномирани европски концептуално оријентисани кореографи, као што су Гзавије Ле Роа (Xavier Le Roy), Естер Саламон (Eszter Salamon) и Мартин Нахбар (Martin Nachbar) – добри примери кореографа који првенствено раде са широко схваћеном темом прошлости. Поменути кореографи излажу различите начине преузимања прошлости, али сви ангажују концепт историје, схваћене као конструкције засноване на потребама садашњости. Према теоретичарки плеса, Ивон Харт, док раде са цитатима, историјским референцама и ре/конструкцијом, ови кореографи развијају методолошке стратегије и кореографске принципе за бављење прошлошћу. Прошлост постаје арена за преиспитивање садашњости, али садашњости која у великој мери одражава неизбежност прошлости. Као таква, ова уметничка пракса се може ставити у шири академски дискурс који је на сличан начин увео разумевање сећања и историје. Хартова сугерише да кореографије ових уметника отклањају јаз између садашњости и прошлости и компликују разлику између уметничког и академског поља. Оне нас терају да преиспитамо појмове цитирања, ре/конструкције и архивирања, које Хартова предлаже као централне кореографске стратегије за дочаравање историчности.

Међутим, паралелно са развојем интересовања за историју и, условно речено, традицију – извођачку и културну, које усмерава савремену плесну сцену у свим њеним глобалним манифестацијама, још један од покретача овог поља је свакако и посматрање плеса као нематеријалног културног наслеђа (*intangible cultural heritage*) или живућег наслеђа (*living heritage*), које све више обликује дискурсе о традицији у плесу, као и дискурсе о плесним традицијама *на* сцени.

Од 2003. године, UNESCO отвара светску листу нематеријалног културног наслеђа која дозвољава упис активности као што су извођачке уметности и вештине на листу заједничког наслеђа човечанства. Другим речима, према члану 2. Конвенције о нематеријалном културном наслеђу, из 2003. године, оквирно стоји да нематеријално културно наслеђе представља праксе репрезентације, експресије, знања, вештине – као и инструменте, објекте, предмете и културне просторе повезане са њима – које заједнице, групе, и у неким случајевима индивидуе, препознају као део њиховог наслеђа (в. <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>).

Од тада до данас, уписане су бројне праксе на ову листу. Такође, сама идеја НКН-а постала је значајан део не само академско/уметничких дискурса и комплексних бирократских процедура, већ је и појам наслеђа заузео значајно место међу носиоцима наслеђа, када је реч о разумевању сопствених традиционалних пракси на глобалној сцени. Дакле, последњих двадесет година, развила су се одређена значајна аналитичка „чворишта“ у дискусијама које обликују свет плеса. То су: аутентичност, транскултуралност, динамично или статично схватање традиције, трансмисија и „утрживост“ наслеђа. Многи од ових појмова нису нови у дискусијама и разумевањима плеса. Међутим, оно што је ново, то су заједнице укључене у ове праксе – научника, извођача и бирократа – у којима се, из различитих углова, тврди да плес као нематеријално културно наслеђе има вредност. Та вредност огледа се у томе што има везе с прошлошћу (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995), коју људи желе да сачувају за

будућност (Howard 2010) и, најзад, има тржишну вредност, тј. представља ресурс – и у овом смислу, плесно наслеђе може бити нешто што даје живот и обезбеђује живот локалним заједницама и извођачима (в. Stepputat 2015), али и нешто што заступа ауторитарне позиције ограничења креативног живота традиција, па и опстанка самих носилаца традиција (в. Hameršak, Pleše & Vukušić 2013).

Пре него што кренемо на дискусију о локалној, источноевропској традицији промишљања о традицији на сцени, желимо да истакнемо још један иновативни аспект тумачења плеса кроз призму нематеријалног културног наслеђа.⁵ Наиме, реч је о пољу кореографије и њене формалне анализе. У овом смислу, плес као НКН изазива пажњу и савременим компјутерским техникама и иновацијама, настојећи да се искористе невероватне могућности бележења, документације и чувања НКН садржаја. Разни иновативни алати за снимање покрета, омогућују развој нових софтвера за моделирање, класификацију и сумаризацију елемената НКН (в. El Raheb & Ioannidis 2021). Иако вредност оваквих приступа остаје виђена, сматрамо да је генерално окретање ка формалним принципима кореографије, као што су покрет, темпо, ритам, просторни и временски обрасци, веома важно. Они, са једне стране, успостављају нове научне дијалоге између различитих традиција бављења плесом, као што су, на пример, етнокорееологија и антропологија. А, са друге стране, окретање ка формалним аспектима кореографије, омогућава да се традиција „види“ и из другог угла, а не само из угла политичких и дискурзивних анализа, те да се постави питање ауторства у плесу.

Традиција у дискурсу плеса као нематеријалног културног наслеђа

Савремене дискусије о традиционалном плесу на сцени могу бити интерпретиране из перспективе плеса као традиције или НКН-а, где увиђамо три промене у овим дискусијама.

Прва промена подразумева развој „изнутра“. Претходни приступи постављања традиције на сцену, као што су били интеркултурно, крос-културно или постколонијално позориште, користили су праксу мешања или спајања културних елемената различитих временски и просторно удаљених традиција. Тако се експериментисало са спајањем класичног азијског позоришта, традиционалних „народних“ сценских облика и пракси и традиција западног позоришта, а све у циљу културног разумевања и дијалога. Чини се, међутим, да је данас тежиште на дубинском читању појединачних традиција где се разматра развој традиција „изнутра“, њиховим сопственим правилима, што се поклапа са широко схваћеном идејом очувања (safeguarding), дефинисаним од стране UNESCO-а. Друга промена представља измењен однос између интересних група: научника, кореографа, заједница праксе и бирократа, који морају чвршће и повезаније да раде на заједничком разумевању суштина традиција, као и њихових будућности, што се поклапа са широко схваћеном идејом одрживости (sustainability) дефинисаном од стране UNESCO-а. Разматрање одрживости и будућности традиционалних пракси и израза свакако је постојало и пре УНЕСКО-ве листе. Академска заједница, стручна тела и организације, националне легислативе, бавили су се, током двадесетог века, идејама и потребама очувања народне (фолк) културе, али не на начин на који се наслеђе данас перципира у оквиру новог дискурса о

⁵ У даљем тексту, користећемо скраћеницу НКН.

наслеђу.⁶ На пример, акценат на разумевању традиције био је на „очувању“ где се традиција разумевала у највећој мери статично – другим речима, правила се веза са пожељном *прошлошћу*. Међутим, UNESCO-ва идеја одрживости (в. Giliberto and Labadi 2022) поставља питање будућности пракси и израза – не само одржавање онога што је традиција била, већ и шта би она могла да буде у *будућности*. Климатске промене и еколошка деградација планете поставља пред UNESCO не само изазове одрживости и заштите, већ и темељна питања сврхе и места традиције у будућности (в. Wolf 2021). Трећа промена представља окрет ка формалним аспектима кореографије, о којима смо већ говорили горе у тексту. Овај окрет, такође, дугујемо UNESCO-у, који захтева формално дефинисање пракси приликом уписа на листу.

Ове три промене, верујемо, могу нам помоћи у контекстуализацији и разумевању локалних дискусија о традиционалном плесу на сцени, развијеним у оквиру кореографисаног фолклора у Југоисточној Европи и дискусијама покренутих у оквиру Етно самита ТрадицијаНова.

Кореографија традиционалног плеса у Југоисточној Европи: кратак осврт

Кореографију традиционалног плеса као жанр можемо пратити тек након II светског рата, када је у Југославији дошло до формирања аматерских и професионалних група које су изводиле традиционалне плесове на сцени.⁷ Експанзија аматерских културно-уметничких друштава, након Другог светског рата,⁸ условила је и генерисање нове уметничке праксе, која је била превасходно инспирисана оновременим културним политикама и процесима еманципације претежно сесоског становништва Југославије (в. Hofman 2012; Njaradi 2018; Rašić 2022).⁹ Иако многи теоретичари социјализма говоре о његовим контролишућим утицајима над културом (в. Naraszi 1989; Verdery 1991; Shay 2002), важно је истаћи да, упркос редовним идеолошким утицајима које имају све државне власти, социјализам је, ипак, омогућио да се створи један нов и специфичан облик уметничке праксе каква је кореографија традиционалног плеса (в. Njaradi 2018, 72; Rašić 2022, 92).

Идеја о кореографији и сценској презентацији традиционалних плесова у Србији веома је стара.¹⁰ Неки видови прото кореографија појављивали су се

6 Види, на пример, Петковски: „Упркос веровањима да концепт наслеђа постоји већ дуге време, неколико научника сугерише да је формално скован и теоретизован тек у последњих неколико деценија. Савремени интерес за теоретисање наслеђа делом је последица његове укључености у културну политику и институционализацију кроз УНЕСЦО“ (Petkovski 2023, 4).

7 Од Другог светског рата, у Југославији су креиране нове културне политике, када државни врх, између осталог, утиче и на формирање културно-уметничких друштава широм земље. Аматеризам је тада замишљан као култура свих радних људи и дефинисан као човекова потреба да се изрази културно-уметнички, а не да на тај начин стиче средства за живот (Supek 1974, 8). Културно-уметничка друштва представљала су аматерске институције у којима је појединац могао да се учлањује у различите – драмске, литерарне, фолклорне и друге – секције. Верременом, фолклорне секције задобиле су доминацију и преузеле примат у овим организацијама. У Југославији је локална власт подстицала уније, фабрике и студентске асоцијације да спонзоришу и на друге начине подржавају фолклорне секције КУД-ова (Aguilar 2005, 156).

8 Осим великог броја аматерских културно-уметничких друштава која су била формирана или обновљена у сеоским и градским срединама целе Југославије, основана су и три професионална ансамбла традиционалних плесова и песама и то „Коло“ у Србији (1948), „Лудо“ у Хрватској (1948) и „Танец“ у Македонији (1949).

9 Културне политике Југославије мењале су се кроз време и те промене значајно су утицале и на рад културно-уметничких друштава, мењајући њихове начине функционисања, финансирања и политика презентације (в. Dimić 1988; Doknić 2021; Hofman 2012).

10 Више о кореографији и процесима кореографисања видети у: Njaradi 2016; Rašić 2021.

још крајем 30-их година XX века, када се у Београду одржао први фестивал тзв. „изворног фолклора“. Поменути фестивал је трајао чак две недеље, учешће су узеле изворне групе из различитих крајева тадашње краљевине Југославије и за крајњи циљ је имао „пропаганду нестилизоване народне игре“ (Јанковић 1949, 298-303). Важно је истаћи да београдски фестивал није био усамљени случај, већ да су широм Југославије у том периоду организовани фестивали сличног типа. Баш из тог разлога, Вишински и Дунин верују да је кроз активности поменутих фестивала формиран модел за приказивање традиционалних плесова на сцени (Ivančić Dunin i Višinski 1995, 6). Ипак, делује да све ове видове презентације традиционалних плесова на сцени можемо сматрати само претечама данашњих кореографија, будући да је на изградњу уметности кореографије традиционалног плеса утицало више различитих фактора – од препорука етнокореолога, преко друштвено-политичког контекста, па све до непостојања професионалних школа за кореографију, због чега се уметност развијала искључиво кроз интуитивну практичну делатност аматера.

Теоријска промишљања о кореографији традиционалног плеса, премда су била спорадична и не баш обимна, можемо пратити од рада Љубице и Данице Јанковић, „Постављање и режирање народних игара: врсте примењених игара“ (Јанковић 1949, 63-75). Према њиховом мишљењу, кореографисање традиционалних плесова зависи од „...врсте комада за који се узима; друго, од техничких средстава којима се кореограф служи; и треће, од тежње коју жели да оствари“ (Јанковић и Јанковић 1949, 65). Надаље, оне наводе да се традиционални плесови могу изводити онако како су забележени током теренског рада или у сплетовима игара, али тако да се не ремети „оригиналност плеса“. Комбиновање традиционалних плесова са другим жанровима, рецимо балетом или савременом игром, нису виделе као погодну методологију, јер би се тиме нарушио њихов „карактер“ (Јанковић и Јанковић 1949, 14).

Скоро три деценије касније, хрватски етнокореолог Иван Иванчан публикује струдију Фолклор и сцена, у којој, истовремено из теоријског и искуственог аспекта, говори о процесу кореографисања традиционалних плесова. Иванчан првенствено наводи шта је све потребно да би неко уопште постао кореограф, а потом истиче важност теренских истраживања, верујући да једино кроз тај процес кореограф може да стекне неопходно искуство за креирање успешне кореографије (Ivančan 1971, 110). Према Иванчановом мишљењу, теренски рад је до те мере неопходан пре кореографисања, да без њега „нема ни разлога да кореографију називамо плесом из тог краја“ (Ivančan 1971, 110).

Међутим, када се осврнемо на историју кореографије традиционалног плеса, постаје јасније да је на њену крајњу форму, која нам је данас позната, ипак више утицаја имало практично деловање кореографа овог жанра. Сви ти кореографи били су аматери и калили су свој занат кроз практичан рад у професионалним и аматерским ансамблима. Да су сви кореографи били аматери – не чуди, јер у Југославији није било професионалних школских програма за обуку кореографа. Систем кореографисања био је релативно уједначен код свих кореографа. Они су бирали одређене традиционалне елементе – плесове, музику, народну ношњу и то најчешће оне најтипичније, стандардизовали их и даље уклапали у кореографску целину. Једна од првих озбиљних кореографкиња на просторима бивше Југославије

у домену традиционалног плеса, била је прва директорка и кореографкиња Ансамбла народних игара и песама Србије „Коло“, Олга Сковран.¹¹

Радећи у Ансамблу „Коло“, Олга Сковран је коначно дефинисала принципе кореографисања у овој уметности, који су и данас присутни као модели на које се угледају нови кореографи. Сходно томе, Сковранову можемо одредити као зачетницу жанра кореографије традиционалног плеса. Вероватно због позиције на којој је радила – професионални ансамбл, њен облик презентације традиционалних плесова представља доминантни облик ове уметности. Како наглашава Петковски:

„...с обзиром на то да су још увек постојале локалне плесне групе које су изразиле своје идентитете као различите кроз извођење локалне културе, југословенски званичници су инсистирали на модернизацији која би трансформисала игре из сељачких у 'високу културу'. Процес модернизације се разликовао од стила совјетског 'социјалистичког реализма' и критиковали су га југословенски идеолози који су саветовали да се не усваја и шири, али су подстицали научнике и уметнике да буду слободни у свом стваралаштву [...]. Ова слобода у стваралаштву и акценат на осавремењавању народног укључивао је процес стилизације који је подразумевао мењање музике и игре за сцену“ (Petkovski 2023, 107).

Осим угледања на прото кореографије које су изводиле сеоске групе на фестивалима, практичног деловања и препорука еминентних етнокореолога, на изглед и поруку коју су слале кореографије традиционалног плеса, значајан утицај имало је и друштвено-политичко стање у земљи. Тако су КУД-ови одмах након рата у својим кореографијама презентовали фолклор свих југословенских република, што је нарочито било изражено када се Југославија отворила за страна тржишта, а фолклорне трупе кренуле на међународне турнеје. Ови сплетови традиционалних плесова, у којима су приказиване традиције из свих делова Југославије, били су погодни за: презентацију пожељне слике о Југославији, „стварање осећаја јединства и непосредног искуства мултикултурализма“ (Hofman 2012, 76) и подржавање идеологије „братства и јединства“ (Њаради 2018, 66). Распад Југославије означио је и промене у политикама репрезентације фолклорних ансамбала, па се тако мултикултурална слика Југославије замењује за ускоодређену националну традицију појединачних република. Другим речима, а на примеру Србије, од деведесетих година, кореографи се све више и интензивније окрећу приказивању локалних традиција и своје кореографије представљају као дела којима се „чува традиција“ и „национални идентитет“.¹²

Нарочити утицај на кореографије традиционалног плеса имао је распад Југославије и повратак националним идеологијама које су се јавиле у готово свим пост-југословенским државама. У тренутку када су у држави почеле да бујају националне идеологије, делује да је за уметност кореографије традиционалног плеса сламка спаса била чињеница да су „народне традиције“ поново добиле своје значајно место у политичком и друштвеном животу нове националне државе.

11 Олга Сковран (1908-1995) била је први српски кореограф и директор Ансамбла народних игара и песама Србије „Коло“. Пре него што је учествовала у оснивању „Кола“ (1948) и његовом каснијем раду, Олга је од 1944. године учествовала у раду фолклорне секције аматерског културно-уметничког друштва „Иво Лола Рибар“ из Београда. Управу је у овој групи Сковранова установила своје педагошке и кореографске принципе у раду с традиционалним плесовима. Она је учествовала у оснивању Ансамбла „Коло“ и у њему је, као директорка, кореографкиња и педагошкиња, радила све до 1965. године. Њен рад обележен је великим бројем кореографија и успешних националних и међународних наступа Ансамбла „Коло“. Више о животу и раду Олге Сковран видети у: Ђурић 2020.

12 Иако постоје различите интерпретације и разумевања „традиције“ међу кореографима који стварају у овом пољу, доминантно схватање је есенцијалистичко и романтичарско.

Наиме, да би се изградила и легитимизовала националност, били су неопходни симболи, а управо су они тражени у што старијим традицијама, фолклору, митовима и обичајима. У политичком дискурсу Србије, већ од краја 1980-их, а нарочито током 1990-их година, све значајније место заузимају термини попут „национални идентитет“, „национална специфичност“, „национално биће“ и слични синоними, те питања националне угрожености (Čolović 2014, 19; Malešević 2011, 47). Национални идентитет се у овом контексту посматра примордијалистички – као нешто што је природно дато, а не друштвено конструисано, све у циљу да се на тај начин оправдају различите политичке акције, превасходно власти. Наиме, градио се нови тип колективног идентитета и, стога, „традиција“ којом је овај идентитет могао да се легитимизује и даље пројектује. Кореографи су, услед нових идеолошких утицаја, почели да креирају искључиво кореографије сопствених етничких група, а да је промена долазила под утицајем државне идеологије, говори у прилог истраживање Јанка Димитријевића о постепеној, али јасној промени програмске политике Ансамбла народних игара и песама „Коло“, док су се исте промене догодиле и у осталим пост-Југословенским професионалним ансамблима као што су Ладо и Танец (в. Petkovski 2023, 112-113). Што се тиче стварања кореографија у новом периоду, доминантан модел стилизације, према Филипу Петковском, остаје једини присутан модел – ипак, додајемо, однос према стилизацији није остао подразумевајући. Како смо појаснили, дискурс нематеријалне баштине и очувања какав промовише UNESCO закомпликовао је доминантне парадигме стварања традиционалних кореорафија на сцени. С једне стране, очекује се повратак „аутентичним“ формалним музичко-плесним обрасцима и минимализација стилизације. С друге стране, укључивање кореографије традиционалног плеса у уметничке и *World dance* дискурсе, подразумева позивање кореографа да се укључе у глобалне уметничке процесе стварања. Другим речима, то значи да, иако би нагласак на очувању могао да имплицира статичан поглед на традицију или „замрзавање“ (в. Vakka 2020), од традиционалних плесних форми се све више очекује да остваре активне везе са савременим процесима валоризације, углавном кроз комодификацију плесног наслеђа (кроз туристичку понуду), нове начине преноса (друштвене мреже, онлајн живот плеса) и власништва (питања ауторства и *copy-right*-а уметничких форми насталих на основама традиције) (в. Zheng 2023). Ова двострука веза дискурса наслеђа – која, с једне стране, подразумева окамењеност, а са друге захтева релевантност кроз раст и развој – створила је кризу међу различитим плесним заједницама (в. Kim et al. 2019). Поменуте кризе наглашавају потребу да плесне заједнице ухвате, разумеју и пренесу динамику креативности и иновација у заштићеним традиционалним облицима (в. Filippou et al. 2006; Vakka 2020).

Преиспитивање граница: да ли је жанр у кризи?

Етно самит ТрадицијаНова тежио је одговору на кризе и указивању на перспективе. Дакле, осмишљавање ТрадицијаНове, као уметничко-научне манифестације, настало је из потребе да се из више перспектива преиспитају и понуде нова решења за уметничку презентацију традиционалних плесова на сцени. С тим у вези, стручна и научна конференција „Етно самит – Традиција Нова“ први пут је одржана 2017. године. Конференција је, у октобру те године,

окупила теоретичаре, научнике, критичаре и практичаре у подручју изведбене традицијске уметности и четири професионална фолклорна ансамбла, те наставила свој континуитет одржавања у 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021. и 2022. години. Циљ ових сусрета, реализованих у Београду (2017, 2018, 2022) и Ужицу (2019, 2021, 2022), био је стварање простора унутар којег ће учесници расправљати о могућностима напредовања у свом раду, учењу, али и креирању будућности презентације традиције на сцени.

Традиција Нова, већ тада, у свом првом издању, осим научног и стручног дела, дала је могућност уметницима ансамбала да учествују у драмским радионицама, преиспитујући сопствени уметнички израз и генеришући, на крају самита, за све учеснике, ново креативно изведбено дело. Такве радионице, постале су пример добре праксе, који се наставио и током свих следећих самита.

У научном делу конференције, учествовали су истраживачи из САД-а, Хрватске, Велике Британије, Македоније, Ирске, Србије, Турске, Румуније, Мађарске и других земаља. Представљајући своје радове, расправљали су о актуелним питањима у вези са деловањем професионалних извођача традиционалног плеса и, генерално, презентацијом овог жанра на сцени. Намера стручно-научних сусрета била је да кроз нова искуства, међусобну сарадњу и учење помогну бољем разумевању властите историје и културе, те да се пронађе начин за бољу презентацију културног наслеђа, које је неисцрпни потенцијал стваралаштва за чиниоце ове уметничке нише.

Како смо то дефинисали у првој Агенди ТрадицијаНове, ова манифестација имала је за циљ „...да истражи феномен сценске презентације народне игре или кореографисане народне игре у условима у којима се она развијала и у којима се и даље развија у оквиру професионалних и аматерских ансамбала региона и Европе“ (Њаради и Рашић 2017, 22). Основна питања која су постављана кроз ову платформу, била су „где и како даље?“. Окупљајући научнике из области етномузикологије, етнокореологије, антропологије и драматургије, али и искусне руководиоце и плесаче професионалних ансамбала, ТрадицијаНова нудила је неколико програмских линија: 1) научну конференцију и округле столове, где су дискутована различита питања у вези са кореографијом и драматургијом традиционалних плесова на сцени – у синхронијској и дијахронијског перспективи; 2) уметничке радионице на којима су плесачи из више различитих професионалних ансамбала размењивали знања и искуства, те радили на стицању нових вештина и развијали алтернативне моделе за презентацију традиционалних плесова на сцени; 3) наступе професионалних ансамбала из региона и Европе, балетских школа и аматерских ансамбала који су креирали другачије програме за потребе ТрадицијаНове. Најјаснији одјек ових конференција нуди тадашњи директор Ансамбла Коло, Владимир Декић: „Научили смо да самокритичност као вриједност у нашој умјетности не постоји, те да, ако се не мијењамо, можемо изгубити ласкаву титулу 'умјетност'. Научили смо да оно што је изнесено на конференцији остаје забележено, да о томе размишљамо и враћамо се одређеним темама из претходних година, с новим искуством или новим закључцима“ (Lado Godišnjak 2019, 41).

Један од многобројних разноликих резултата одржаних конференција, односно комуникације међу страучњацима и са јавношћу, свакако је и овај зборник у којем

се представља селекција одабраних радова и тема о којима се дискутовало на научним панелима током протеклих година.

У свом чланку, Соња Здравкова Дјепароска (Sonja Zdravkova Djeparoska) пише о традиционалном плесу тешкото, који за Македонце има посебно значење. Тешкото не припада само низу традиционалних плесова, већ представља и облик који је акумулирао мноштво значења. Општа перцепција и интерпретација традиционалног плеса тешкото и његова популарност, не само због традиционалне фолклорне форме, већ и због специфичности у погледу естетике и изражаја, говори нам о јединственој вредности овог феномена. Emili Vilkoš (Emily Wilcox) приповеда о слици која одјекује, односно о уметници Јанг Липинг (Yang Liping) и еволуцији савременог кинеског традиционалног плеса. Јанг Липинг је најуспешнија кинеска кореографкиња савременог приказа традиционалног плеса. Овај чланак поставља питање како је Јанг постигла значајан успех кроз савремену кореографију традиционалног плеса, испитујући успон поменутих уметница од седамдесетих година XX века, кроз њену трансформацију иконографске кинеске народне слике: плеса пауна. Сузана Ајхнер-Старчевић и Крешимир Старчевић доносе причу о Ивану Иванчану, који 1975. године започиње каријеру у Ансамблу народних плесова и пјесама Хрватске „ЛАДО“, где је провео 41 годину, од чега чак 24 године као уметнички директор. Током година проведених на позицији уметничког директора, на репертоар је поставио више од четрдесет нових кореографија и четиристо музичких комада световног и сакралног карактера. Осмислио је и на сцену поставио стотинак посебних програма за разне пригоде. Све наведено, а што је само део богате и разнолике фолклорне активности Ивана Иванчана, недвосмислено га сврстава у великане фолклорне сцене Хрватске. Мехмет Оџал Озбилгин (Mehmet Öcal Özbilgin), у чланку под називом „Оснивање и процес развоја националних турских институција за фолклорни плес“, доноси хронологију развоја установа за фолклорни плес у Турској. Државни ансамбл народних плесова основан је 1975. године при Министарству туризма и пропаганде, као први службени професионални ансамбл фолклорних плесова. Иновативни сценски аранжмани Државног ансамбла фолклорних плесова, који традиционалне плесове представљају савременим сценским приступом, дали су нову димензију схватању инсценације ових плесова. Различите врсте обука за професионалне плесаче Државног ансамбла народних плесова и сценска перцепција коју су створили познати плесни кореографи тог раздобља, биће основа за стварање курса изведбених уметности, укључених у наставни план и програм Одсека за турски фолклор. Аутор у раду расправља о учинку професионалних фолклорних ансамбала основаних у Источној Еуроци, те процесу успостављања и развоја националних турских институција за традиционални плес.

Дуња Њаради тематизује плес у контексту наслеђа кроз три студије случаја традиције на савременој плесној сцени. Ауторка кроз овај рад представља допринос растућој расправи о инсценацији историје и традиције у научним расправама и уметничким круговима. Реконструкција културних историјских дела, као и упризорење различитог традиционалног плесног материјала из целог света, постали су саставни део савремених кореографских приступа. Ови трендови у уметничким стратегијама отворили су многа значајна питања која се односе на наш осећај за историју и разумевање баштине. Покушавајући да разјасни нека од поменутих питања и проблема, овај рад уводи три различите кореографске

студије случаја које се, свака на свој начин, баве појмом традиције у савременим дискурсима плеса као баштине.

Ива Ниемчић пише о професионалцима – плесачима традиционалних плесова. У бившој Југославији, средином прошлога века, основана су три професионална ансамбла народних плесова и песама која делују до данас. Ове Ансамбле чине професионални плесачи и музичари. Основни задатак била им је уметничка интерпретација некада југословенских, а данас хрватских, српских и македонских народних песама и плесова у земљи и иностранству.

У свом раду Андриј Нахачевски (Andriy Nahachewsky) говори о кореографисању погледа у украјинским сценским традиционалним плесовима. Плесачи користе своје очи врло различито у контексту партиципације у плесу, за разлику од наступа на позорници. У инсценираном традиционалном плесу, учесници су често упућени да одрже снажан контакт очима једни с другима (интрадијагетички поглед), који се делимично користи за појачавање илузије импутираног окружења плеса „тамо и тада“ (често у идеализовано традиционално село у прошлости), те помоћи публици да их прати у својој машти. Друга доминантна стратегија гледања је екстрадијагетичка (успостављање контакта очима с гледаоцима изван просцениума). Ова опција наглашава фокусирање на „овде и сада“, на догађаје заједничке изведбе.

У раду „Румунска плесна етнокореографија: путање из прошлости и приступи у развоју“, Лиз Мелиш (Liz Mellish) проговара о историји румунске етнокореографије и њених заговорника, ослањајући се на документарне изворе и свој дугогодишњи теренски рад. Истражује вишеслојне идеје локалних културних норми, кореографског ауторитета и знања, презентацијских изведби и „начина репрезентације“. Први део рада оцртава историју румунске етнокореографије од раног двадесетог века, када су румунски плесови били укључени у инсцениране уметничке продукције. Мелиш оцртава оквир мреже фолклорних ансамбала основаних након Другог светског рата, који су се смањили између 1990. и 2005. године, а потом проширили након обновљеног ентузијазма за локалну културу. Други део прати кореографе и плесне инструкторе, разврставајући их према одговарајућим генерацијама, те истражујући доступне могућности кореографског тренинга у прошлости и садашњости. Трећи део испитује еволуцију структуре изведбе румунских ансамбала и етнокореографски стил, улогу кореографа као посредника између плесних покрета и стварања њихових плесних изведби, те различите стратегије које се користе за конструисање кореографија.

Мари-Пијер Гиберт (Marie-Pierre Gibert) у раду под називом „Прикажите, сачувајте, овековечите. Логика изведбе у појединим јеменским етничким плесним групама у Израелу“ говори о такозваним „етничким плесним трупима“ (лехакот етниот) које приказују богато културно наслеђе појединих група које чине израелско друштво: Јевреја из Јемена, Марока, Курдистана, Либије, Ирака, Етиопије или Индије, али и Арапа, Друза или Черкеза. Приказујући елементе своје културе, ове су групе учествовале у важном политичком захтеву из 1970-их у Израелу: да буду признате и третиране као једнаке с осталим деловима становништва ове мултикултуралне државе. Антрополошки истраживачки рад ауторке, спроведен у Израелу током последњих двадесет година, фокусирао се на плесне репертоаре Јевреја који долазе из Јемена. Овај рад приказује како је репертоар, који су донели

из Јемена, коришћен за конструисање различитих изведби појединих јемених етничких плесних група унутар овог политичког оквира културног признања, а касније, за очување и овековечење ове баштине. У новије време, окрећући свој поглед према будућности плесних група и њиховом одржавању, плесачи и менаџери приступају радикалној трансформацији онога што се изводи на позорници.

У свом раду Кетрин Фоли (Catherine E. Foley) говори о кореографима ирског традиционалног степ плес. У Ирској, кореографски рад у традиционалном степ плесу постоји на многим нивоима: од аматерског до професионалног и унутар различитих културних система и контекста. Ови системи и контексти подржавају одређене заједничке праксе, које утичу и обликују кореографски рад кореографа и значења која ти плесови/дела утеловљују и изражавају. У чланку, ауторка одабира и испитује различите ирске традиционалне плесне заједнице и њихове естетске системе. Притом, истражује како кореографи смештају свој рад унутар и око тих система културне праксе. Смештен унутар специфичних идеолошких дискурса и епистемологија, ауторка тврди да се данас кореографи традиционалног степ плеса или прилагођавају или изазивају границе дискурса повезаних с одговарајућим естетским системима тих пракси.

Даниела Иванова-Најберг (Daniela Ivanova-Nyberg) у својем чланку тумачи културолошки пренос кореографског знања, представљајући резултате теренског рада у Бугарској, с неким примерима из Сједињених Држава. Овај рад разматра различите изазове које представља тема културног преноса кореографског знања, али такође открива фасцинацију новим путевима за даље проучавање које нуди. Текст садржи теоријски део, документе с теренског рада (попраћене аналитичким коментарима) и закључна разматрања. Теоријски део доноси ауторкин „дијалог“ с појмовима културног преноса и кореографског знања; „презентацијски“ представља документе теренског рада у потрази за културним преносом кореографског знања у бугарском контексту с појединим примерима из САД-а. Јошко Ђалета пише о формалним и неформалним начинима преноса знања и вештина традиционалног (вишегласног) певања на примеру Ансамбла „Ладо“. Једноставно је немогуће говорити о традиционалној вокалној музици, кроз призму идиличног сеоског живота у којем све перфектно функционише, где је музика контекстуално присутна кроз изведбе различитих архаичних жанрова и стилова. Попут многих културних процеса установљених у прошлости, у временима другачијих друштвених, економских и социјалних прилика, и традицијски вокални музички идиом подложен је менама кроз које проналази нове начине опстанка у садашњем времену. Све наведене околности утицале су и на развој музичког живота, посебно вокалне (вишегласне) традиције у малим градским и руралним срединама, чији се традиционални музички живот наставља у контексту разноврсних традиционалних световних и сакралних обичаја, као и кроз разне вокалне, инструменталне и плесне форме.

У свом раду, Милош Рашић указује како је кореографија традиционалног плеса у Србији у уметничкој кризи. Србија има дугу етнокореолошку традицију, док је уметност кореографије традиционалног плеса релативно новија појава, настала након Другог светског рата. Иако се ради о уметничкој пракси, кореографија традиционалног плеса често се темељи на опозицији изворно:стилизирано и перципира као пракса која „чува идентитет“, „традицију“ и „баштину“. Аутор

тврди да тежња према поделама унутар жанра не иде у прилог уметности. Напротив, покушаји кадрирања и инсистирање на јасном опредељењу за приступ при стварању кореографије доводе до ограничавања уметности кореографије традиционалног плеса. Рашић је у свом раду приказао процесе којима је изграђен дискурс о „изворним“ кореографијама, а затим и указао на ограничавајуће покушаје поцанровске класификације кореографија. На крају, представио је представу „#МелтингПот“ у извођењу ученика Средње балетске школе из Новог Сада, као пример покушаја изласка из поменутих жанровских граница.

Да закључимо, нови концепт попут ТрадицијаНове око себе је окупио велики број научника и уметника из целог света. Креативне дискусије и презентације традиционалних плесова на сцени били су инспирација многим кореографима, који су почели да бирају нове приступе кореографији традиционалног плеса. На пример, професори и ученици Средње балетске школе у Новом Саду креирали су целовечерњи уметнички перформанс инспирисан традиционалним плесовима, под именом „МелтингПот“ (в. Рашић у овом Зборнику), да наведемо само један пример. Управо су такве реакције појединачно показале да је ТрадицијаНова успела у томе да понуди нови уметнички импулс жанру који је у вишедеценијској хибернацији – то је нешто за чиме су многи тежили.

Овим Зборником обележавамо низ успешних, узбудљивих и турбулентних година на локалној и регионалној сцени кореографије традиционалног плеса на сцени. Овај Зборник истражује теоријске и практичне проблеме, недоумице и изазове који се јављају у доменима професионалне сценске презентације традиционалних плесова у Југоисточној Европи, али и повезује поменуте дискусије са глобалним токовима и дискурсима о плесу, уметности и наслеђу.

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The choreography of traditional dance between the Local and the Global – Introductory Considerations

Abstract: The collection of papers, *The Choreography of Traditional Dance on Stage: Crises, Perspectives and Global Dialogues*, was created as a result of a series of conferences held within the Ethno Summit “TradicijaNova”, organized by the Ensemble of folk dances and songs of Serbia “Kolo”. This paper aims to present topics discussed at conferences and opens space for new re-examinations in traditional and contemporary dance at local and global levels. This paper explores the artistic transpositions of traditional dance on stage (the relationship between artistic dance, its discourses and practices, with the discourses and practices of traditional dance) and the issue of heritage in both dance genres. Finally, our goal is to explore theoretical and practical problems, doubts and challenges arising in the professional presentation of traditional dances in Southeast Europe and to connect these discussions with global trends and discourses about dance, art and heritage.

Key words: traditional dance, contemporary dance, local, global, heritage, artistic transposition

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Formal and informal ways of transferring knowledge and skills of traditional (polyphonic) singing, example of the Lado Ensemble

Abstract: Vocal musical phenomena represent recognizable identification marks of wider communities and integral segments of their cultural and social identity. The term ‘folk music’ in Croatia is closely related to the history of its performance at festivals and parades, where the attitude towards vocal music had a remarkable influence on the development of the parade system. All of the above was a good prerequisite for creating the first professional ensemble in the period of institutionalization, which will also form a recognizable vocal pattern, a recognizable Croatian “voice”. Chest-throat singing, today known as Lado’s singing (*ladovsko pjevanje*), as a “voice”, is very similar to the singing of the central and northern Croatian plains. In this act, the informal way of learning (oral transmission) is formalized with new ways of learning – spontaneity, which is one of the backbones of the concept of originality, is, in this case, replaced by professionalism represented during the entire process of creating a stylized, staged work of art. Changes in approaches to the stage presentation of vocal music in the seventy-year practice of the Lado ensemble will show a series of knowledge transfer processes that found their place in the stage vocal performances of the ensemble, creating new performance models that simultaneously became new ways of acquiring and transferring knowledge in local communities.

Key words: Croatian vocal music, polyphonic singing, folklore, original vs. stylized folklore, Lado ensemble

Traditional vocal (polyphonic) music in Croatia

Speaking about traditional vocal music through the prism of an idyllic rural life where everything functions perfectly, and music is contextually present through performances of various archaic genres and styles that we will discuss, is simply an impossible mission. Like many cultural processes established in the past, in times of different social, economic, and societal circumstances, the traditional vocal musical idiom has been a subject of changes through which it finds new ways of survival in the present time. All

the mentioned circumstances have also influenced the development of musical life, especially the vocal (polyphonic) tradition in small urban and rural communities, whose traditional musical life continues in the context of various traditional customs, secular and sacred, as well as through various vocal, instrumental, and dance forms.

The Croatian vocal traditional culture is an integral and important component of Croatian traditional culture. It is characterized by the diversity of vocal styles and genres in different Croatian regions, in different ethnographic zones. Polyphonic singing is the most common vocal musical tradition in Croatia. The northern regions of Međimurje and Podravina are the only areas where monophonic singing predominated in polyphonic singing (in the past), although it is a fact that the practice of polyphonic (urban) singing is increasingly becoming a singing tradition in these regions as well. There are many reasons for the persistence of polyphonic singing in Croatia. Geographically, Croatia is an area where different cultures collide, including musical influences. It is a space where the tradition of archaic, untempered, polyphonic singing intertwines with polyphonic diatonic urban singing. The area of contact between the Mediterranean, Alpine, and Balkan cultural circles is an excellent example of the coexistence of different cultural (musical) influences that preserve their differences through traditional vocal expressions.¹ Complex layers of vocal traditions intertwine and complement each other in all aspects; in most cases, vocal musical phenomena represent recognizable identification marks of broader communities and are an integral part of their cultural and social identity. Polyphonic singing represents a lively, creative, complex, and above all, changeable cultural expression created by talented musicians – individuals and groups. When it comes to traditional vocal styles and genres typical for the Croatian area, we are faced with various approaches that are equally important for understanding and presenting this subject matter. The complex mosaic of the vocal (polyphonic) musical phenomenon can be most simply depicted by determining common musical characteristics, both in secular and sacred vocal musical phenomena.

Earlier research on vocal music tradition in Croatia was primarily focused on archaic layers of polyphonic or monophonic vocal genres and styles of sacred and secular repertoires of local communities. The extensive collection of melodies and chants (melographing) was a common practice among researchers almost until the end of the 20th century. Melographers were exclusively interested in the musical characteristics of the chants, determined by analytical comparison of melodic pitch sequences and melorhythmic patterns. Music analysis usually starts from the basic principles of Western music, although a large number of recorded musical examples are almost impossible to notate in standardized Western notation. Similarly, melographers often notate the leading performance voice, although in many cases, it involves polyphonic performances. Standard notation and melorhythmic patterns (measures) often misrepresent the real sound picture of the performance, which is usually delivered in a free *parlando rubato* rhythm, unconstrained by the conventions of classical music, which is the most common language of communication. At the same time, comparative studies of local aspects of vocal music within the context and framework of the broader region are usually avoided.

From the perspective of contemporary ethnomusicological paradigms, the complex mosaic of vocal (polyphonic) musical phenomena is best represented by recognizing mu-

¹ The ancient layer of Croatian traditional and folk church music practice is characterized by a wealth of different styles, a heterogeneous repertoire, which was a result of various living conditions, turbulent historical events, and Croatia's position at the geographical, political, and cultural crossroads of the Central European, Balkan, and Mediterranean regions (Ceribašić 2000, 27; Marošević 2000, 413).

sical styles and genres, i.e., the diverse layers of musical cultures still present in contemporary musical practices. Contemporary ethnomusicology emphasizes the exploration of all musical phenomena, which includes various musical styles and genres that coexist within the researched area. Accordingly, from today's perspective, we can discuss *old*, *older*, *new*, or *newer* musical traditions that are preserved in the territory of the Republic of Croatia. The modern way of life allows individuals from smaller or larger communities to adopt various general musical influences whose complexity is almost impossible to generalize. Due to increasing interaction among inhabitants of neighboring regions and different ethnographic zones, traditional songs blend various musical characteristics. Archaic, oldest musical traditions are gradually paving the way for new, more popular musical styles and genres, causing them to disappear from musical practice forever. Through the urbanization of rural areas, there is a mutual interplay between rural and urban traditional music. The same applies to the latest economic processes that have completely changed the demographic and economic landscape of the entire area, altering the musical landscape as well. Instead of numerous singers who often demonstrated their singing abilities in informal private and public settings, today's performers are regularly members of local folklore groups or active participants and organizers of local formal events – processions, customs, and rituals – still present in the life of local communities.

The aforementioned facts are the main reason why traditional singing is now a sporadic part of everyday musical life. The context in which it originated and was continuously practiced for centuries has long been supplanted by a more technologically advanced way of life. The same applies to social interaction, which is less prevalent compared to past times when individuals relied more on their immediate life communities. Fortunately, significant progress has had a lesser impact on small local communities, where good performance practices today indicate that the continuation of musical tradition is possible in informal situations or as part of former customs where music, especially vocal music, was an integral part of the tradition. Local communities need support in the form of external affirmation, recognition, and acknowledgment of their activities and sharing their existence with the broader community. These are activities through which ethnomusicologists and ethnochoreologists can bring two completely different worlds closer together: the local world where tradition is still somewhat a way of life and the global world that seeks to scientifically categorize and explain living tradition. It should be emphasized that despite the aforementioned, Croatian traditional music still exists (albeit less frequently) in an authentic context, (more frequently) in various public performance forms of rural and urban, amateur and professional groups and ensembles, as well as in forms of neo-traditional music (Croatian ethno music), i.e., in popular music based on transformed traditional elements.² It can be concluded that the preoccupation with history and its reinterpretation in local communities and the important ongoing (global) changes are the main characteristics of musical life, as well as the polyphonic singing of local communities – cities and villages. Historical processes, as a result of the confrontation of global influences brought by tourism from outside and local communities trying to preserve their own system from within, have contributed to the creation of well-defined local identities and helped preserve different layers of polyphonic singing for future generations.

² This is just a brief introductory overview of polyphonic singing in Croatia. There is an extensive bibliography on traditional vocal music in Croatia, which is included, among other sources, in the bibliography of the Vienna-based Research Centre for European Multipart Music (<https://www.mdw.ac.at/ive/emm/?PageId=21>). In this regard, the works of Vinko Žganec (1944, 1951, 1956, 1958ab, 1959, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1983), Božidar Širola (1920, 1930, 1935, 1940, 1956), Stjepan Stepanov (1960abc, 1966, 1970), and Jerko Bezić (1973, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1981ab, 1988, 1989ab, 1990abc, 1991, 1995, 1996abcd, 1998, 1999ab) stand out as the most significant for historical research on traditional vocal music in Croatia.

Performance (stage) as a way of preserving and transmitting tradition

Taking a step back to examine the ways tradition is preserved and transmitted, we must reflect on pivotal moments that have left their mark on a broader, European scale and have clearly influenced the situation in our region. The second half of the last century in European traditional music was characterized by processes of “festivalization, orientation towards public performance, professionalization, internationalization, institutionalization, and mediation” (Ronström and Malm 2000, 149), among which festivalization processes and the associated institutionalization of traditional music hold a prominent place in Croatia. Festivalization and institutionalization represent the most important fields of application for ethnomusicological, ethnochoreological, folklore, and ethnological knowledge. Their role has been highlighted in canonizing traditional music, particularly in profiling genres and styles that were showcased on stage, as opposed to those that were not. In this process, experts acquire the status of tradition connoisseurs and shape it according to their discretion. These processes continue to this day. The preparation and creation of programs presented at festivals are their work, defined as a continuation of preserving traditional music. The aforementioned experts play the same roles in both the dance and vocal segments.

It is worth noting that these processes in Croatia began much earlier, in the period between the two World Wars (Ceribašić 2003). Folklore festivals, events presenting traditional culture, have been a long-standing tradition in Croatia. From the 1930s to the 1950s, they brought together local participants and showcased traditional Croatian culture. The concept of “folk music” in Croatia is closely linked to the history of its performance at festivals and other related public events. With the establishment of regional festivals and the International Folklore Festival in Zagreb, “modern questioning of folklore and folklorism, authenticity and originality, aesthetics of presentation, the relationship between traditional and contemporary values, freedom of creative expression, and the relationship between experts and scientific discourse began” (Ceribašić 2003, 405). It is important to mention that in these processes, regarding vocal music, public presentation of vocal music had a significant influence on the development of the later festival system. Already in the mid-19th century, formal church choirs were established within parishes, especially in the urban areas of northern Croatia. The result of this activity was the establishment of the Croatian Singing Association back in 1875. On the other hand, formal village church choirs became relevant in the early 20th century. Peasant solidarity, the driving force behind the development and reform of Croatian villages through folk art festivals, encourages cultural activities. Numerous organized singing societies founded their community on May 5, 1926: the Peasant Singing Association “Matija Gubec” aimed at “preserving ancient Croatian folk songs,” “developing and reintroducing folk songs to the people in villages,” as well as “laying the foundations and providing an inexhaustible source for art music culture” (Herceg, cited in: Ceribašić 1929, 67). With church folk songs, peasant singing societies exclusively performed in churches, “especially on major holidays” (Herceg 1928b, 41), while patriotic folk songs were an integral part of various events (Ceribašić 2003, 50). This activity faded after World War II but was revitalized during and after the Croatian War of Independence. The mentioned musical “experts” in that early period played a significant role in shaping musical identities. Rudolf Matz, Božidar Širola, Antun Dobronić, Vinko Žganec, Ivan Matetić Ronjgov, Matko Brajša Rašan, Slavko Zlatić, Jakov Gotovac, Ivo Tijardović, are just some of the prominent composers of that time who sought to transform collected folk melodies into choral sounds that are relevant to this

day in the performances of numerous vocal ensembles and choirs. Similar processes occurred with the musical phenomenon known as “klapa” singing nowadays. Melographers of the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century (Kuhač, Kuba, Bersa, Dobronić) collected material in southern Croatia. Melographers of the second half of the 20th century transcribed and adapted the collected material for performances by four-part choirs and vocal ensembles (Fio, Tralić, Stipišić). In the mid-1960s, the organization of the Festival of Dalmatian Klapas in Omiš represents the beginning of a period of organized festival klapa singing which has continued its activities to this day (see: Čaleta 2008a; Čaleta 2008b; Čaleta and Bošković 2011).

An important fact that needs to be mentioned, indirectly interwoven through both dance and vocal folk traditions, relates to the dispute between two main concepts whose distinctiveness has come to the fore precisely through the staging of traditional expression – the concept of authenticity versus stylization. According to the concept of authenticity, folklore is a direct expression and an integral part of local culture. Organized folk groups whose performance activity is linked to the concept of authenticity preserve, transmit and perform the exclusively local, domestic repertoire. Although interventions arising from the staging of musical and dance patterns respect the conventions of stage presentation, many believe that this involves preserving authentic forms taken from the past without modification. In their case, a good performance is considered one that, through its structural characteristics, attempts to imitate performances from the past, which fully outlines the complexity and ambiguity of the relationship between informal and formal transmission of knowledge and skills. Advocates of this concept rarely mention issues of rehearsal or methods of knowledge transmission but emphasize tradition as an integral part of culture that is acquired by the “natural” instinct through the entire process of acculturation and the regulatory mechanisms of canonized public practice. On the other hand, the attitude towards performance quality is reflected in a lesser complexity regarding the desired level of variability, individualism, and innovation of singers and dancers. Some may find justification for unarticulated, unbalanced, or tonally uncertain singing in the fact that “this is how it used to be sung.” They justify their stance by claiming that it is necessary to preserve the inherited traditional heritage from the past, which should simultaneously be an expression and integral part of today’s local culture.

On the other hand, the concept of stylization is best illustrated by a quote from the official website of the only Croatian professional folk ensemble, the Croatian National Folk Dance and Song Ensemble “Lado.” In the first paragraph of its work description, it states that the ensemble operates “with the task and goal of researching, collecting, artistically processing, and stage presenting the most beautiful examples of the rich Croatian musical and dance tradition. Top dancers, 38 of them, who are also outstanding singers, effortlessly transform from a dance ensemble into a representative folk choir, while 14 excellent musicians play fifty traditional and classical instruments” ([Author unknown] 2023). This is a clear example of separating the final artistic product from the “field,” from the immediate cultural context from which its performance material is drawn. The elements mentioned are, according to the statement, highly aestheticized. In the further text, the author emphasizes collaboration with creative authors who, with their knowledge, skill, and talent, will artistically process the collected rich material and, through systematic rehearsal, present it in top-notch performances by the Lado ensemble. In this case, it is not about changing forms from the past out of necessity; the change is the result of exceptional individualism and innovation of prominent

individuals: “choreographers, ethnochoreologists and folklorists, music arrangers and ethnomusicologists, conductors and composers inspired by folk musical creativity” (ibid.). Spontaneity, which is one of the fundamental characteristics of the concept of authenticity, is replaced here by professionalism present throughout the entire process of creating the artistic piece for the stage. Professionalism presupposes top talent, practice, and skill, ultimately leaving little room for improvisation and innovation, which are also characteristics of authenticity. In addition to the Lado Ensemble, many mostly urban folk ensembles operate according to the same principles. Their performances also rely on the staging and excellent reproduction of dance choreographies and vocal, vocal-instrumental arrangements, which today most often find their source in the Croatian rural music and dance tradition. In contrast to urban folk groups and ensembles, rural folk groups base their work on the determinants of the concept of authenticity.

Such a rigid division does not work in practice. Due to various interactions and the actions of experts who operate in both of these mentioned areas, there is a mixing of the concepts of authenticity and stylization at work. As even original rural folk groups are oriented towards stage performance, they require expert assistance in shaping and rehearsing their programs, which in many cases leaves little room for variation and free improvisation, as the performance context should allow. Similarly, in many local traditions, certain stylistic procedures have been adopted, originating from well-known choreographies and musical arrangements created through artistic transformation of these same traditions. The case of the “Lado voice,” which will be discussed further, will illustrate this claim.

Similar processes occur on the opposite side; the transfer of knowledge, which is institutionally transmitted through the Croatian School of Folklore, is based “on the respect for authentic dance, musical, and choreographic forms”; the authorial enhancement is evident only in the “knowledgeable recognition and highlighting of stylistic and other specificities that are simultaneously scenically interesting, even attractive” (Srećmac 2002, 179). From all the above, it can be concluded that just as groups operating within the concept of authenticity are approaching the concept of stylization with their approaches, Croatian authors of folk choreographies and musical arrangements remain close to the source through their choices. The hybrid intermediate space created by the festivalization process has itself become a legitimate tradition through this act.

All of the aforementioned was a necessary precondition for the emergence, during the period of institutionalization, of the first professional ensemble that would, with its inception, form a distinctive vocal pattern, known as the Croatian “voice.”

Lado - “voice”, performance practice as a way of transferring knowledge

The term “Lado,” for enthusiasts of their artistry and all others familiar with the magnitude and quality of the performance power of the only Croatian professional ensemble, primarily evokes the main component of their stage performance - the lively dance in recognizable traditional costumes. However, the truth is much more complex and substantive, with integral components such as specific singing accompanying the dance and instrumental accompaniment of various orchestras and traditional musical instruments, without which most of Lado’s choreographies would be unimaginable.

It is very responsible and demanding to speak about the vocal repertoire and performance styles that “Lado” has showcased and inaugurated as part of the culture (folk, traditional singing) from its earliest performances. From the very beginning, the founders,

responsible for the artistic concept of the ensemble's work, introduced the public to one of the characteristic singing styles; chest-throat singing, now known as "Lado singing" (*ladovsko pjevanje*), a "voice" reminiscent of the singing of the central and northern Croatian flatland regions. This musical idiom has over time become the vocal standard, synonymous with the folk singing of the Lado ensemble. Considering the fact that this singing is just one of numerous archaic, old, and newer variants of traditional singing among Croats, we can see the demanding task faced by its creators. It would be unfair to speak of this singing as the only means of musical expression represented by the Lado Ensemble in its choreographies. Looking at the program of the first concert, we will notice considerable stylistic diversity as well as an endeavor to present to the audience the musical-dance traditions of different Croatian regions in a full-length concert.³ Even the review of the first performance by Tvrtko Čubelić highlights the diversity of vocal styles as well as the performers' good rehearsal and their appropriate rendition of those vocal styles.

"Popijevka (song) is an essential, integral part of folk dance, and the same demands are placed on it as on the dance itself. In the program of our State Assembly, the performance of popijevka was almost flawless. The rendition of standalone popijevkas, sung without dance, greatly contributed to the diversity and interest of the program. Considering that folk popijevka has its own particular architecture and requires unique vocal expressive abilities from the performers, one can understand how much effort and understanding went into their truly perfect stylistic performance. Given the specific nature of the performance, special mention should be made of the successful rendition of the Istrian popijevka 'Rodila loza grozda dva,' as well as popijevkas from the island of Krk about Dobrinj, and Bosnian popijevka 'Igrali se konji vrani'..." (Čubelić 1950, 35).

The practice that is part of the everyday singing activities of the Lado Ensemble is nevertheless recognized in public primarily for its first, *chest-throat* singing (*brustonalno pjevanje*), as it is most often called. The reasons for this can be found both in the interventions of sound creators and in the tastes of the audience, without which the functioning of this sole professional ensemble would not be possible. The ensemble began at a time when views on presenting traditional culture were different, aimed at artistically adapting traditional culture for stage performance, at a time when attempts were made, under the influence of global trends at the time, to present folk culture in a representative manner, which also implied a certain standardization in vocal terms. In the case of the Lado Ensemble, a specific *chest-throat* singing (*prсно-grleno*) style was chosen, which became a hallmark, a synonym for Croatian singing for all those involved in folk singing.⁴ Comparing this to Bulgarian singing, which represents one of the most attractive traditional singing styles on a global scale, we will notice a fundamental difference precisely in the choice of singing style. While the Bulgarian vocal standard is predominantly based on mountainous throat singing (which could be compared to singing from the *Dinaric region* in our case), Lado singing (*ladovsko*) is more lowland, different in character and in the manner of execution.

3 Program of the first concert: 1. Ladarska popijevka iz srednje Hrvatske; 2. Istarska popijevka: Rodila loza grozda dva; Balun uz sopele; 3. Slavonsko kolo uz pjesmu; 4. Krčki tanac uz sopele; 5. Slavonsko kolo uz tambure; 6. Bosanska popijevka: Igrali se konji vrani; 7. Vrličko kolo; 8. Brezovačka jurjevska popijevka; 9. Bunjevačko momačko kolo; 10. Slavonska popijevka: Tri jetrve žito žele; 11. Drmeš „Opšajdiri“ i Pokupski svatovski drmeš; 12. Slavonska svatovska i pokladna popijevka; 13. Dalmatinsko kolo – poskočica uz lijericu; 14. Ladarska popijevka iz Posavine; 15. Posavski plesovi.

4 One of the recent works on this topic is by the recently deceased Sarajevo ethnomusicologist Mirjana Laušević ("Balkan Fascination"), which analyzes the Balkan music scene among members of the American community known as "Balkanites," many of whom have no roots in this part of the world. Traditional music – playing, singing, and folk dance – are the only identification markers that connect this group of music enthusiasts. Numerous excerpts from conversations with the founders of the scene (Dick Crum) and numerous followers mention the Lado Ensemble and the Filip Kutev Ensemble as the primary inspiration for the methods of working with numerous folk ensembles in the United States.

Knowing the work and legacy of the great Croatian choral conductor, educator, and composer Emil Cossetto, and discussing it with the oldest members of the ensemble, I come to the conclusion that Cossetto, alongside Zvonimir Ljevaković, was indeed the creator of the recognizable singing style. His cycles of choral songs written for the folk choir (“Ladarke idu u selo,” “Dobri denek,” “Jurjaši,” etc.) best testify to the vocal style that most lovers of folk music today consider the primal, authentic way of singing.

For the first forty years of promoting this singing style and musical thinking, characterized by rearranging and (over)harmonizing simple traditional melodies into standard choral polyphonic pieces, the vocal expression of the Lado ensemble was distinctive. Similar methods were reflected in orchestrating the musical accompaniment – by adding more complex harmonies, polyphonic voice leading, introducing new motifs, introductions, intermezzos that melodically corresponded to or echoed the original templates. Orchestra conductor Božo Potočnik, as well as artistic directors Zvonimir Ljevaković and Ivan Ivančan, led the ensemble during a time when this musical approach became “famous” and thus became standardly accepted by the broader community. It’s worth noting that the influence was reciprocal; what Lado adopted and later shaped into a recognizable singing style had a significant impact on local communities, on folklore groups (especially urban ensembles, but also local folklore groups) that greatly relied on their greatest role model in establishing tradition on the stage – Lado. It would be unfair to speak of exclusivity, considering the significant importance these singing styles had on the development of both the domestic and international folklore movements. Unlike the Bulgarian case where the preservation and development of accepted singing styles were taken over by the system, where alongside organized schooling, entire teams of experts, vocal coaches, composers, arrangers, were responsible for studying talented new singers, in Croatia, the whole process remained at the discretion of the “elder” singers in the ensemble who passed on the singing styles to new generations of Lado members through “oral tradition” but with the assistance of the ensemble’s musical directors.

***Ladarice* - media bearers of the “voice”**

Confirmation that this is indeed a “musical process” comes from the timeless popularity of the female vocal ensemble formed during the most glorious phase of the “Lado” singing style. The “Ladarice” vocal group was established in 1968 by singer-dancers who, in their free time, sang and performed together with a repertoire consisting of North Croatian, Zagorje, and Međimurje folk songs, as well as socialist and partisan songs relevant at that time.⁵ *Chest-throat singing* was almost exclusively the singing style of this ensemble, further popularizing this specific singing style and promoting it as the recognizable “voice,” the first association with the sound of the Lado ensemble. An interesting fact is that the singers, employees of the Lado Ensemble, engaged in these activities in their spare time, outside of their official duties. The association of the vocal group’s name with the name of the Lado Ensemble led the general public to assume a direct connection; it was assumed that the “Ladarice” were an official part of the Lado Ensemble’s performances, which was not accurate information. Thanks to their frequent appearances in the media at the time (TV, radio)⁶, their voices could be

5 The female vocal ensemble started operating as early as 1965, but under the name “9 mladih,” before changing its name to “Ladarice” in 1968, thus beginning a glorious chapter in traditional vocal music in Croatia.

6 They continuously recorded for the programming needs of the former Folk Music Editorial Office of RTV Zagreb and performed in many shows dedicated to traditional culture and heritage. The “Ladarice” regularly appeared on entertainment New Year’s TV shows, singing alongside their repertoire of popular old-town songs and newer hits. In addition to studio recordings with the Tamburitza Orchestra of RTV Zagreb (today’s Tamburitza Orchestra of Croatian Radiotelevision), they performed throughout

heard throughout the country. The fame of their singing, performances, and repertoire is still fondly remembered by those who had the opportunity to see them in numerous television appearances⁷, festivals⁸, musical collaborations⁹, and concerts.

New Lado's "voices" of the new period (1990 - 2016)

The story of the modern "Lado voice" begins at the same time as significant changes in Croatia; with the establishment of the new state, Lado's repertoire also changes, aiming exclusively to present the diverse Croatian traditional heritage. In addition to showcasing secular traditional heritage, a completely new area of interpreting Croatian spiritual heritage emerges, as well as the traditional singing of the southern Croatian regions (including klapa singing), which becomes a new idiom and proving ground for demonstrating the ensemble's quality. Changes in the approach to sound treatment come with new executive forces. Artistic directors Hanibal Dundović (1983-1991) and Ivan Ivančan Jr. (1992-2016) introduced new guidelines into their concepts, allowing "new" people to freely experiment with setting and shaping the new sound of the Lado ensemble. Dundović, initially with the help of Dinko Fio, and then Tomislav Uhlík and Bojan Pogrmlović, intensified, while Ivančan Jr. completely affirmed the ensemble's great vocal and instrumental potentials (always present but insufficiently exposed) through solo vocal concerts, solo performances of the orchestra, and recordings on sound carriers. Since then, the ensemble's increasingly rich discography has become available material for educating new generations, both within Lado and among numerous participants in the folkloric movement, for whom the Lado Ensemble continues to be the greatest ideal in acquiring knowledge about the folk performance tradition in Croatia.

Following the development of the "voice" and the approach to vocal musical expression, we can observe that this process from the 1990s clearly outlines a general departure from the concept of dance stylization from the period of socialist Yugoslavia towards the concept of cultural diversity, pluralistic approaches, and expressions within the national corpus. Thus, the Lado "voice" is no longer the only one taught, no longer the sole "voice" receiving special attention. To illustrate the new situation, we will present the concept of vocal techniques outlined by one of the longest-serving artistic directors of the ensemble, Ivan Ivančan Jr., during vocal workshops and seminars, highlighting the fact that these are

Croatia and the former Yugoslavia.

7 An interesting description of the activities and significance of the "Ladarice" is provided by Đorđe Matić in the *Lexicon of Yugoslav Mythology*: "...The 'Ladarice' were recognizable at once: dressed in folk costumes – white women's shirts, scarves with folk patterns, and with artificial curls under their scarves – they sang wide, sad Kajkavian songs, and when they stretched out their rich voices with 'Zorja je zorja' or 'Zvira voda,' it sounded fantastic – sophisticated and paganly disobedient at the same time. So much so that, after years of singing and performing (around the world), they almost appropriated the entire genre and became its only interpreters. The 'Ladarice' are proof that good surpasses original intentions and adverse circumstances: first, folk dance ensembles are an artificial, institutionalized variant of folk heritage. Second, the fact that such a figure as Božo Potočnik stood 'behind' them, the alpha and omega of almost the entire representation of Croatia's folk music heritage and the man responsible for the terrifying, academic formalization of our folklore – just turn on the radio at night and hear how shrill Croatian folk music sounds today – that alone would be enough to make everything artificial, false, and ultimately boring. Regardless and in spite of it, the 'Ladarice' always sounded excellent, sincere, profound, and most importantly, authentic. And other musicians did not remain deaf to that..." (Accessed May 7, 2023). [Source: <http://www.leksikon-yu-mitologije.net/ladarice/>]

8 From 1971 to 1998, they performed multiple times at the *Festival kajkavskih popevki* [Festival of Kajkavian Songs] in Krapina, where they won twelve awards from both the professional jury and the audience. They also performed at the *Muzički festival u Slavoniji* [Music Festival in Slavonija] in Požega, where they were awarded in 1973 and 1974. In 1984, they performed at the *Festival podunavskih zemalja* [Festival of Danube Countries] in Novi Sad.

9 The "Ladarice" collaborated on productions at the Komedija Theater: they participated in the premiere (1975) and performed in numerous performances of the first Croatian rock opera "Gubec-beg" (by Ivica Krajač, Karlo Metikoš, and Miljenko Prohaska), as well as the pop opera "Jadnici" (by Claude-Michel Schönberg, Alain Boublil, and Jean-Marc Natel). In 1984, they collaborated with Goran Bregović and the rock band "Bijelo Dugme" on their self-titled album, and the following year with Haris Džinović and the ensemble "Sar e Roma" on their third studio album, "Romske Pjesme" (Gypsy Songs).

singing techniques that the singers of the Lado Ensemble are capable of performing with quality. Ivančan categorizes singing techniques into four basic categories:¹⁰

1. Chest-tonal singing (*brustonalno pjevanje*) – a singing technique where strong air pressure in the chest area results in sharp, loud tones. It imitates the sound of traditional instruments such as bagpipes and flutes, typical of the Pannonian, central, and lowland regions of Croatia. Examples of this singing style can be found on albums like “From the Kajkavian Regions” and “The Tambourine Plays, the Tambourine Sounds.”
2. Dinaric singing (*dinarsko pjevanje*) – a summoning singing style, known as “ojkanje,” where the tone is produced with a strong push from the abdominal area and high in the palate. This singing style, characterized by a powerful, robust sound, originated in the mountainous regions of Croatia and mimics the calling from hilltop to hilltop and the sound of the flute, a traditional instrument typical of these regions. Examples of this singing style can be found on albums like “By the Sea and the Shore” and “Treasure Trove.”
3. Head-tonal singing (*kopftonalno pjevanje*) – a singing technique typical of Mediterranean urban areas. This type of singing, with soft tones originating “from the head,” was inspired by urban, church singing. Examples of this singing style can be found on albums like “By the Sea and the Shore” (“Good Evening, My Rose,” “Come Here, Falcon”).
4. Nasal singing (*nazalno pjevanje*) – a singing style typical of the Istria and Kvarner regions, which also sounds like traditional music (bagpipes, wooden flutes, and shawms). Examples of this singing style can be found on albums like “By the Sea and the Shore” (“Lovran Was a Beautiful Town,” “Homo in the Circle,” “Katarina Wants Gold”).

Observing the performance activity of the Lado Ensemble from the 1990s, we notice a significant increase in vocal activity. This is the era when Bojan Pogrmilović develops a new sound and a new formal approach to singing – the folk choir, which becomes equally important in the ensemble’s work and performances alongside the dance ensemble. Two new repertoires through which Lado has presented its new musical identity for the past thirty years are Croatian Christmas and Lenten folk songs. Their research and presentation are formalized through traditional Christmas concerts and collaborations with the *Pasion-ska baština* (Lenten songs). Accordingly, Christmas and Lenten (vocal) tours are organized, along with frequent vocal concerts, the most important being the vocal concert at the Knežev dvor during the Dubrovnik Summer Festival (*Dubrovačke ljetne igre*). Pogrmilović and Ivan Ivančan sought prominent collaborators in “finding” interesting repertoires and new sounds. The most notable external collaborator of that period was the Dalmatian folk poet and musician Ljubo Stipišić Dalmata. Their collaboration resulted in numerous works inspired by the musical idioms of southern Croatian folk music areas. The most striking work from that period, initially performed by Lado with the help of external collaborators – singers, and later with their own forces, is Stipišić’s – an oratorio for soloists, male choir, and mixed folk choir based on Lenten folk church singing from the island of Hvar. A complex work requiring vocal prowess, *Kalvarija* remains a challenge that no other choir in Croatia has managed to overcome to this day. It was one of the first pieces recorded for distribution – a practice also introduced in the early 1990s by the duo Pogrmilović *Kalvarija* - Ivančan. The musical production also underwent various transformations, from collaborations with Branko Starc and his independent label *Best Music*, to *Memphis* production, independent productions by the Lado Ensemble, to successful

¹⁰ Transferred from the private archive of Ivan Ivančan Jr.

collaborations with today's publisher, *Aquarius Records*. Similar situations occurred with recording methods and locations, ranging from various acoustic spaces (churches), Lado's hall, to the Croatian Radio studios, with which the Lado Ensemble has had a reciprocal relationship for many years. *Kalvarija* is the only piece that has been recorded twice – first immediately after its creation and premiere performances with conductor Pogrmilović, and the second time in 2006 with conductor Joško Čaleta. This symbolic move indicates the processes initiated by Pogrmilović and Ivan Ivančan Jr., further continued by “new” people – Kurilovčan, Ivanković, Čaleta. After fifteen years of performances and collaborations with new conductors, who treated the sound in a more stylistically defined manner, *Kalvarija* was supposed to be “outfitted with a new sonic garment.” The greatest challenge in the whole process undoubtedly lay with the members of the Lado Ensemble, who no longer honed their vocal skills solely by learning/imitating older colleagues but together with new musical directors mastered new musical idioms. Listening to sound recordings, both discographic and archival, became one of the methods of learning and forming new musical idioms, which in the case of the Lado Ensemble will never surpass the “voice” but will refresh the entire repertoire with their diversity, thus offering a more varied performance repertoire. The period from 1990-2000 thus became a period of forming the folk choir sound, introducing new choreographies with a simple stylistically appropriate sound (Bagur, Ivanković, Golemac, Ivančan Jr.), a period in which annual concerts attempted to showcase different Croatian traditions, taking away the dominant position from the northern Croatian Lado's musical expression. It was a period of intense creation of new repertoires through researching musical samples from history, as well as through new field research in previously unexplored areas. The innovations in the repertoire were also reflected in the methods of learning. In addition to the classical way of reading sheet music, there were increasingly situations in which singers were introduced to the stylistic peculiarities of the songs they would perform through listening. Similarly, in these situations, arrangements, the addition of harmonically appropriate parts, and the “rearranging” of archaic, often untuned songs into standard intoned sound were omitted. Witnessing the excitement and happiness of tradition bearers after Lado's concerts, when they recognized “their” songs being performed by the famous Lado Ensemble, was memorable. The hybrid space between the concept of stylization and the concept of authenticity in many situations either overlapped or became unique, giving the entire performance of the Lado Ensemble a new quality and a new recognizable characteristic that no longer rested solely on the “voice.” The “voice” is still omnipresent, but it is now sung by new generations of singers who perceive it in a new way, experiencing it as the basic but not the only vocal musical expression of their ensemble.

At the same time, the Lado Ensemble launches an intriguing series of global Christmas hits titled “Božić u svetu” [Christmas Around the World] (by Tomislav Uhlik), which still captures the attention of Lado's loyal audience to this day. In this work, Uhlik's qualities as an excellent arranger for orchestra come to the forefront, thereby emphasizing the increasing importance of the orchestra, which has evolved from a supporting ensemble into an independent performing body. Tomislav Uhlik is also the author of the first significant Christmas piece, “Telo Kristuševo” – a liturgical cantata for a folk choir and tamburitza orchestra. Written for the Lado Ensemble and inspired by the musical tradition of Međimurje, it is based on sacred folk texts collected by Croatian ethnomusicologist Vinko Žganec in the early 20th century in Međimurje. “Telo Kristuševo,” which, due to its non-standard Mass text, bears the title of a liturgical cantata, is composed in the form of a

classical Mass with an independent *Benedictus* (*Pozdravljeno budi*). Ljubo Stipišić Delmata also writes Christmas cantatas for the Lado Ensemble (such as “Ditić rodi se nam” – a pastoral cantata a cappella for male choir and traditional Dalmatian group (klapa) based on folk Christmas carols from Split, Solin, Trogir, and Poljica; and “I rič se Bogom učini” – an oratorical cantata a cappella comprising 40 Christmas songs from the Adriatic islands, coast, and hinterland from Istria to the Bay of Kotor), but not with the same level of success as Uhlik’s works, where the “voice” dominates. The success of Uhlik’s “Telo Kristuševo” among audiences and critics has led to the realization of a new collaborative project, “Narodil se mladi Kralj” (A Young King Is Born). The source, idea, and inspiration are the same as in the previous work, but the form is significantly different. The five movements of the Christmas portrayal have a clear dramatic structure and plot that could be staged. The work was successfully performed at the “Komedijska” City Theater, based on the dramatic text by Vida Balog (December 2000). One of the reasons for the success achieved by this project, both with the audience and performers, is precisely the “voice” – the recognizable vocal idiom of Lado, which perfectly fits into the musical concept of this work. It is reiterated that the “voice” is a vocal expression in which singers feel most secure, and therefore perform most convincingly.

The last period, the era of the new millennium, was marked by new individuals, new approaches, and new works. Pogrmilović was replaced as the head by Dražen Kurilovčan, who formally became the conductor of the Ensemble since 2008. Ivančan Jr. continued with the concept of exploring new sounds and enriching the repertoire with unique musical idioms, showcasing the diversity of vocal musical heritage from all Croatian regions. The first significant work to emerge during this period was “Raspelo” – Lenten chants from the Kajkavian regions. It was a collaboration between Dražen Kurilovčan and Vid Balog, who together explored and presented a different style of Kajkavian music. Its vocal template was far from the standard Lado sound, delivered in simple two-part harmonies, mixed four-part harmonies, in a folk manner, close to the musical idiom of live musical practices in those areas. “Raspelo” was widely recognized by receiving the annual Porin award for the best spiritual music album. With “Raspelo,” a successful series of awards began, the result of systematic efforts by the Ensemble over many years to refine the sound and bring it to people in a more accessible manner. In this case, stylization gave way to a concept of authenticity, which proved to be a perfect fit for presenting the folk church tradition.

At the same time, Ivančan Jr. began collaborating with Joško Čaleta, the writer of these lines. For the Christmas concert in 2001, a Dalmatian Christmas repertoire was commissioned. My initial experiences working with singers confirmed the assumption that they were exceptionally talented musicians, ready for serious work, capable of embracing the musical and stylistic characteristics of various Croatian regions. What sets my work apart is the new approach to treating the choir – the ensemble is arranged “in wings” with two leading singers on opposite sides (leading tenor voices) and deep voices (baritones and basses) in the middle of the semicircle. This creates the illusion of a responsorial folk choir – a musical practice still present in the local folk church traditions of southern Croatia, known as *glagoljaško pjevanje* [Glagolitic singing]. Several years of research and arrangement of Christmas repertoire from the central and southern Croatian musical heritage resulted in the audio recording “Preveliku radost navišćujem Vama” – Christmas songs and carols from Central Dalmatia.¹¹

11 In the accompanying note of the CD, editor Mojca Piškorić says: “Listening to the compact disc ‘Preveliku radost navišćujem

The entire musical material that forms the basis of the presented musical arrangements of Christmas songs and carols from Dalmatia, designed in five sections – “Na dobro nam Božić dojde” (Zadar area), “Kad se Bog čovik učini” (Bol), “Evo smo van zdravo došli” (Vinišće), “Dobra večer u barba Sibeta” (Stari Grad), and “Preveliku radost navišćujem vama” (Murter) – was collected by the author during several years of field research. All the melodies used are part of the living musical tradition of specific localities and as such, integral parts of local Christmas customs. Not only examples of church folk singing are represented, but also musical practices associated with celebrating Christmas outside the church, primarily within the ritual house-to-house visits or caroling. The specific symbiosis of church and traditional music is one of the characteristics of church folk singing in Croatia. While adopting the basics of choral psalmody, folk singers almost always retained the stylistic peculiarities of traditional music from their own region, resulting in a large number of melodic, rhythmic, and performance variations of individual songs. This richness of local specificities in shaping the Christmas repertoire is best illustrated by four renditions of the widespread Christmas song “U se vrime godišća” documented in Polača, Vrana, Vinišće, and Murter.

The process of adopting this repertoire was quite interesting. Singers reacted quite vehemently to the new lineup arrangement, standing during performances, which was a change for new singers whose singing they needed to get used to. Similarly, I insisted on singing without scores during performances, as they hindered communication between the conductor and the singers. Listening to each other while singing without scores, which was not emphasized as much before, allowed the singers to have better control and a more secure performance balance. Since this was about presenting a “living” musical tradition that I had the opportunity to experience and document, the curiosity of the singers prompted me to organize several meetings with tradition bearers, and in some cases, we had the opportunity (most of the performers) to visit our “narrators” in their small local communities. With the new approach, the singers continued to perform the new repertoire with even more zeal and enthusiasm, now with significant experience that brought them closer to the original. The culmination of the new styles and interaction with the “field” could be experienced at the annual concert in 2008. The concert of songs and dances from the Adriatic islands titled “Lipi naši škoji” featured not only professional members of the Lado Ensemble but also around twenty original folk artists-storytellers: poets, singers, instrumentalists, and dancers. In addition to the exceptional collaboration between the original performers (*izvornjaci*) and the members of Lado (*ladovci*), the concert was recognized by both the audience and critics as a showcase of the new sound, with particular prominence given to the songs from the island of Rab and the Neviđane carol (Neviđane, island of Pašman).

vama, it is hard not to be struck by the impression that it is precisely the intertwining of the sounds of the coastal and mountainous parts of Dalmatia that serves as the impulse driving Joško Čaleta's creativity. For him, the blend of these two traditions, within which countless smaller traditions reside, is not a collision of two spheres that mutually exclude each other, but rather a meeting of musical worlds that complement each other. This blending of the coast and the hinterland is as powerful as the blending of Čaleta the composer and Čaleta the ethnomusicologist. The constant interplay between his interest in the musical traditions of Dalmatian Zagora and his experience with klapa singing has come to life in this compact disc, especially in the musical interpretation of Dalmatian Christmas. The individuals performing the chants on the recordings – which served as a kind of inspiration for this collection – are deeply connected to the musical traditions of their regions, and these chants are an integral part of their musical world. The compact disc ‘Preveliku radost navišćujem vama’ presents an interpretation by the LADO ensemble. Therefore, it is remarkable to see the richness and stylistic diversity of performances of this truly diverse material. In creating their interpretation, LADO has managed to preserve the stylistic characteristics of each of the musical traditions presented on the disc. The most impressive aspect of this collection is its sound timbre. Perhaps it is for this reason that our search for the visual design of this edition led us to the magnificent monograph ‘Hrvatska obala i more’ by Ivo Pervan, to his colors – the colors of details and the overall picture. In the preface of that monograph, Ivo Šimat Banov wrote – ‘Croatia does not have one face, it is reflected in a different way in every eye’. Similarly, Dalmatian Christmas does not have just one sound. ‘Preveliku radost navišćujem vama’ is just one of its sounds. The sound of the LADO ensemble and Joško Čaleta.”

The passage outlines only a small portion of the rich activity in the field of vocal music that the Lado Ensemble has undertaken throughout its existence, especially in this millennium. This state could also be termed hectic, as it accumulates a large number of different approaches in a relatively short period, not allowing complete development of everything they intend to realize, neither for the artists themselves nor for their leaders. However, despite this, results are evident. One of the brighter examples is the work with singers which have always been in the background vocally during the ensemble's long existence. During this period, as new horizons opened up, they were given their chance. New sounds, new regions, new musical areas inspired the male singers of the Ensemble to engage in a new activity, resulting in the formation of a new folk sound within the ensemble titled "Vokalisti Lada" (Lado's Vocalists). The spiritual and folk repertoire of the southern Croatian musical idiom, represented by a klapa ensemble, was the focus of these dedicated artists from 2003 to 2016, until the departure of Ivan Ivančan Jr. from the ensemble's concert activities. Initially, the project began with the formation of a Dalmatian klapa. However, during the process, it was recognized that not all members of the ensemble could participate in a klapa formation, which ideally consists of 8-9 singers. Therefore, the concept of a "bifurcated" male folk choir was embraced, whose repertoire was based on the rich folk church tradition, especially that of the Adriatic region. By 2016, when concert activities ceased,¹² the Lado Vocalists had proven that with the right approach, exceptional results could be achieved even in "other" vocal musical expressions that were not part of the performers' personal heritage. Alongside mastering the stylistic characteristics typical of these vocal styles, a significant amount of time was spent on interaction among the singers, as social interaction is also a crucial factor in the process of achieving a quality performance and defining the character of the vocal group. Performing in front of audiences of klapa enthusiasts at klapa gatherings in Zagreb or "Svijetla noć" (Bright Night), the Lenten concert of klapas in Zagreb, was a great honor and success for the singers whose performances previously were primarily associated with the "voice." The singers augmented their professional approach with an amateur enthusiasm that authentically brought their performances closer to the original ways of vocal musical expression.

This brief journey through the vocal tradition that the Lado Ensemble has built from its beginnings to the present clearly demonstrates that the creative processes in this ensemble continue successfully. It's not far off the moment when even the most demanding archaic vocal styles, which are slowly disappearing among the people, will be successfully presented by our artists. Through generations, these authentic artists have proven their quality of singing, carrying forth not just their own voice but a whole range of other "voices." Judging by the aforementioned, this tradition will continue to resonate for many years to come, bringing joy and satisfaction to new generations of performers and lovers of Lado's artistry.

Instead of ending

The rich and diverse activity of the Lado Ensemble in the field of traditional vocal music throughout this millennium has left a mark on the broader community. During this period, the interaction between the ensemble and local communities has taken on different forms, primarily reflected in the ways new knowledge is acquired. Raising

¹² This concept of musical presentation did not correspond to the programming policy of the new artistic director Andrija Ivančan, so it was simply put on hold.

awareness of the value of local musical expressions has helped professional artists enrich their performance abilities, while recognition of the greatness and importance of their tradition has served as encouragement for local tradition bearers to further improve the quality of their work. The institutionalization of traditional vocal music unexpectedly began in this period at a prestigious institution, a leader in classical music education – the Music Academy in Zagreb. In 2016, following a series of traditional music workshops held at the Music Academy in Zagreb, ethnomusicologist Mojca Piškori initiated a meeting point for classical music students and accomplished traditional music vocalists.

The unexpected response, primarily from female vocalists, spurred the establishment of a performance ensemble for traditional music named “Harmony of Dissonance.” The main goal of this newly formed ensemble was to introduce vocal traditional music, especially the archaic layers of Croatian traditional music, to classically trained students of the Music Academy. This approach, guided by the idea of bridging the musical worlds of its participants, opened up new spaces for collaborative learning and knowledge sharing. According to the project initiator, Professor Mojca Piškori, this was intended to be “an important step towards the affirmation of traditional music in the system of academic education for musicians and (ethno)musicologists, as well as a unequivocal response to the question of whether the oldest layers of traditional music are relevant and inspiring for the youngest generation of musicians educated in the Western European art music system.”¹³ The ensemble’s programs were shaped in direct encounters with experienced practitioners of traditional singing, thanks to whom traditional singing remains a part of living performance practice today. Field trips were also part of the learning process, as well as listening to archival recordings that the ensemble members revived with their performances. One of the primary challenges the ensemble members faced initially was the complete freedom of choice in interpreting each song – from the selection of repertoire to performance arrangements, and even the initial intonation, based on musical notation in classical music, which was conceptually unfamiliar in traditional music. Such unfamiliar performer freedom was initially confusing and even complex to execute. The first musical examples the singers tackled seemed too demanding for memorization and reproduction, often due to simultaneous fear and embarrassment of public performance (in front of other ensemble singers and the audience). This fear also extended to the dread of making a “mistake,” a concept that doesn’t exist in traditional music.

The new methods of acquiring and sharing knowledge and experiences that the Lado Ensemble initiated at the beginning of this millennium have found advocates in a new generation of educated singers. This generation of young people, raised in a technologically advanced environment and unburdened by historically inherited performance models, is shaping its own “voice,” thus continuing the centuries-old tradition of stage presentation and transmission of traditional vocal music in Croatia.

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13 From the program booklet of the concert Harmony of Dissonance and the Jazz Orchestra of the Music Academy of the University of Zagreb, entitled Harmony of Dissonance: in the footsteps of traditional singing, held on November 4, 2017 in the Vatroslav Lisinski Concert Hall in Zagreb https://www.lisinski.hr/media/publications/LISINSKI_2017_11_04_Harmonija_dissonance_Prog_knjzica_05_y7DRF4e.pdf p. 6-7. (accessed 05/10/2023).

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Формални и неформални начини преноса знања и вештина традицијског (вишегласног) певања на примеру Ансамбла Ладо

Апстракт: Вокални музички феномени представљају преопознатљиве идентификацијске ознаке ширих заједница и саставни су део њиховог културног и друштвеног идентитета. Појам „народна музика“ у Хрватској је уско повезан с историјом њених извођења на фестивалима и смотрама, где је управо однос према вокалној музици имао посебан утицај на развој система смотри. Све наведено било је добра основа да у раздобљу институционализације настане и први професионални ансамбл који ће својим настанком формирати и препознатљив вокални образац, препознатљив хрватски „глас“. Прсно-грлено певање, данас познато као *ладовско* певање, као „глас“, увелико подсећа на певање централних и северних хрватских равничарских крајева. Неформални начин учења (усмена предаја) овим је чином формализована новим начином учења – спонтаност која је једна од окосница концепта изворности у овом је случају замењена професионалношћу заступљеном током читавог процеса настајања стилизованог, за сцену приређеног уметничког дела. Промене у приступима у складу с сценским представљањем вокалне музике у седамдесетогодишњој пракси ансамбла „Ладо“ приказале низ процеса преноса знања који су своје место нашли у сценским вокалним изведбама ансамбла, стварајући притом нове изведбене моделе који су истовремено постајали нови начин усвајања и преноса знања у локалним заједницама.

Кључне речи: хрватска вокална музика, полифоно певање, фолклор, оригинални vs. стилизовани фолклор, ансамбл Ладо

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Cultural transmission of choreographic knowledge: Fieldwork in Bulgaria with some examples from the United States

Abstract: This paper discusses the various challenges that the topic of cultural transmission of choreographic knowledge presents but also reveals the fascination with the new avenues for further study it offers. The text includes a theoretical part, fieldwork documents (accompanied by analytical commentaries), and a concluding remark. The theoretical part brings the author's "dialogue" with the concepts of cultural transmission and choreographic knowledge; the "presentational" one presents fieldwork documents in a search for cultural transmission of choreographic knowledge within the Bulgarian context with some examples from the US. This section includes references to universities' programs, traces the history of the discipline of Bulgarian Folk Choreography (and the genre of Bulgarian Dance Art Based on Folklore), and presents mentor-disciple influence. The adopted interdisciplinary research method combines historical, anthropological, and ethnochoreological research approaches by incorporating a philosophical perspective. This research leads to the conclusion that there is a strong institutional foundation and well-established practices in offering practical choreographic knowledge/education in Bulgaria which opens the door to further studies on both theoretical and fieldwork sides.

Keywords: cultural transmission, choreographic knowledge, Bulgaria, continuity, innovation.

Introduction

It is a good thing and a bad thing to revisit a text written years ago.¹ The good thing is that the author has the illusion that she knows more about her topic. The bad thing is that there is no way of pulling out a paper on cultural transmission related to folk dance written before the Pandemic and submitting it for publication in 2023. One needs to write a new text instead, informed by one's refreshed understanding of dance and dancing, teaching-choreographing-performing, the spread of technology, human movement and humanity, and more. But even without such a dramatic occurrence, what one had been thinking and talking about five years ago is not the same today. In this sense, rewriting is a challenge that the author greets with curiosity.

¹ I thank TradicijaNova for the honor and privilege to present my work during its 2018 summit in Belgrade.

Before I climb the tall tree of my topic, I must outline a few things. In the past (up to 2008), I pursued an understanding of transmission's complexity while observing several generations of Bulgarian choreographers within the Bulgarian context, starting with those born at the threshold of the 20th century and stopping with those born in the 1970s–1980s (s. Ivanova-Nyberg 2001a; Ivanova-Nyberg 2001b; Ivanova-Nyberg 2011a). Today, I follow the work of the active choreographers (including the practice of those born in the 1990s), but living in the United States, I embrace the opportunity to conduct fieldwork in my host country and observe choreographic knowledge's cultural transmission among Bulgarian and international folk dance communities (s. Ivanova-Nyberg 2011b; Ivanova-Nyberg 2019; Ivanova-Nyberg 2019). Still, my frequent trips to Bulgaria (along with the internet providing dance documents of all kinds) allow me to continue writing on dance-dancing-dancers-and-choreographing in Bulgaria, juxtaposing these to similar occurrences in the United States.

My paper includes a theoretical part, fieldwork documents (accompanied by analytical commentaries), and a concluding remark. The theoretical part digests the terminological “jungle” in which I found myself (and from which I tried to get out with some dignity). The “presentational” one searches for cultural transmission of choreographic knowledge within the Bulgarian context with some examples from the US. The concluding remark opens the door to further studies on choreographic transmission via social media that I consider “a mediated transmission of choreographic knowledge” or, rather, a “mediated” (choreographic) knowledge.²

Methodology. I apply an interdisciplinary research method combining historical, anthropological, and ethnochoreological research approaches by incorporating a philosophical perspective.

I look at this work on cultural transmission and all my ethnochoreological investigations as a re-search, meaning search and search again, and search again. And not only because the river is never the same, but also because one can constantly explore new perspectives, learn, and grow.

Theoretical Discussion

On the Concept of Cultural Transmission

Cultural transmission lies at the core of many disciplines,³ and the literature on the topic is overwhelming. I bring here my “dialoguing” with this concept by putting together excerpts from both “old” (from the 1970s and 1980s) and recent writings that touched upon this concept's complexity and inspired my thinking.

I begin with Allan Tindall's article, “Theory in the Study of Cultural Transmission” (Tindall 1976). This article outlines the distinction between theory and theory work (with the remark that descriptions, even in the form of precisely defined concepts, are not theory). Then, it dives into the works of Michael Cole, Sylvia Scribner, Marion Dobbert, Fred Gearing, Ward H. Goodenough, Solon Toothaker Kimball, George Spindler, and others (s. Tindall 1976). In a nutshell, this text addresses a) the inter-psyche interactive social and cultural process and (b) the intra-psyche process of learning which

² I touched upon the topic of mediated dance practices in a separated paper (s. Ivanova-Nyberg 2022a).

³ It is also closely related to the broader topic of culture and the educative process. See for example Kimball 1974; Cole 1974; Spindler 1974; Lotman 1990, and others.

takes place within the individual. The details of the interactive aspect of cultural transmission lie in the specification of who teaches what to whom, how, where, and under what circumstances. One must also consider situations where, despite no apparent effort to teach, the youthful observers successfully imitate the behavior they have witnessed (Tindall 1976, 198, after Kimball 1974). Tindall was looking for a “true” theory.

Reading this part, my mind quickly brought up scenes with Bulgarian children in Seattle with my observations of such “imitations”. That quickly also came references to “community of practice” research (Wenger 1998), “legitimate peripheral participation” (Lave & Wenger 1991), and more studies that appeared later. But the article here was written in 1976, and its focus was on “inter” and “intra” processes (of equal importance to the author). I liked the specification he made of who teaches what to whom, how, where, and under what circumstances.

In 1981, Robert Funnell and Richard Smith published the paper, “Search for a ‘Theory of Cultural Transmission in an Anthropology of Education: Notes on Spindler and Gearing’”, where they wrote:

“Tindall (Tindall 1976, 198) goes on to identify two types of theory that define cultural transmission: ‘(a) the inter-psycho interactive social and cultural perspectives and (b) the intra-psycho process of learning which takes place within the individual’. While Tindall (Tindall 1976, 228) suggests that these two approaches need to be transcended if the ‘exact nature’ of their interrelationship is to be explained, he does not specify how this might be done” (Funnell & Smith 1981, 276–277).

Part of the problem, to the authors, may well be the conceptual paradox inherent in the conflation of the terms “cultural transmission” and “culture acquisition”. Transmission and acquisition are not the same; “one is a process that implies a sending forward of information and knowledge, the other refers to an opposite process, that of appropriation” (Funnell & Smith 1981, 277). An analytic separation of the two processes is necessary because “it enables researchers to differentiate between those personality and personal identity characteristics that are a consequence of cultural transmission and the nature of the transmitted code”.

The distinguishing between questions of how culture is learned and how behaviors are patterned, what effects these have on the personalities of socialized individuals, and how systems of knowledge give meaning to social forms of learned behavior is very important (Funnell & Smith 1981, 277); it is central to the theoretical work of mainstream anthropologists (Sahlins, Keesing, Goodenough, Geertz, Bourdieu, and Adlam), continued Funnell and Smith. In these contemporary developments, culture is viewed as being symbolically constituted in systems of knowledge that are transmitted, for example, through a “common set of previously assimilated master patterns” (Bourdieu 1971, 192–193), which are “grounded in the public order that precedes it and gives it context” (Sahlins 1976, 21). Following Geertz (Geertz 1957; Geertz 1973), a useful way of locating the nature of the cultural code and of ascertaining how symbolic systems are institutionalized and transmitted is to analytically distinguish personality, society, and culture as separate concepts. It is then possible to focus on intrapsychic variables such as acquired personality characteristics, the behavioral patterns in the interpsychic transaction of personal and social identity (how culture is acquired), and the transmitted code. (Funnell & Smith 1981, 277)

I agree.

In following the above stream of thoughts, Funnell and Smith argue that:

“...the culture concept, as used in the intra- and interpsychic theories of cultural transmission, is grounded in the logics of either psychological or biological instrumentalism, and, as such, it cannot investigate cultural codes that give shape to, and confer significance on, in, and between institutions. Social activity in these circumstances, or the concept of “culture” in a cultural analysis of education, or anything else, becomes an epiphenomenon rather than the object of analysis”. (Funnell & Smith 1981, 277).

I am taking with me the reasons for critiquing Tindal’s work and the remainder of the primacy of investigating the cultural code. It is valid for every culture; it is twice vital for my historical overview of the choreography practice. My paper needs to make evident the significant changes in the cultural code of Bulgaria from before and after 1989.

Again in the early 1980s, Cavalli-Sforza, Feldman, Chen, and Dornbusch offered their “Theory and Observation in Cultural Transmission” (Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1982) – a quantitative theory of the evolution of a culturally transmitted trait⁴ that requires “modeling who transmits what to whom, the number of transmitters per receiver, their ages, and other relations between them” (Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1982, 19). The introduction clarifies that cultural transmission is “the process of acquisition of behaviors, attitudes, or technologies through imprinting, conditioning, imitation, active teaching, and learning. Or a combination of these” (Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1982, 19). And further:

“As a first step in measuring cultural transmission, it is natural to consider discrete valued traits and the parent-offspring relationship. When the transmission is from parent to child it is termed vertical, in agreement with usage in epidemiology, and the natural discrete time unit is the generation. We use horizontal transmission to mean transmission between members of the same generation, and oblique for transmission from nonparental individuals of the parental generation to members of the filial generation” (Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1982, 20).

With my inclination (and training) to execute/practice qualitative research methods, such quantitative theory presented the obvious question: What can I learn? There are many things in the cultural transmission of choreographic knowledge that cannot be strictly measured. To what degree did the first choreographer of a child in a children’s ensemble influence this child’s dance style, for example. Or how to measure the love for folklore inspired by one’s first dance teacher. However, I see possibilities to apply the quantitative methodology for life choices in vertical transmission (for a child, for instance, whose both parents are choreographers or folk dancers, or just the father, or only the mother), for aesthetic preferences, and more. But these are avenues for future studies.

The ideas and outcomes that this 1980s research proposed, was apparently a very significant “first step” (Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1982, 23), because one can hardly find an academic writing on cultural transmission afterward that would ignore the suggested above research directions. Here is an excerpt from a 2002 study:

“In vertical transmission parents transmit cultural values, skills, beliefs, and motives to their offspring. In this case it is difficult to distinguish between cultural and biological transmission, since we typically learn from the very people who are responsible for our conception; biological parents and cultural parents are very often the same. In horizontal cultural transmission, we

⁴ In their earlier work, Cavally-Sforza and Feldman wrote that “they accept as the cultural unit or trait, *the result of any cultural action* (by transmission from other individuals) *that can be clearly observed or measured on a discontinuous or continuous scale*” (italic as in the original) (Cavally-Sforza and Feldman 1981, 73).

learn from our peers in day-to-day interactions during the course of development from birth to adulthood; in this case, there is no confounding of biological and cultural transmission. And in oblique cultural transmission, we learn from other adults and institutions (for example in formal schooling), either in our own culture or from other cultures” (Berry et al. 2002, 20).⁵

The terminological apparatus of vertical, horizontal, and oblique transmissions will also work for my research. At least at this stage. I bring this quote above also because later on, I will present my examples of father and daughter and father and son cultural transmission that illustrate such challenge.

I became especially interested in the ideas expressed in “Understanding Cultural Transmission in Anthropology: A Critical Synthesis”, edited by Roy Ellen, Stephen J. Lycett, and Sarah E. Johns (Ellen et al. 2013). In this book’s introduction, one reads:

“In studying cultural transmission, we have to explore and attempt to synthesize hypotheses and data over series of levels. We might distinguish the following: a) the micro-level, applying to bodily and cognitive aspects of processes of learning and innovation, and to interpersonal interaction; b) the middle-range level, at which social institutions serve as contexts for perpetuating transmission and ensuring its fidelity; and (c) the macro-level, addressing issues of cultural history, adaptation, phylogeny, diversification and spatial diffusion” (Ellen & Fischer 2013, 14).

In the choreographic profession, these bodily and cognitive aspects are foundational. Such are the institutions (on the middle-range level) and everything that happens on the macro-level. I also took with me the following reminder:

“(…) it is often assumed to operate collectively, from one generation to another, rather than from one individual to another; at a supra-individual (summative) level (Boyer 1994, 265). While the process indeed takes place in a socio-ecological context that comprises multiple individuals, single individuals are always the vectors of acquisition and transmission” (Ellen & Fischer 2013, 14).

This last quote is crucial to me in understanding the role of the individual (the choreographer as a culture-hero,⁶ the one who presents, shows the first dance steps, especially to children,⁷ creates choreography, teaches choreographic principle, and more), but also the “recipient”, that is, the disciple’s aptitude, motivation, education, intelligence, talent, personal dance style, and whole personality (the recipients are not vessels to be filled)⁸. Thus, the word “transmission” seems problematic; “transmission” implies passiveness. If we examine how people acquire knowledge and skills, however, the process is much more interactive and complex, even discordant, than can be conveyed by a passive conception of ‘transmission’ (Ellen & Fischer 2013, 15).⁹ “The mind, like all organic learning system, is not a fixed generic device (...); we become experts not by passively absorbing knowledge, but by actively selecting it (...)” (Ellen & Fisher 2013, 15).

This perspective resonates fully with my own.

5 See also Schönplflug 2009 5, 102.

6 I addressed this topic elsewhere, s. Ivanova-Nyberg 2013.

7 I wrote on this topic by giving an example with Lachezaria Pavlova “syllable method” in a chapter for an upcoming book. See online:

https://www.academia.edu/45194742/On_choreographer_Coming_of_age_as_a_choreographer_in_Bulgaria (Accessed February 6, 2023)

8 After Reynolds, P.C. 1981. *On the Evolution of Human Behaviour*. Berkely: University of California Press, according to: Ellen & Fischer References 2013, 63.

9 After Strauss, S. and N. Guinn. 1997. *A Cognitive Theory of Cultural Meaning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), according to: Ellen and Fischer References 2013, 64.

Now, equipped with this broader framework of cultural transmission, with its various ways of flowing, let me proceed with the concept of choreographic knowledge.

On choreographic knowledge

Before addressing choreographic knowledge, I found it obligatory to elaborate on the concept of knowledge itself. But when shall I even start; “knowledge” is one of this “cabbage” or “onion” – words/concepts that have grown so many “meanings” over the history of humankind that the exhausted scholar, after re-reading some Ancient philosophy collections (Radev 1988), going through several heavy philosophical compendiums (such as *Four Ages of Understanding*, and others (Deely 2001)), listening to lectures on epistemology by leading philosophers on YouTube, and downloading several helpful articles, ended up consulting Cambridge and Merriam-Webster dictionaries. In the latter (among the numerous others), one reads that “knowledge is understanding of or information about a subject that you get by experience or study, either known by one person or by people generally”.¹⁰

I acknowledged the help, but I proceeded with consulting other texts. Here is one:

“Knowledge is an abstract concept without any reference to the tangible world. It is a very powerful concept, yet it has no clear definition so far. From the Greek philosophers up to present experts in knowledge management, people tried to define knowledge, but the results are still very fuzzy (...)” (Bolisani & Bratianu 2018).

I needed to solve this “fuzziness”, though, to have a ground and proceed. The clarification I sought required a theoretical understanding and “information about a subject” but also involved knowledge through the body. And here on my side came Anna Pakes’ article, “Knowing Through Dance-Making: Choreography, Practical Knowledge, and Practice-as-Research”. From her article, which I found fascinating in many ways, I took only one particular “stream” that applied to my work (being aware that there is always a danger in doing such “surgeries”). The latter concerns the differentiation between “knowing how” and “knowing what”. While following the works of Gilbert Ryle, David Carr, and others, Pakes writes:

“A well-known challenge to the factual and theoretical bias of Western epistemology is articulated in Gilbert Ryle’s (1963) discussion of knowing how as distinct from knowing that. Against the background of a tradition preoccupied with ‘investigating the nature, source, and the credentials of the theories we adopt (Ryle 1963, 28), Ryle’s concern is to explore what it is to know how to perform tasks and what it means to act intelligently. His ideas are pertinent to choreography insofar as they outline a kind of knowledge embodied in dance, alongside other forms of practice” (Pakes 2016, 2).

Now I will allow myself to “twist” this quote (since it is addressed to a form of dance that is different from “my” “folk”¹¹ choreographies) and just focus on these questions: what is it to know how to perform (tasks) and what does it mean to act intelligently? I read further:

“In Aristotle’s world, artmaking was (or was considered to be) essentially this kind of technical procedure, a species of craftsmanship in which skill was used instrumentally to achieve pre-conceived ends. In the context of contemporary choreography, *techne* is still involved in making processes where the end is clearly specified in advance – perhaps where a dance is

¹⁰ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/knowledge>; <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/knowledge>

¹¹ Applicable here is Andriy Nahachewsky’s definition of “folk dances” broadly seen as peasant dances along with their derivatives – the latter developed (along with rich review of other concepts and definitions) in his *Ukrainian Dance* (Nahachewsky 2012, 33), and also in the *Oxford Handbook of Dance and Ethnicity* (Nahachewsky 2016, 298–305). For a further discussion on “folk”, see also Joann Kealiinohomoku’s article on Folk Dance in *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Kealiinohomoku 2006).

created according to an exact specification, or within a well-defined style which already sets out the criteria for artistic or aesthetic success. Indeed, an element of *techne* may be present in all choreographic making, insofar as there are parts of the process where the aim is clear and a largely procedural approach is appropriate to fulfilling it” (Pakes 2016, 8).

I was first introduced to Aristotle’s ideas in depth by my philosophy professors at Sofia University, and I loved using *techne* on various occasions while describing the process of “crafting”. But apparently, my reading of Aristotle in depth was not that deep since I missed somehow that Aristotle contrasted *techne* to a different mode of practical knowledge – *phronesis*, or “practical wisdom”, that was now brought by Pakes. The latter is “a kind of attunement to the particularities of situations and experiences, requiring subjective involvement rather than objective detachment”. Such involvement has “an irreducibly personal dimension in its dependence upon and the fact that it folds back into subjective and intersubjective experience” (Pakes 2016, 9).

And here, again, Pakes’s ideas inspire a refreshed perspective of the notion of (folk) choreographer in Bulgaria. Some choreographers learned how to act “intelligently” in attuning themselves to inspiring (creative) work. Others practice the profession in a way that is more or less craftsmanship, lacking a profound understanding of what lies behind their “craft”. One can distinguish various approaches in the Bulgarian case (as elsewhere). And here, I return again to the concept of *phronesis* and its applicability to choreographic work:

“The concept of *phronesis* seems relevant to choreography not only because we can draw an analogy between dance-making and moral action. Choreography is itself arguably a form of praxis because it involves collective production. Choreographers work with others – performers, designers, audiences – to produce performance events. It is crucial, in this intersubjective context, to have a creative sensitivity to the others involved, the evolving situation and the experiences it generates” (Pakes 2016, 9).

To some choreographers I interviewed 20 years ago, *a choreographer is a person who creates his/her own dances. Simultaneously, he/she must be universal—as an organizer and everything, from alpha to omega*. This “alpha to omega” presumably includes both choreographer’s “*techne*” – her craftsmanship, and her ability to “act intelligently” in a sense described above. This is the capability to create, to go beyond one’s already acquired *instrumentarium*. To reach this state, one has to prepare oneself by “allowing”, evoking the new (choreographic ideas) to unfold.

Back to my survey, one interviewee believes that *a choreographer is a person who creates dances that are planted on solid ground with respect to the ethnographic regions*. But today, things are blurred – everybody proclaims to be a choreographer. This quote brings up one essential issue in defining choreographic knowledge. It is not the pure craftsmanship (that is, the practical knowledge of how to compose steps and figures). It is the practical knowledge bonded to the knowledge of folklore (with an understanding of the folklore regions’ specifics) that is essential. Said otherwise, the choreographic knowledge includes knowing of/about

- the “classical” folklore traditions from the pre-industrial times when these were living traditions (but with an awareness that folklore has not been frozen there)
- ethnographic specifics
- principles of stage arrangements.

Other perceptions came from another answer: *despite the differentiation between the choreographer-composer and choreographer-trainer, which is informally made, in practice, the term choreographer combines both, including pedagogic skills and more.*

This opinion brings an understanding of a knowledge that “incorporates” “knowing what” but also “knowing how”.¹² It includes skills that may be defined as craftsmanship (more or less a repetition/replication of what has been already learned). But it also consists of a creative aspect, innovations. In addition, the choreographer (in the Bulgarian context) must learn (know) how to pass her knowledge to her students, which is often a younger generation.

To keep choreographic activity alive is important because 1) it comes from the national-training school of folk-dance arrangements, which is a school of high artistic achievements, and 2) it is inspired by “classical” folklore traditions. Therefore, it relates to “our” cultural heritage (memory) and national identity. In developing and passing this genre, we contribute to securing our future.

To summarize. Choreographic knowledge in Bulgaria, as bonded to the genre Bulgarian-music-and-dance-art-based-on-folklore, is understood (by my interviewee) as related to both Bulgarian folklore and choreographic principles (s. Abrashev 1989; Abrashev 2001). It includes knowledge and talent to create choreographies, to teach someone else’s choreography. Related to this (or rather stemming from it) is the existence of a proper training school (institution). So, we distinguish here two levels of “knowing what” and “knowing how” – one related to choreographic work *per se* and the other – related to the choreographic institutions.

This broad understanding of choreographic knowledge is shared by all institutions that offer choreographic education in Bulgaria. Within it, each university has its own priorities and authorities. But these university professors grew up under their own choreographer(s)-mentors. And now, let us see how the history of this genre has been taught.

Fieldwork Documents

Cultural Transmission of Choreographic Knowledge in Bulgaria: universities’ programs about the choreographic knowledge foundation (one example)

Dance transmission and choreographic (knowledge) transmission are different things¹³

Today four universities offer higher choreography education: Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts in Plovdiv,¹⁴ Neofit Rilski South-West University in Blagoevgrad,¹⁵ Chernorizets Hrabar Varna Free University (VSU)¹⁶, and New Bulgarian University

12 For further reading see Ryle 2009, 14–48; Pakes 2016. See also Parviainen 2002.

13 Lately, the Study Group on Ethnochoreology paid special attention to the topic of dance transmission. See Wharton and Urbanavičienė 2022.

14 About the Choreography Department see: <https://www.artacademyplvdiv.com/struktura/kat-horeografiq.html>; <http://try.artacademyplvdiv.com/EN/home.html>. For the Doctoral program at the Academy: <https://www.artacademyplvdiv.com/doktoranti/planove/Dokt-plan%20-%20Horeografiq.pdf> (Accessed January 25, 2023).

15 <https://swu.bg/bg/109-bprogrammescat/mticat/170-bnhbgart>; https://www.swu.bg/images/educational_programs/bachelor/music_dance/bulgarian_folk_choreography_infopack_bg.pdf About the department see Bulgarian Folk Choreography Major documentary movie (2016): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I1db0PJMw6I> Published by South-West University Neofit Rilski; About the doctoral program: <https://www.swu.bg/bg/prospectivevbg/admpha/176-docpcd/mdapcat/438-chorpbg> (Accessed January 25, 2023).

16 Dance department at The Varna Free University (VFU) <https://ects.vfu.bg/> <https://ects.vfu.bg/бакалавър/Хореография-Български-народни-танци/> (Accessed February 5, 2023).

(NBU)¹⁷ in Sofia. They all – in one way or another – address the history of their discipline and acknowledge the names of the founding mothers and fathers. I take here the course on the history of Bulgarian folk choreography taught by Nikolay Tzvetkov, professor at the Bulgarian Folk Choreography Department at Neofit Rilski South-West University, as an example. In the description, one reads:

“In the lecture course students have the opportunity to get acquainted with the different stages of development of Bulgarian choreography, as well as with the biographies and works of prominent choreographers who have created and left significant choreographic works, invaluable examples in our contemporary performing arts”.¹⁸

The program includes the following topics:

- First attempts to arrange Bulgarian folk dances for stage (1910–1930). The creativity of Ruska Koleva and Pesho Radoev
- Second period in the development of Bulgarian folk choreography. The work of the choreographers Boris Tsonev, Haralampi Garibov, Hristo Tsonev, Petar Zahariev, Bozhidar Yanev, Lyuben Georgiev (1930–1945)¹⁹
- Third period in the development of Bulgarian folk choreography (1945–1960). Kiril Dzhenev, Metodi Kutev, Kiril Haralampiev, Dimitar Dimitrov, Ivan Todorov, Georgi Abrashev, Parvan Stoev, and others
- Fourth period in the development of Bulgarian folk choreography (1960–1985)
- The development of Bulgarian folk choreography in the years after 1985.²⁰

Assos. Prof. Georgi Garov, who is Nikolay Tzvetkov’s colleague from the same department and with whom he works in close cooperation, leads a course on the legacy of the following choreographers: Kiril Dzhenev, Kiril Haralampiev, Georgi Abrashev, Metodi Kutev, Dimitar Dimitrov, Ivan Todorov, Yordan Yanakiev²¹, Nikolay Tzvetkov, Todor Bekirski, Ivan Donev, Kiril Apostolov, and Petar Angelov. The lecture course topics (including practical classes) are grouped in several main directions. Its aim is for the students to become familiar with the individual stages of development of Bulgarian folk choreography and to study the biographies and works of “outstanding choreographers who created and left significant choreographic works, priceless examples in our contemporary performing arts”.

I also read online about the discipline, “Classic Repertoire and Choreographic Heritage”, presented by Prof. Dr. Anton Andonov, today’s representative “face” of the Academy’s choreography department (along with Professor Daniela Dzheneva). The program is presented briefly, though. I read that this subject is studied for two semesters within the Master’s program. Its aim is to “summarize the knowledge of the students from the other auxiliary disciplines and bring them into a coherent system of views, knowledge, and skills, which makes it possible

17 The NBU Bachelor program description is available here: https://ecatalog.nbu.bg/default.asp?V_Year=2022&PageShow=programpresent&P_Menu=generalinfo&Fac_ID=3&M_PHD=0&P_ID=844&TabIndex=1&l=0. The NBU Master’s program is accessible here: https://ecatalog.nbu.bg/default.asp?V_Year=2022&PageShow=programpresent&P_Menu=generalinfo&Fac_ID=4&M_PHD=0&P_ID=2636&TabIndex=1&l=0 (Accessed 30 January 2023). Thanks for the assistance of Dr. Margarita Krasteva-Stoychevska, who is among the very responsible people for the development and execution of these programs. Since 2002, Krasteva-Stoychevska has been a full-time assistant in Bulgarian dance folklore at NBU, and since 2010, she has been a chief assistant. She is also the head and choreographer of the NBU dance ensemble.

18 http://www-old.swu.bg/media/416547/bulgarian_folk_choreography_infopack_en.pdf. (Accessed 25, January 2023).

19 On these names, s. Dzhudzhhev 1945 and Katzarova 1955.

20 Between the third and the fourth periods, the course includes other lectures.

21 Yordan Yanakiev used to work at the same university. He is also the author of “Bulgarian Character Exercise” (Yanakiev 2000).

to effectively master the creative process and the professional mastery of the contemporary choreographer”.²²

But let us stop here and acknowledge the professional mastery of some of the founding figures of the genre Bulgarian-Music-and-Dance-Art-Based-on-Folklore.

The “golden” choreographers and their impact on the next generations

“Golden choreographers” is a known description for Margarita Dikova (born in 1916), Ivan Todorov, Kiril Dzhenev, Kiril Haralampiev, Methodi Kutev, and Dimitar Dimitrov (born circa 1922).²³ These choreographers set the patterns, the standards for stage arrangements and created the stage image of the most representative music and dance folklore regions. They also laid the foundation of the Bulgarian character exercise that became essential for professional, semi-professional, and amateur ensemble training. The overarching concept of folk stage arrangements that these choreographers created is nationally and internationally recognized today as the Bulgarian performance-group/ensemble model (that also includes the rehearsal model). With their artistic visions, methodology, and a whole array of activities – blended into well-recognized personal styles, these choreographers formed their own schools, “shkoli” (although not in a formal way), that profoundly influenced the work of their students and followers.

Margarita Dikova was the first choreographer of the State Ensemble for folk songs and dances, led by maestro Philip Koutev (1951). Along with her tireless and creative work with the ensemble, she frequently traveled across the country, juried regional festivals, wrote methodological literature that was extremely important for the new genre of amateurs’ folk dancing. She also taught at the state’s ballet school that, in the 1950s, developed its two branches: ballet and folk dance/choreography, with the help of Russian specialists (s. Vasilev 2012; Grancharova 2012). All the choreographic works she presented decades ago (with an immense impact on amateur folk dance development nationwide) are today’s “true classics”. Many of these pieces are still in the repertoire of the Philip Koutev National Ensemble.

Kiril Dzhenev’s role as one of the founding figures of the Bulgarian Music and Dance Art Based on Folklore is vital for various reasons. Not only for the establishment of Trakia Folk Ensemble (and embedding his innovative thinking in the ensemble’s repertoire that became a true “classic”) but for initiating the choreography education program at the Independent Higher Institute of Music and Pedagogy in Plovdiv (1974). In 1995 the Institute became the Academy of Music and Dance, and today it is the Academy of Music, Dance, and Fine Arts. Speeding ahead with my examples of horizontal transmission, I want to mention that for 18 years (starting in 1951), Dzhenev worked with Margarita Dikova as her assistant, in which professional collaboration, he found his own style. Professor Dzhenev is also the author of Kinetographia – a system for dance notation that he initially introduced to his

22 <https://www.artacademyplovdiv.com/specialnosti/disciplini/BNH-mag/03%20Klasichesko%20repertoarno%20nasledstvo.pdf>. One the Academy’s website one also reads that the students learn: choreographic composition; choreographic directing [*horeografska rezhisura*]; Bulgarian folk dances; theory of Bulgarian folk choreography; melodics of teaching Bulgarian folk dances; classical exercise; Bulgarian ethnography, music theory, historical dances; folk dances from the world; modern and jazz dance, acting, and stage designing. S. <https://www.artacademyplovdiv.com/specialnosti/BNH.html>

23 Biser Grigorov calls them the “titans” of Bulgarian choreography (Grigorov 2021).

first students at the Plovdiv Institute.²⁴ All the choreographic works he created in the 1970s and 1980s were considered excitingly innovative yet close to the earth, truly inspirational. Many of these pieces are still in the repertoire of the Trakia Ensemble. Dikova and Dzhenev worked with outstanding professional composers and musicians to create their masterpieces.

Ivan Todorov played an essential role in the establishment of the choreography branch in the State's Ballet School. First, he began folk dancing at the high school with a group led by Ruska Koleva (this is a good moment to mention the role of the first dance leaders from the first decades of the 20th century), having before that, as a kid, involved in various village practices in Thrace. Then, by chance, he became a ballet dancer at the Bulgarian National Opera in 1946 (s. Ivanova-Nyberg 2011). Todorov (known for his bohemian spirit and aptitude to include theatrical elements in his choreographies) and Kiril Haralampiev (with a background in visual arts, known for his "clean" lines and figures and his highly disciplined rehearsal methods) trained hundreds of students (many of whom also became legendary figures in the choreographic field). Todorov and Haralampiev also trained numerous folk dancers at their semi-professional ensembles (the first one – at the Students' group at the National Students House of Culture in Sofia, now Academic Ensemble, and the other – at the Vladimir Mayakovski Ensemble in Sofia. After Haralampiev's death, the latter was renamed the "Kiril Haralampiev" ensemble.

Methodi Koutev began dancing in his high-school years with Boris Tzonev's group (s. Tsoneva-Kusitaseva and Tsonev 2000). He received a formal education in economics, but like Ivan Todorov, he became a ballet artist at the Bulgarian National Opera (1946–1960). He was also among the professors at the state choreography school, long affiliated with the Military Ensemble for Folk Songs and Dances, known for his aptitude for higher stylization. Dimitar Doychinov spoke of him with great respect as someone from whose way of choreographing he gathered a lot, along with learning from every other choreographer active at that time (Ivanova-Nyberg 2011, 94).

Dimitar Dimitrov, who danced with Ruska Koleva's group, worked from 1957 until his last days (1991) with "Sredets" Dance Ensemble. The latter was established in 1937 by a few young enthusiasts led by Yordan Nikolov at the Sofia Municipality.²⁵ Like the choreographers above, Dimitrov created choreographies considered today to be "classics". Marin Marinov, who was Dimitar Dimitrov's assistant for many years and after Dimitrov's death, the leading choreographer of "Sredets", is the father of Konstantin Marinov, a professional folk dancer, and choreographer. Konstantin Marinov, who emigrated to the United States more than 20 years ago and settled in Chicago, founded there Vereia Ensemble and Vereia Bulgarian Folk Festival (2011-); the latter became the most essential platform/medium for horizontal transmission of choreographic knowledge in the United States.

24 Before offering his Kinetografia Dzhenev worked on a "universal dance notation" with Kiril Haralampiev. About Dzhenev's artistic work, see Parlamov 1992, and also <https://archives.bnr.bg/kiril-dzhenev/>. (Accessed 26 January 2023).

25 <https://www.ensemblesredets.com/bg/managers/6-dimitar-petrov-dimitrov> (Accessed January 26, 2023).

On (choreographic) generations²⁶

When we coordinate serial life cycles and attempt to place them in groups of more or less contemporaneous cycles we often speak of “generations”.

(...)

Members of the same generation are assumed: to associate, and through association to reinforce existing practices, or confirm innovatory ones; to receive cultural information from, and to be subject to, social control of ascendant generations; and to transmit cultural information and exercise social control with respect to descendent generations.

(Ellen & Fisher 2013, 25)

Dimitar Doychinov, the choreographer who led the three-month seminar for folk dance arrangement (with Georgi Shishmanov) in Plovdiv for a few decades up to the 1980s and whom I had the chance to interview in 2001, suggested that we can now talk about First, Second, Third, and further generations (*pokoleniya* – pl.) of Bulgarian choreographers (Ivanova-Nyberg 2011, 384–386). He considered choreographers Dikova, Dzhenev, Haralampev, Todorov, Kutev, and Dimitrov representative of the **Second generation** (*pokolenie*). Ruska Koleva, Boris Tzonev, and those from the second period (as described by Tzvetkov above that were active before the 1940s) he defined as representative of the **First generation**.

Doychinov himself saw himself as belonging to **the second but in a transition to the third-generation** choreographers. To the “transitional-toward-the-third” generation belongs Petar Grigorov, founder and the leader of Rosna Kitka Children’s Ensemble at the Palace of Pioneers (known for his outstanding methodology in working with kids). With Grigorov and his team, this prestigious ensemble trained thousands and thousands of folk dancers, many of whom continued to dance in adult ensembles, chose the professional choreographer’s career, or remained a faithful audience of folk-dance spectacles.

To the **Third generation** (choreographers born in the 1940s) – in following Doychinov’s concept (and to mention only a few) belong:

Agripina Voynova, Toncho Tonchev, and Krasimir Petrov (three of them were classmates at the State’s Choreography School, with Ivan Todorov as their mentor; all of them had prolific and very successful choreographers’ careers

Ivan Donev (who was “introduced” to the choreography profession by Metodi Koutev), Petar Angelov, who learned the choreographic “techne” from Dimitar Dimitrov and Kiril Dzhenev, Maria Evtimova, Simeon Simeonov, and other students of Kiril Haralampev. To this generation also belongs Yordan Yanakiev, who was first a dancer (for 8 years) and then a choreographer (24 years) for Philip Koutev ensemble, being also for some periods an Assos. Prof. at Neofit Rilski South-West University and New Bulgarian University (NBU).

First graduates of the Higher Institute of Music and Pedagogy in Plovdiv (initiated in 1974 by Kiril Dzhenev), professional dancers at Trakia Ensemble led by Kiril Dzhenev.

²⁶ “Generations” is used conventionally here, as suggested by Dimitar Doychinov 20 years ago. The reader may notice that these groupings below do not necessarily “agree” with the life cycles. Plus, these individuals of approximately equal relative age are not “encapsulated in the idea of siblinghood (Ellen & Fisher 2013, 25). Still, I bring up the term “generation” (*pokolenie* – in Bulgarian) because it is informally used by members of the choreographic guild and because it provides some references. In addition, *pokolenie* is a broader term than “generation”.

Among the first soloists of Trakia and graduates of the Institute was Todor Bekirski (born in 1947) and Lachezaria Pavlova (born in the 1950s).

Lachezaria Pavlova, however, and those born circa the 1950s, appeared to be among choreographers **in a transition toward the Fourth generation**. To this generation also belongs Mariya Radulova (who considers herself a student of Todor Bekirski).

Some of the representative names from the **Fourth generation** (born circa 1960s) include Daniela Dzheneva – the daughter of Kiril Dzhenev (Plovdiv), Biser Grigorov – the son of Petar Grigorov (Sofia), Nikolay Tzvetkov (Blagoevgrad), Vasil Gerlimov (Stara Zagora), Ventsislava Elenska (Plovdiv), Hristo Stankov (Sofia), Zhivko Zhechev (Razgrad), Tzetzko Kolev (Rouse), Emil Genov (late 1950s), and others.

To the **Fourth in transition to the Fifth generation**, we may consider those born circa the 1970s (Ivaylo Ivanov, the choreographer of Philip Koutev National Ensemble, was born before that, in 1967, but he is closer to this group than to the previous. Georgi Garov may be considered part of this generation (he, along with Nikolay Tzvetkov, creates the “image” of the Bulgarian folk choreography department at South-West University in Blagoevgrad.²⁷

To this “stream”, we may consider the choreographic team (brother-and-sister) Mitko and Daria Mihalkovi (Sofia and Pernik), who studied with Maria Evtimova (who was Kiril Haralampev’s student and his assistant for a long time). Daria and Mitko Mihalkovi are choreographers who became fully involved in the Bulgarian folk dance club movement while establishing a performing group whose repertoire is inspired by traditional village repertoire.

A representative of the **Fifth generation**, following the adopted “thread”, should be Maria Kardzhieva (born 1974), a student of Petar Angelov, now an Assoc. Professor at VSU’s Choreography department and one of the “faces” of Petar Angelov’s “school”. A bit older (born 1969) is Asen Pavlov, who has a significant influence on choreographic field because of his work at the National School for Dance Arts for decades now²⁸ (and because of his artistic work of a higher stylization at Chinari private ensemble²⁹, and many other media and other activities. His son, Kaloyan Pavlov is also a choreographer.

Daniel Kostov (born 1986), the founder and artistic director of Na Megdana Folk Dance Club (for popular and arranged folk dances)³⁰, would belong to the **Fifth-in-transition-to-Sixth generation**. An example of a choreographer of the same generation, who also became an ethnochoreologist, is Ivaylo Parvanov.

We have a **Sixth generation** today – those born in the mid-1990s who graduated from one or another university with a professional choreographer’s diploma.

These few names above are included for time references (it is in no way a selection by merits; creating a complete list of choreographers with higher achievements is not the goal of this paper). What became apparent is that the generation concept is arbitrary. The second thing that became obvious was that, in some cases, one may trace a reco-

27 For Tzvetkov and Garov artistic cooperation, s. Pärvo Lyube [First love] folk concert-spectacle. 2018. Dance department at the Neofit Rilski South-West University. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSd9X5At7u8>. Published November 13 by South-West University Neofit Rilski

28 S. <https://nutibg.com/специалности/> (Accessed February 5, 2023).

29 <https://chinaryfolkdance.com/en/team.php> (Accessed February 6, 2023).

30 S. <https://namegdana.eu/team/daniel-kostov/> (Accessed February 5, 2023). See also the Folk dance club and ensemble Na Megdana YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoeAuTV3xRJGdpFndktdmPA>

(Some of the stage performances are fruits of collaborative work of the dance department of The South-West University “Neofit Rilski”, Blagoevgrad and Na Megdana).

gnizable transmission from the choreographer-mentor to her disciples (and the section below addresses some examples). Still, there are many other cases where the transmission could not be easily identifiable. As the genre developed and new choreography institutions appeared with the Democratic changes (with the increased possibilities for folk dancing and choreographic education), the issue of cultural transmission of choreographic knowledge became more and more complicated.

The role of the choreographer(s)-mentor(s) and issue of continuity: who have you danced with?

I am a full cocktail... Cocktail, do you understand?

(From an interview with a Bulgarian choreographer, born in 1960, private archive)

One of the aspects that intrigued me from this research is the impact that the primary teacher/choreographer (or choreographer) had on their students. So, this section now carries further the conversation about the choreographer(s)-mentor and her disciple(s). If one wants to understand somebody else's dance background, one will ask: Who have you studied/danced with? Or with which group. Not "what" but "with whom". At the same time, other factors must be observed (since the recipient is not the empty "vessel to be filled"). So, when I conduct interviews with choreographers, I always ask: Whom did you dance with as a child? Where (with whom) did you study choreographic principles? Would you identify yourself as someone's student/disciple; Whose choreographer's works "speak" to you, inspire you? And various insights about choreographic transmission processes come from such a conversation.

Agripina Voynova's answer to my question about her mentor was straightforward: Ivan Todorov ("I not only adopted his style, but I also adopted his way of thinking").

I need to note here, though, that such strong influence happens when the student has studied intensely with one mentor. The response of Lachezaria Pavlova (with whom I worked for several years and benefited genuinely from this cooperation) was this: I see myself as belonging to two schools – the school of Haralampiev and to school of Dzhenev, with the Dikova's impact (femininity and artistic taste).

In 2001, I asked the same question Maria Kardzhieva. At that time, she was a young student of Petar Angelov at Varna Free University. Later on (in 2015), while working at the same university as a mentor herself, she wrote a book entitled "Petar Angelov – life with the dance's soul" (Kardzhieva 2015). In this book, one reads that "his (Petar Angelov's) creative charisma captivated young people, and so in 1995, the first graduating class of the 'Choreography' major was formed". And further:

"Students in these first years are active choreographers and amateur folk dancers. But after the publicity in the country that Prof. Angelov has opened training in the field of Bulgarian choreography, the courses are filled by graduates of the specialized art schools and the schools with profiled training in Bulgarian choreography. Thus, the choreographic school of Prof. Petar Angelov grows and gains fame, gaining authority in higher education in dance. And once you become part of this school as a student, you join a community that follows and assimilates the creative and pedagogical experience of Prof. Petar Angelov" (Kardzhieva 2015, 53–54).³¹

³¹ Translated by D.I.N.

Today the university offers two bachelor programs: Choreography: Bulgarian folk dances,³² and Choreography – contemporary dance theater.³³ The master’s program is named “Stage arts, management, and production”.³⁴ Students with master’s degrees may also obtain their doctoral degree in Choreography (Ph.D. in Choreography).

Varna Free University is a private university as it is the New Bulgarian University. And again, let me say that although all these four universities provide bachelor, master’s, and doctoral degrees in choreography (within the national standards set by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science), each university presents and teaches choreographic knowledge differently. The programs and the professors behind them attract students of various backgrounds. Going back to the “cocktail” metaphor, there are many cases when there is no explicit self-identification of a dancer as a student of one particular professor. This is especially true when the dancer dances with various choreographers and acquires different bits of knowledge from all of them. There is a lot of material today for research on horizontal and oblique transmission in further addressing the role of the institutions and other factors.³⁵

Examples of mixed vertical, horizontal, and oblique transmissions

We see such a complex transmission in the example of Professor Kiril Dzhenev and his daughter, Professor Daniela Dzheneva. The daughter continued her father’s position with Trakia Ensemble and the “Academy” in Plovdiv. She established her own team and endorsed the educational programs (for “choreographic knowledge” – bachelor, master, and doctoral).³⁶ At the same time, it is hard to estimate to what extent the daughter’s life choice was predisposed “by blood” and how other factors played their roles. The only thing that may be said at this point is that today’s Academy is one of the primary institutions for distributing choreographic knowledge.

Another example of complex transmission would be in the case of Petar Grigorov (the father) and Biser Grigorov (the son). Today, the choreographic guild identifies them with Rosna Kitka Children Ensemble and with teaching at higher institutions and writing (Biser Grigorov). But what precisely Biser took from his father in terms of pedagogical approaches and style of choreographing?

Ivaylo Ivanov, the choreographer of the Philip Koutev Ensemble, grew up in the State Choreography School. He was a student there. But his mother, Lyubov Stoyanova, was also there. As a dance teacher. She was also among the mentors of Lachezaria Pavlova.

32 <https://ects.vfu.bg/бакалавър/Хореография-Български-народни-танци/> Accessed 6 February 2023. See also: “Tants ot Dusha Blika” [Dance from the soul gushes] concert-spectacle. 2018. Dance department at The Varna Free University (VFU) “Chernorizets Hrabar” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5gG4sxTSyk>). Published May 9, 2018 by (VFU) “Chernorizets Hrabar” (Accessed February 5, 2023).

33 <https://ects.vfu.bg/бакалавър/Хореография-Съвременен-танцов-театър/>. (Accessed January 28, 2023).

34 <https://ects.vfu.bg/магистър/сценични-изкуства-мениджмънт-и-проду/>

35 And since higher (folk) choreography education was initiated in 1974, a couple of decades ago, a look at it (diachronically and synchronically) is required while tracing the cultural transmission of choreographic knowledge in Bulgaria. However, this is beyond the scope of this paper.

36 On the Academy’s website one reads that students first learn: Choreographic composition; choreographic directing [horeograf-ska rezhisura]; Bulgarian folk dances; theory of Bulgarian folk choreography; melodies of teaching Bulgarian folk dances; classical exercise; Bulgarian ethnography, music theory, historical dances; folk dances from the world; modern and jazz dance, acting, and stage designing. <https://www.artacademyplovdiv.com/specialnosti/BNH.html>

Notes from my fieldwork in the United States

*Choreographic work is shared knowledge*³⁷

Tanya Kostova (Lachezaria Pavlova's colleague in Trakia Ensemble) has lived in San Francisco, California, for more than 20 years. She established Antika Bulgaria Festival in San Francisco, Antika Ensemble, and Martenichki Art School. Tanya presented an approach strongly influenced by her background as a soloist of Trakia Ensemble (with Kiril Dzenev's work there and in the Academy) and a professional who worked closely with Todor Bekirski. This background, combined with her knowledge of folklore, her taste for stage performances, and her strong leadership personality, was her signature. Tanya returned to Bulgaria to stay in 2020. But so did some of "her" dancers, members of Antika Ensemble who were deeply influenced by Tanya's knowledge of Bulgarian folklore (village traditions) and passion. The latter led to some genuinely transformative experiences for the ensemble members.

Konstantin Marinov (born in 1973), the founder of the more significant Bulgarian folk festival Vereva (2011–) with hundreds of participants, is another name I mentioned earlier. Not only was his father a choreographer, but his mother and sister were folk dancers. In the States, he has a wife who is a folk dancer, and their daughter became a folk dancer, also.

Konstantin grew up folk dancing/performing and graduated from the State Choreography School (today National School for Dance Arts). Among his mentors were Stefan Kolaksazov and Vasil Gerlimov. Vasil Gerlimov was the choreographer who, on the threshold to the 21st century, created his spectacle "Dance of the Wind" to the music of renowned accordionist and composer Petar Ralchev with his private troupe. Inspired by River Dance, the show was envisioned as an attractive spectacle with newly created steps and stylized costumes. "Dance of the Wind" was one of these dance "experiments" that appeared on the threshold of the 21st century (as it was "Two Kingdoms" by national gymnastics coach Neshka Robeva with Ivaylo Ivanov – soloist and choreographer, Georgi Andreev – composer).³⁸

A careful observer may "sense" some influence of Gerlimov's innovative thinking in Konstantin Marinov's work. However, other forces also need to be considered. Among these is one's unique way of adopting and re-working the acquired (any kind of) knowledge.

There are many Bulgarian folk dance groups in the United States today whose leaders are not professional choreographers but folk dancers. The typical way to sustain the group for these amateur leaders is to bring the repertoire of the group they danced with, also imitating their choreographer's style. They also look online and pick something appealing to them and the group members.

Unaddressed here remained the topic of the influence of Bulgarian choreographers with their artistic visions on the repertoires of American ensembles such as Duquesne's Tamburitza (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania), Brigham Young University's International Ensemble (Provo, Utah), Aman (Los Angeles, Koleda, Radost (Seattle), and others. I will only mention that choreographer Dimitar Manov (born 1941) worked

³⁷ Suggested by an article on shared knowledge (Dombrowski et al. 2013, 221–226).

³⁸ Later on Ivaylo Ivanov, as choreographer of Philip Koutev National Folk Ensemble would present his work "Crossroad" to Georgi Andreev's music. Today it may be interpreted as a metaphoric expression of the state ensembles' search for new direction.

with the Tamburitzans for 10 years (and he is known for his aptitude for a higher stylization in folk dance arrangement, Antony Shay's Shop Suite for Aman Ensemble in the 1970s was greatly inspired by Margarita Dikova's Shop choreography, and that Seattle' Radost Ensemble still keeps in their repertoire (and treasures) Petar Angelov's choreographies.

My notes here only briefly illustrate the connection between the Bulgarian folk dance scene and the Bulgarian and International folk dancing scenes in the United States. Having in mind the Bulgarian communities, the topic of choreographic knowledge (introduced by one or another professional choreographer or amateur leader, or acquired from YouTube dance tutorials), is essential in studying the different revival strategies (cp. Nahachewsky 2008). But while some trends of stage arrangements (or modes of existence, such as the club form) flew in both directions (from America to Europe and back), the highly professional choreographic work on a grand scale remained a domain of Bulgaria.

Choreographic knowledge in Bulgaria in the 21st century: the transmitted cultural standard(s)

It has been a long enough time for the choreography profession in Bulgaria to lay a strong foundation – that strong that even the ground-shaking political shift (like the one in 1989) could not destroy. It had been, and still is, a solid motivation to sustain this activity, to pass it (by passing the passion first) to the next generation. Going through the generational concept, as lucid as it was, revealed some lines of continuity and innovation. As for choreographic knowledge, publications suggest that the practical knowledge/education offered by higher institutions needs to be more connected to the theoretical understanding of not only choreographic principles but to studies of traditional culture, folkloristics, and ethnochoreology (Vasilev 2012, 150).

There were visible changes in the artistic profiles of professional ensembles, private, professional ensembles/companies, amateur ensembles, and folk dance clubs in the 21st century. It was not only due to the urge for new creations but also because of the need to attract new members and a faithful audience.

A specific way of transmission appeared when “offspring” of folk dance clubs (initially for recreational folk dancing, but gradually involved in competing and performing, meaning, choreographing) with a few years of club-dancing initiated their own group/club. Then, they began teaching the material introduced in the club or learned via the internet. Some leaders attend programs (at the Academy and other institutions) that provide specializations to receive certificates for folk dance club leaders. The latter puts even more “wheat” for grinding in my mill since the study of the club's repertoire dissemination, in person and online, is also part of today's cultural transmission of choreographic knowledge.

I did not have enough time to “untangle” the “alpha to omega” range of choreographic knowledge that presumably includes both choreographer's “techne” – her craftsmanship and her ability to “act intelligently”, that is, the capability to create, to go beyond one's already acquired *instrumentarium*. But I did include names of choreographers that, to my understanding, act “intelligently” in attuning themselves to inspiring (creative) work (Nikolay Tzvetkov and Georgi Garov, for example).

The ensembles, dance groups, and clubs' repertoires and overall activities belong to the topic of the cultural standard – “It is a standard that is being transmitted or enculturated” (Ingold in Ellen & Fisher 2013, 20).

In this paper I did not talk about the relationship of the genre, Bulgarian folk dance based on the folklore, and transmission processes with the politics and economy, only because I have spoken on this matter in depth earlier (Ivanova-Nyberg 2011). However, none of the addressed issues in this paper could be properly understood without looking at the larger picture of Bulgarian state of before and after 1989.

A reflection

(...) in human cultural transmission, “teleology is mostly everything”

(Ellen & Fisher 2013:19).

I realize that my text, in a way, bridges two separate papers: one related to the theoretical wonders and the other – plainly ethnographical, with brief analytical commentaries only, and I am aware that the connection between the concepts and the fieldwork appears to be more implicit than explicit. Which means that good work is still ahead. In this mood, I bring back my dialoguing with some of the theoretical texts, cited earlier, that now suggest the concept of meta-culture:

“We cannot learn how to pour water from one container to another without mastering the concepts of volume. We cannot learn needlepoint before we have mastered the intuitive physics of manipulating the needle. We, literally, cannot run before we can walk. We have to know how to use tools before we can execute the jobs that require them, except that often as not we learn how to operate a tool by repeatedly using it in a real (rather virtual context). The two parts of the process of learning are not completely separate. It is the idea that certain things have to be learned to acquire other things that has given rise to the idea of ‘meta-culture,’ cultural equipment learned first in order to facilitate the learning of the rest of culture (...)” (Ellen & Fisher 2013, 3).

And this is like I just began working on understanding choreographic knowledge, inviting me to search and search again and again in exploring different perspectives. To learn. And grow.

A concluding remark

I enjoy listening to Larry McEnerney’s lecture, *The Craft of Writing Effectively*.³⁹ What he says there always reminds me to ask myself: is my research of importance? If yes, to whom? Is it valuable, not just informative? And I am looking now at all these pages above, wondering. Did I succeed in moving the conversation forward? My hope is that along with outlining the major developmental lines in the Bulgarian choreography profession and knowledge, I presented the potential that the topic of cultural transmission of choreographic knowledge offers for further studies.

³⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtIzMaLkCaM> (Accessed February 5, 2023).

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Културно преношење кореографског знања:

Теренски рад у Бугарској са појединим примерима из Сједињених Држава

Сажетак: Овај рад је пратио две (беле и црвене) „нити” – теоријску и практичну (које је научник покушао да заокрене као бугарску *martenitsa*). Теоријски део обухватао је различите научне радове који су довели до прилагођавања појмова вертикалног, хоризонталног и косог преноса. Истовремено, теоријски оквир које нуде Рој Елен и Мајкл Фишер (у погледу процеса преноса на микро нивоу, средњем домету и макро нивоу) (Ellen & Fischer 2013) и Ана Пејкс (са њеним разликовањем између „знати како” и „знати шта” у кореографском процесу, заједно са поентом „интелигентног деловања” (Pakes 2016) проширили су истраживачку перспективу сугеришући неистражене правце. Бугарски контекст је представљен под мотом да су плесни пренос и кореографска (знања) различите ствари – будући да је ово схватање донето успостављањем народне кореографије као професије и сада је утиснуто у кореографски еснаф. Овај одељак прво узима историјску перспективу која наводи имена оснивача жанра бугарске плесне уметности засноване на фолклору и дисциплине бугарске народне кореографије као академске дисциплине (оријентисане ка уметничким сценским наступима). Потоњи представља примере како се историја ове области предавала на неким универзитетима, као и преглед програма које нуде Академија музичке, плесне и ликовне уметности у Пловдиву, Југозападни универзитет Неофит Рилски у Благоевграду, Черноризец Храбар Слободни универзитет Варна (ВСУ) и Нови бугарски универзитет (НБУ) у Софији. Затим усваја концепт кореографских генерација (поколенија), пратећи перспективу Димитра Дојчинова који пак прати примере различитих врста кореографског преноса (вертикалног, хоризонталног и косог). Коначно, белешке са теренског рада истраживача у Сједињеним Државама повезују неке бугарске примере (имена) са међународном сценом традиционалних плесова и данашњом ситуацијом (у смислу кореографског преноса) међу бугарским заједницама. За крај, рад се осврће на кореографско знање Бугарске у 21. веку. Овде долази до позивања на студију Мирослава Василева (Василев 2012), према коме практична знања/образовање које нуде високе институције треба више да се везују за студије традиционалне културе, фолклористике и етнокорееологије. Развој феномена клубова народних игара појавио се на другом „колору” (а ипак повезаним) са темом кореографског преноса будући да је овај феномен покренут од стране професионалних кореографа, али је сада стекао и свој правац. Постепено развијајући се, рад је дошао до теме културног(их) стандарда и до закључка да, пошто посебност бугарске националне школе/модела постављају више институције за професионално кореографско образовање, даља проучавања било које теме која се односи на културно преношење кореографског знања треба почети са њиховим утицајем.

Кључне речи: културни пренос, кореографско знање, Бугарска, континуитет, иновације

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Situating the Choreographer in Irish Traditional Step Dancing

Abstract: In Ireland, choreographic work in traditional step dancing exists on many levels: amateur to professional and within diverse cultural systems and contexts. These systems and contexts support particular communities of practice, which influence and shape choreographers' choreographic work and the meanings that these dances/works embody and express. In this paper, I select and examine different Irish traditional step dancing communities of practice and their respective aesthetic systems. In so doing, I explore how choreographers situate their work within and around these systems of cultural practice. Located within specific ideological discourses and epistemologies, I contend that today, choreographers of traditional step dancing either conform to, or challenge, the boundaries of discourses associated with the respective aesthetic systems of these practices. The paper focuses on group dancing and not solo step dancing.

Keywords: Irish traditional step dancing, Ireland, political ideologies, choreography, choreographer.

Introduction

At the end of the 19th century within the context of English colonialism, Irish dancing was “invented” (Hobsbawm 1983) and promoted by the Gaelic League, a cultural nationalist movement in Ireland (Foley 2012 [1988]; Foley 2013). The Gaelic League, established in 1893, had as its primary objective the de-anglicisation of Ireland through the revival of the Irish language. By the closing years of the 19th century, traditional music, song and dance were included in this de-anglicisation process as they provided a continuation with the past and were enjoyed by Irish people. They were therefore potentially powerful tools in the de-anglicisation and ideological agenda of the Gaelic League. To this end, the Gaelic League established and organised dance events such as

*céilithe*¹ and *feiseanna*² (festivals).

The first *céilí* was organised in London on 30th October 1897 by the London branch of the Gaelic League (Foley 2011; Foley 2013). With a strong Irish diasporic presence, it was successful, and subsequently, the model of an Irish *céilí* – as a social Irish dance event, was disseminated to Ireland and other Irish diasporic regions around the world, including England, Scotland, the United States, Canada, New Zealand and Australia. Debates, however, emerged within the Gaelic League around what dances were or were not *Irish dances*. These debates led to social dances such as Sets (Sets of Quadrilles), which had been danced socially throughout Ireland during the 19th century, and which had also been danced at the first *céilí* in London, being banned by the Gaelic League at future *céilithe*. The reason for Sets being banned was because they were considered by the Gaelic League to be foreign dances as they had been disseminated to Ireland from France in the 19th century. Instead, a canon of what were believed to be “true” Irish group dances was selected by the Gaelic League and these formed a canon of Irish *céilí* dances; these dances included *Ballaí Luimní* (The Walls of Limerick), *Ionsaí na hÍnse* (The Siege of Ennis), and *Baint an Fhéir* (The Haymakers Jig) (s. Foley 2011). This canon of dances was subsequently popularised, institutionalised and danced at *céilithe* in Ireland and other diasporic locations throughout the 20th century. In popularising this canon of *céilí* dances as Irish social dances, the Gaelic League contributed to the construction of a uniform sense of Irish cultural identity for themselves and for people living in Ireland and Irish diasporic regions around the world (Foley 2011; Foley 2013). As social dance events, *céilithe* were participatory and inclusive and therefore the focus was on dancing the selected social dances; step dancers also participated in these social dance events although solo step dancing was not the focus of *céilithe*. *Feiseanna*, however, again established and organised by the Gaelic League, had a greater impact on the development of Irish step dancing.

Feiseanna established at the end of the 19th century – again as part of the Gaelic League’s cultural nationalist agenda, consisted of formal competitions in the indigenous performing arts. Initially, *feiseanna* consisted of competitions in Irish language singing, Irish traditional instrumental music, and Irish dancing, which consisted of both categories, *céilí* dancing and solo step dancing (Foley 2012; Foley 2013). *Feiseanna* were initially held outdoors in rural areas during summer seasons but as the 20th century progressed, indoor *feiseanna* became the norm allowing for an increase in *feiseanna* and *oireachtais*³ throughout the year. Thus, from its rural roots in 18th-century Ireland (Foley 2012; Foley 2013), step dancing as Irish dancing became urbanised, popularised and institutionalised by the Gaelic League from the early 20th century. In 1930, intent on centralizing, overseeing and controlling all aspects of competitive Irish dancing, the Gaelic League established the organisation *An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha* or simply *An Coimisiún* (The Commission) under its auspices. From the 1940s, registration of Irish dancing teachers was introduced by *An Coimisiún*, which qualified teachers to teach Irish dancing and for their students to participate in competitions run by *An Coimisiún*. Registration for adjudicators was also introduced. Thus, in controlling and centralizing

1 The plural for *céilí* in the Irish language is *céilithe*, but in the English language, they may be commonly referred to as *céilís* (s. Foley 2011; Foley 2013). In this paper, I will use the Irish spelling.

2 The plural of *feis* in the Irish language is *feiseanna*, but in the English language, they may be commonly referred to as *feises* (s. Foley 2013). In this paper, I will use the Irish spelling.

3 An *Oireachtas* is a major competitive event such as those run at regional, national, or “world” levels (s. Foley 2013). *Oireachtais* is the plural of *Oireachtas*.

Irish dancing, the Gaelic League as a cultural nationalist organisation, brought Irish dancing into its political and cultural nationalist agenda. Today, *An Coimisiún* is the largest organisation in competitive Irish dancing in the World and it also holds its annual *Oireachtas Rince na Cruinne* – World Irish Dancing Championships (or simply “the Worlds”); the Worlds was established in 1970 and is the pinnacle in the hierarchical system of *Coimisiún* Irish dancing competitions (Foley 2013).

Alongside *An Coimisiún*, other Irish dancing organisations also exist including *Comhdháil na Múinteoirí le Rincí Gaelacha*, *Cumann Rince Náisiúnta*, *Festival Dance Teachers’ Association*, and *World Irish Dancing Association*, however *An Coimisiún* continues to be the largest of these organisations internationally, and due to length restrictions in this paper, when examining dance competitions in this paper, I will focus solely on *An Coimisiún*. However, the other organisations in competitive Irish dancing also hold their competitions.

Formal Training in Irish Competitive Dancing

Throughout the 20th century to date, regular tuition in Irish dancing occurred in Irish dance schools which were run by registered Irish dancing teachers in predominantly urban areas in Ireland, diasporic areas, and further afield; it was predominantly young children (sometimes commencing as early as the age of four) and teenagers who attended these Irish dancing classes, which were dominated by female dancers (see Foley 2013). Dancers trained in solo dances and in group or *céili*/figure dances. Solo dances fell into two categories: light-shoe dances and hard-shoe dances. Light-shoe dances included reels, slip jigs, single jigs, and light jigs; hard-shoe dances included, double jigs, and hornpipes. *Céili* or figure dances included four-hand reels, six-hand reels, eight-hand reels and jigs, and more. Many of these group dances were selected by *An Coimisiún* and published in *An Coimisiún* handbook, *Ár Rincidhe Fóirne*; this handbook consisted of three little booklets published in 1939, 1943, and 1969. Each booklet included ten *céili* dances, totalling thirty dances. Today, the handbook combines the three booklets into one volume and has been renamed to *Ár Rincí Céili: Thirty Popular Céili Dances*. This handbook is the required textbook for all aspiring teachers and adjudicators of Irish dancing within *An Coimisiún*. Within Irish dancing classes, dancers generally learn both solo dances – choreographed and taught to them by their teachers according to age, competency, and gender, and a selection of the prescribed *céili* dances from the book *Ár Rincí Céili*. These *céili* dances are generally performed in competitions run by *An Coimisiún*; and as mentioned above, the most prestigious of these competitions was, and continues to be, *Oireachtas Rince na Cruinne*, the World Championships. In this paper, I will focus on the choreographer and Irish dancing as it is manifested in group or team competitions at World Championships, rather than on solo step dancing. However, it is important to note that team dancing in Irish dancing requires members of the team to be proficient in the technique of solo Irish dancing, and in many cases, dancers perform in both solo and team dances within and outside of formal competitions.

In the *céili* dance competitions at the *Oireachtas*, assessment is based on teamwork and timing; the execution of the *céili* dance in question; synchronicity in movement; accuracy of footwork and execution; and overall teamwork and presentation. However, teachers also have the opportunity to choreograph their own group or team dances for their dancers; these they choreograph predominantly for school exhibition purposes or

competition.⁴ In the next section I will look at the Figure Dancing and Dance Drama competitions at the *Oireachtas* or World Championships as these competitions provide teachers with a platform and the opportunity to choreograph new dance work for dancers in their dance schools.

Choreographing Team Dances within Competitive Irish Dancing

The Figure Dancing Championships at the World Championship competitions run by *An Coimisiún* have strict guidelines for team dances. Regarding the Figure Dances, these include that each team must consist of no fewer than eight dancers and not more than sixteen dancers; each Figure Dance must portray an Irish theme or item; and each Figure Dance must be no longer in time than four minutes. In the Figure-Dancing competition, teams are assessed on (1) the portrayal of a story through dance; (2) figure content; (3) footwork and execution; and (4) teamwork and presentation. Only basic Irish dancing movements are admissible; solo dancing steps are not admissible. Hand movements are permitted, including hand clapping. no props or theatrical lighting is permitted. According to the Competition Syllabus (2008): “Stance and body movements should be performed with modesty in mind” (An Coimisiún, 2008, 35). Music for the Figure Dance must be in either 2/4, 4/4, or 6/8, or a combination of these - this allows for Irish traditional dance movements to fit into the music. Teachers as choreographers can select their music accompaniment for the Figure Dance, which can be pre-recorded or performed live for the competition. Prior to the competition, teachers are required to submit a written account of their Figure Dance to *An Coimisiún*, which cannot exceed 200 words. This account is read aloud to the audience before the commencement of the Figure Dance performance.

The Figure Dance Competition provides teachers with an opportunity to choreograph for teams; formal Irish dancing costumes and shoes are worn by all members of the team. The story that is portrayed can be historical or cultural, while those Figure Dances based on an Irish item, can be based on an item such as the Tara brooch, which carries Celtic symbolic relevance for the dance community as an artefact of Celtic metalwork; also replicas of Tara brooches were and may still be worn by step dancers who use it to attach a corner of their shawls to the left shoulder of their costume. Up to the 1970s, the Tara brooch was also an accepted Celtic design embroidered on female dance costumes. For an example of a Figure Dance, see *The Changelings* performed by The Doherty School of Irish Dancing’s Senior Mixed Team from Belfast, who won the World Champions in Glasgow, Scotland in 2010: [The Changelings](#) (accessed 11 January 2023). The text for the Figure Dance is as follows:

The Changelings

“Complete anarchy, the changelings take control of the mortal bodies of the leaders one by one, as they attempt to steal the infants of the mortals in order to play music in their own land. Finally, realizing what is happening, the leaders of Éire can take no more. They fall to their knees, and they pray for the evil spirits to leave. With their prayers answered, and the changelings departing the mortal bodies ... The mortals vanish them from the land of Éire, never to be seen again. As they leave, the leaders of the land fall to their knees again, but this time... in gratitude with the promise to protect the homeland for ever more”.

Sixteen dancers – eight female and eight male dancers, wearing formal Irish danc-

⁴ Teachers within *An Coimisiún* do not receive formal training in choreography.

ing costumes and shoes, perform a new choreographed Figure Dance to this story of *The Changelings*. Recorded Reels and Jigs are used for music accompaniment while the choreography includes fast-moving, synchronized, travelling spatial patterns; these patterns include circular, diagonal, and square formations. Hand and body gestures are used to enhance the narrative.

Another opportunity teachers have to choreograph new dances for a team is the Dance Drama Championships, which differ from the Figure Dance Championships. In the Dance Drama competition at the World Championships, teams must consist of between six and twenty dancers and each dance must portray a specific Irish historical or traditional story or event, suitable for a general audience. A dance drama cannot exceed six minutes. In this competition, stage props which can be easily moved may be used, and stage lighting available in the venue may also be used. The music accompaniment must be Irish music consisting of one or a combination of reels, jigs, slip jigs, single jigs, hornpipes, Irish marches, or Irish slow airs – the music accompaniment must be submitted to *An Coimisiún* prior to the competition. Spoken words or songs are not permitted, and neither is miming to spoken words or songs on tape. Video projection is also not allowed as part of a dance-drama. Similar to the Figure Dance competition, a 200-word (or less) account of the story must be submitted before the competition to *An Coimisiún*. These criteria are some of the guidelines and parameters for teachers who wish to consider choreographing a new dance drama for competition. Assessment of the Dance Drama is based on (1) choice of theme, event, or story, (2) portrayal of theme, including dance content and music, (3) dancing, (4) impact (on adjudicator); and (5) costume (An Coimisiún 2008, 27). These Dance Dramas may be comedic or serious, depending on the theme, event or story. The Dance Drama competition at the *Oireachtas* or World Championships is a very popular competition and often assists in bringing light relief to what is otherwise a serious Irish dance event. Also, the competition is culturally informative and engages audiences. An example of a Dance Drama is *The Girona* performed by The Maguire O’Shea Academy of Irish Dancing at the World Irish Dance Championships in Belfast in 2012: [The Girona](#) (accessed 22 December 2022). *The Girona* text is as follows:

“A long, long time ago in the province of Ulster, a beautiful town on the coast celebrated its annual match making festival, where men make merry, and women hope to find a suiter. But all was not well in the town as they were troubled by the dark presence of little *púcas*. These pixie-like creatures loved to cause mischief and chaos all over the land. A great storm brought sailors from the Spanish Armada into the borders of Ireland and the *púcas* seized this opportunity to entice the huge ship, *The Girona* on to the rocks of Lacada Point. Brave Captain Alonso fought hard against the evil spirits to save his men, but the *púcas* power was too strong for the *Girona* and few sailors survived. Dazed and disoriented in a new land, the sailors were discovered by the ladies of the village. Afraid but curious, the ladies watched the Spanish sailors, some taken in by their dark hair and mysterious ways. The Captain falls in love with *Síona*, a beautiful Irish maiden, and the Irish men arrive furiously defending their women from the Spanish arrivals. The Spanish and Irish men clash in battle to the *púcas* capture, *Síona*, forcing the clans to unite and fight against a common enemy. The *púcas* place the men under a spell, broken only by the brave Captain Alonso to vanish the *púcas* and save the town. The Spanish are welcomed and accepted into the community and the Captain and his Irish love are together at last”.

In the Dance Drama competition, the narrative of *The Girona* is dramatically represented on stage using predominantly hard-shoe treble reels and soft-shoes slip jigs; the

latter are confined to the women as slip-jigs are generally confined to women in competitions. Maguire O'Shea, the choreographers and teachers, incorporate recorded music, appropriate costuming related to the characterisation of the narrative, and dramatic gestural movements in portraying the clash between the Spanish and Irish men, and then their united battle against the *púcas* for the capture of *Siona*. The choreography and the dramatic tension owe much to the influence of the commercial Irish dance stage show, *Lord of the Dance*.

The competitive context, along with the style of dancing and the parameters of the Dance Drama competition, situates these choreographers – Maguire O'Shea within the competitive context of *An Coimisiún* but illustrates influences from the Irish dance commercial stage shows (s. Foley 2001; Hall 1997; O Cinnéide 2002). The Dance Drama competition therefore provides a platform for teachers to choreograph new Irish dance material, but the parameters of the competition shape the choreographer's choreographic work and the intended meanings that these dances/works embody and express. These intended meanings are communicated through the theme, story, or event around which the dance is choreographed. *The Girona* (2012) performance was influenced by the Irish dance stage show, *Lord of the Dance*, however, the Dance Drama competition was in existence long before *Riverdance* and *Lord of the Dance*; in fact, the Dance Drama competition was introduced in 1970, and the dancers who performed in *Riverdance* and many of the other popular Irish dance stage shows, were trained within the competitive contexts of Irish dancing.

These Figure Dance Championships and the Dance Drama Championships as examined above, provide opportunities for Irish dance choreographers to play with, and choreograph within the Irish dance form. These opportunities assist in expanding (1) cultural knowledge through Irish-themed, storylines from Irish culture; and (2) choreographic ideas, while conforming to the guidelines of the competitions by *An Coimisiún*.

Riverdance and its Aftermath

With the emergence and success of the Irish popular stage show *Riverdance – the Show* in 1995 (Foley 2001; Hall 1997; Ó Cinnéide 2002), Irish dancing became transnational and was popularized and disseminated to different parts of the world. Prior to *Riverdance*, Irish dancers were predominantly from Ireland or Irish diasporic locations; post-*Riverdance*, Irish dancing was no longer confined to Ireland and its diasporas, with classes emerging in places in Finland, Japan, Russia, and elsewhere. Dancers were now learning from teachers registered with *An Coimisiún* or with one of the other Irish dance organizations including *An Comhdháil na Múinteoirí le Rincí Gaelacha*, *Cumann Rince Náisiúnta*, the Festival Dance Teachers Association, or the World Irish Dancing Association; others were learning from the former stage show dancers of *Riverdance*, *Lord of the Dance*, and others still. Those dancers interested in learning traditional Irish dancing that existed outside of the formal competitive contexts, learned traditional dancing (s. Foley 2012 [1988]; Foley 2013; Foley 2015) or *sean nós* dancing⁵ informally from teachers who were not involved in the competitive Irish dancing scene, or from dancing friends or neighbors. Indeed, following the success of *Riverdance*, I authored a paper on “Perceptions of Irish Step Dance: National, Local, and Global” (2001) and at the end of that paper I asked:

⁵ *Sean nós* dancing is a solo percussive, and improvisatory form of step dancing (s. Foley 2019; Foley 2021).

“...what is the future for the Riverdancers after *Riverdance*? Do we see the establishment of small Irish step-dance companies or freelance individual Irish step-dance performers? These are questions that may well be answered in the near future” (Foley 2001, 43).

The 1990s onwards did see the emergence of the cited potential careers in Irish dancing above, along with other developments in Irish dance, including university programs.

Choreographing Irish Traditional Dance: The University Context

In 1997, an MA in Ethnochoreology was established at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick, Ireland. This was the first masters of its kind at a university in Europe and dancers from different parts of the world, including dancers from Ireland, enrolled in this one-year taught program. In 1999, an MA in Irish Traditional Dance Performance program was also established there; this was the first program of its type at any university in the world. As an ethnochoreologist, trained Irish step dancer and musician, and qualified Irish dance teacher, I had the privilege of leading the design of these programs and in being the founding director of both programs. Within the ethnochoreology program, students trained in theoretical and methodological techniques within the discipline of ethnochoreology and they also studied and engaged in practical dance classes to embody movement systems from different dance cultures; these included a selection of world and Irish dance workshops.

Students on the MA in Irish Traditional Dance Performance had the opportunity to train to a very advanced level in Irish dancing – traditional repertoires and contemporary techniques, while also taking practical workshops in contemporary dance principles, somatic practices, world dance, and dance analysis; they also engaged in field-work techniques and theoretical critical reflection. While the MA in Ethnochoreology program provided students with the opportunity to do a final written thesis submission or a combination of a shorter written thesis with a choreographic/performative final submission, the MA in Irish Traditional Dance Performance provided students with the opportunity to showcase their performative, technical and choreographic skills at a final performance; they also choose additionally between a solo choreography, a written essay, or a field research project (s. Foley 2012b; Foley 2021a).

Regarding choreographic work, students on the MA in Irish Traditional Dance Performance program created original, solo theatrical works, and engaged and performed in ensemble works choreographed for them by invited and experienced dance tutors; these included Colin Dunne, Máire Clerkin, Katarina Mojzisova, Olive Beecher and Breandán de Gallaí. Students choreographed their new solo works based on their ability and their thematic choices, which included themes addressing personal, social, cultural and/or political issues. Theatrical props, lighting and costuming appropriate to the theme of their theatrical solo were used. For example, a Japanese student took a theme from a Japanese Noh drama; a Dutch student took the bicycle as iconic of her home city, Amsterdam; an Irish student took the skipping rope as iconic of games she played in her youth; and an American student took the theme of synesthesia, as she had direct experience of it.

Full choreographed steps (generally 8-bar structures), as is characteristic of Irish solo step dancing, were not always present in these theatrical solos. Dancers sometimes deconstructed steps, played with rhythm, timing, postures, and foot positioning. Texts were spoken, video technology was used, and Irish traditional dance music was often replaced by different music, or indeed no music. Without Irish traditional dance music, which generally provides the music structure for Irish step dancers, dancers were able to explore Irish dance in ways that were new for them. Also, since students came with differing levels of competencies and from different parts of the world, music, and soundscapes along with the themes selected, were richly diverse. The theatrical solos thus provided students with opportunities to (1) develop and express themselves as Irish dancers in different ways; (2) expand their dance vocabulary and different creative and choreographic possibilities; and (3) build their skills and confidence to move outside the parameters of competition culture and to creatively explore within the form. Together with this, students were encouraged to find their own individual voice, while respecting, acknowledging, and referencing the rich traditions of Irish step dancing. Indeed, in an earlier publication, I wrote:

“The university arena provides a context where ...Irish dance boundaries may be maintained, redefined, shaped and challenged while honoring and respecting the tradition from which it has come” (Foley 2007, 68).

The ensemble choreographers worked with the students/dancers knowing that they were Irish dancers and introduced them to working differently as an ensemble. As discussed above, Irish dancers are trained in and have experience in working in team formations (for example *céilí* dances, figure dances, and dance dramas), therefore within the parameters of Irish dancing, trained dancers generally excel at rhythmic, gestural, and spatial synchronicity. Within the MA program, students also learned to move individually and theatrically within a contemporary ensemble framework, and with different objectives. For example, Katarina Mojzisoava, a performance artist from Belgium living in Limerick at the time, choreographed the work *Danny Boy*, which took a comedic angle, again developing the dancers’ techniques and modes of expression.



Figure 1: *Danny Boy* (2007). Choreographer: Katarina Mojzisoava. Performers: Michael Donnellan, Nicole McKeever, Andrej Mikulka (Students on MA Irish Traditional Dance Performance). Photo: Maurice Gunning.

Although both the MA in Ethnochoreology and the MA in Irish Traditional Dance Performance programs had their specializations, there was engagement between the two programs. For example, students on the MA Ethnochoreology program had the opportunity to choose to choreograph a new dance work as part of their final submission (see above), and frequently, students on the MA in Irish Traditional Dance Performance

trained in, and performed these works as part of their assessment for their final MA performances. For example, Breandán de Gallaí, an Irish dancer/choreographer/ and ex-lead *Riverdancer*; choreographed *Firebird* (music by Igor Stravinsky) as part of his final submission for his MA in Ethnochoreology degree (de Gallaí 2009). Three alumni of the MA Irish Traditional Dance Performance program together with then two current students, learned and performed it, along with de Gallaí. The image below was the first performance of *Firebird* and was part of the Final Performance assessment for the MA Irish Traditional Dance Performance students.



Figure 2: *Firebird*. Choreographer: Breandán de Gallaí. Performers: Satomi Mitera, Anna Shalabadova, Renska Burgout, Mairéad O'Connor, Andriy Mikulka (Students MA Irish Traditional Dance Performance), and Breandán de Gallaí. Performed at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick. Photograph: Maurice Gunning.

Firebird was a new Irish dance work. de Gallaí selected one movement from Stravinsky's *Firebird Suite*: the third movement – “Infernal Dance of King Kashchei”. This was four minutes and forty-two seconds of music. Aiming to choreograph a slightly longer piece, de Gallaí selected a piece of music by Jozef Csibi, called *Fairies*. According to de Gallaí, *Fairies* had many of the characteristics of Stravinsky's *Firebird Suite*, such as motif repetition, similar instrumentation, harsh atonal passage and programmatic tone, mood, and style. Using percussive-sounding pedestrian movements, the choreography of the *Firebird* movement was linked to *Fairies* – although the full seven-minute choreographic work for the final performance of the MA Irish Dance Performance students was simply called *Firebird*.

In the words of de Gallaí:

“The intention of *Firebird* for me is to persuade an audience, content with the art form as it is, to engage in work of a different nature. The appealing percussive nature still exists, albeit doctored in how it is executed, but the nature of its presentation is challenging to the seasoned Irish dance member.... One of the intentions of *Firebird* was to avoid a conventional presentation and create a contemporary context” (de Gallaí 2009, 23-24).

Regarding the *Firebird* choreography, de Gallaí stated:

“As an Irish dancer, I am obsessed with syncopation and the “Infernal dance’ was an excellent opportunity for me as a choreographer and performer to experiment with polyrhythmic music to create an Irish ensemble percussive dance. ... Postures and gestures which would be unusual to the Irish dance form could be experimented with and introduced into the choreography as a result of this musical choice... The musical choices ... are certainly unusual for an Irish dance choreography but were not chosen with the intention of being clever or controversial in mind. Mostly they were ... music pieces that appealed to me. Also, I felt that they would lend themselves well to a contemporary piece of Irish dance choreography. I did not

use traditional Irish dance music because it does not provoke the movements or gestures of the new vocabulary I had in mind. When I hear regular Irish music, my body or *habitus* responds in the normal everyday step dance aesthetic, whereas the mood and tone of the musical choices above affect my *habitus* differently, generating a different kind of Irish dance aesthetic” (de Gallaí 2009, 14-16).

He continues:

“Crucial to my work ... is to work the corps as a “swarm” or sort of Grecian chorus. The intended spacial patterns is that of a drifting motion, the individuals of the ensemble always having the same special relationship relative to each other as they move about the space. The “swarm” operates as a collective” (de Gallaí 2009, 18).

In response to the question, I often posed to my students on the MA in Irish Dance Performance, and discussed in an earlier article: “When is Irish dance no longer Irish dance?”, de Gallaí had the following to say in relation to *Firebird*:

“*Firebird* to me was nothing other than an Irish dance choreography, and it is certainly my opinion that only Irish dancers could perform it. Therefore, although it has pushed the boundaries, it is still Irish dance” (de Gallaí 2009, 43).

De Gallaí continued to do a PhD in Arts Practice Research, under my supervision, for which he choreographed two further choreographies: *Noctú* and *The Rite of Spring*. For the training and performance of these two doctoral works, he created his own dance company, Ériu Dance Company. The dancers of the Ériu Dance Company had been trained in competitive Irish dancing and a number of them had completed degrees in dance at the University of Limerick; they were all open-minded and willing to explore another way of doing Irish dancing in a theatricalized way within a company setting. The two dance works by de Gallaí aimed to expand Irish dancers’ dance vocabulary and create expressive possibilities within the Irish dance form (de Gallaí, 2013).⁶

After completing his doctorate, de Gallaí, continued choreographing new work including *Linger*, a male duet, performed by de Gallaí and Nick O’Connell, which explored themes relating to identity, sexuality, and the aging body. *Linger* also sought to examine the empowerment of human beings through manipulation of tensions that might arise from these thematic areas. De Gallaí was awarded funding from the Arts Council of Ireland for this work.

Regarding Éiru the company, de Gallaí stated:

“With Éiru, I wanted to create shows that had a narrative, or indeed no narrative at all – to be abstract and thought provoking. I wanted to work with all types of music and collaborate with a host of artists of different disciplines. My aim was to promote Irish dance as a living, ever evolving tradition, to explore the traditional aesthetic, and to exploit the untapped poetic and dramatic possibilities of the genre, and to create inspiring new work. An important motivation

⁶ See a sample of de Gallaí’s *Noctú*; see a sample of de Gallaí’s *Rite of Spring*. Also, see *Breandán de Gallaí’s TEDx Talk* at Dublin City University in 2013 on “Neither Here nor There: Exploring the Transformative through Choreography”.

was to move away from the review style structure, which many of the mainstream stage shows follow” (Breandán de Gallaí, *Ériu at Stutháin, Earagail Arts Festival 2020*).⁷

De Gallaí continued choreographing new works for *Éiru* including *Aon* and *The Village*. *Éiru* received awards including the Drama Desk Awards (New York) and The Total Theatre and Place Award (Edinburgh Fringe, Scotland). With these new works, de Gallaí succeeded in expanding understandings of Irish dance practices with the *Éiru* Dance Company. Today he is a Lecturer in Dance at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick.

Choreographing Irish Traditional Dance: Free-Lance Choreographers and Performers

Together with Breandán de Gallaí, other choreographers working within the Irish dance form and within a free-lance capacity include Colin Dunne (s. Foley 2010). Dunne was also a lead dancer with *Riverdance*, taking over from Michael Flatley, and after successfully completing an MA in Dance Performance at the University of Limerick, he choreographed new solo dance works to construct

“...a way of moving as a dancer that would allow him to express something through his body about himself, about the individual Colin Dunne. Within the competitive context and also within the stage shows, Colin stated that much of the dance material was created onto his body, was inscribed, and this left him with the creative urge to choreograph work from the inside-out, as opposed to from the outside-in” (Foley 2010, 60-61).

With funding from institutions such as the Arts Council of Ireland and Culture Ireland, Dunne choreographed works including *Out of Time* (2008) and *Concert* (2011). *Out of Time*, directed by Sinéad Rushe, was a one-man choreographic exploration of time, utilizing archival film footage, white cubed boxes for film projection, technical lighting, and text. In *Out of Time* Dunne moves from dancing with his Irish “hard” dance shoes to dancing barefoot, but always engaging with Irish dance as a dance form – its precision in footwork and rhythmic timing, but often seeing Dunne play or improvise with rhythmic motivic patterns (movement and sound) by changes of tempo, repetition, and the use of loose upper body movements. Using archival video footage, Dunne positions himself within the tradition of Irish dancing, while simultaneously questioning and pushing its boundaries. In *Out of Time*⁸, Dunne celebrates the Irish dance tradition as an artist and interrogates the tradition with spoken text, sung text, and lilting; movement-wise, he plays with Irish dance motifs, pedestrian movement, running, and stillness. In *Out of Time*, he asks: “Hornpipe: What the hell is a Hornpipe?” As one of the three primary solo Irish dance types (Reels, Jigs, and Hornpipes), this question, which Dunne simultaneously verbally poses while performing the basic motif of the Hornpipe, brings the audience back to basics and to a question, which they have possibly never asked. Dunne also reflects on this question as he narrates and performs his story and his relationship to the Irish dance tradition. He also explores the aesthetics of tradition, particularly

⁷ See other [Excerpts of de Gallaí's Work](#).

⁸ See a sample of Dunne's [Out of Time](#).

in regard to the use of space. For example, taking a four-foot by four-foot piece of wood, he places it in the middle of the performance space and confines his dancing to this space; this was traditionally the amount of space used by traditional dancers, before the revival of Irish dancing by the Gaelic League at the end of the nineteenth century (see above; also s. Foley 2012; Foley 2013). This confined spatial aesthetic is a nod to an older generation of traditional dancers; dancers on whose shoulders Dunne stands and dances, expressing his place within the tradition of Irish dancing.

Dunne toured internationally with *Out of Time* and was nominated for a 2010 Olivier Award for outstanding achievement in dance. His next major work was *Concert* in 2017, which he choreographed in collaboration with Sinéad Rushe and sound designer/composer Mel Mercier, and with film design by Jeffrey Weeter. Influenced by the music of Irish traditional fiddle player, Tommie Potts (1912-1988), Dunne set out in *Concert* to choreograph a new solo dance work. Tommie Potts, a virtuoso and controversial Irish traditional fiddle player, rarely played in public, but he succeeded in commercially releasing one album *The Liffey Banks* in 1972, before his death. This iconic album of Potts is full of reels, jigs, hornpipes, and slip jigs and displays not only playfulness, delicacy, and melancholy, but it is full of idiosyncrasies with changing tempos, pauses, and abrupt changing tempos. Unlike other traditional Irish musicians, Potts expresses his interpretation of these music tunes in what is regarded by traditional Irish musicians as unusual but virtuosic. Potts' music has been regarded as being undanceable.

Dunne, however, selects Potts' *The Liffey Banks*, for his new solo dance work to explore and understand Potts' music. The set consists of planks of wood to enable the hearing of Dunne's percussive dancing, an upright piano, a record player with a vinyl copy of Potts' *The Liffey Bank*, a cassette player, a chair, and a pair of black, Irish dancing hard-shoes; the latter belonging to Dunne, which he put on and off throughout the show. Following the playfulness of Potts' music, Dunne interacts and plays with Potts' music, often in an improvisatory percussive, rhythmical manner, other times in a listening stillness, but always, in a manner that displays his mastery of Irish dancing.

The cassette player on stage represents a recorded archival interview with Potts, from which a small segment is played, and Dunne movingly interacts in conversation with Potts. Later Dunne approaches the upright piano on stage; he sits and plays the traditional solo set dance *The Blackbird* in a steady, structured, and rhythmically regular manner; this set dance and the tempo which Dunne is playing, is familiar to Irish competitive step dancers. Later, a recording of Potts' interpretation of the traditional solo set dance *The Blackbird*, is played and as has been stated earlier – it is irregular and for Irish step dancers, it is “undanceable”, that is, what they would generally dance to *The Blackbird* music, cannot be danced to Potts' version of *The Blackbird*. In *Concert*, Dunne does not dance to Potts' *Blackbird*.

Concert enabled Dunne to explore the virtuosic and idiosyncratic music style of Tommie Pott artistically and choreographically and in doing so he enabled audiences to hear Potts' music in a new way, and maybe for the very first time. And, as Potts was pushing the boundaries within Irish traditional music, Dunne was doing likewise within Irish traditional dance. As Foley states:

“In relation to his choreographic work and his attempts at negotiating the boundaries of Irish step-dance performance practice, Colin Dunne states, “the process in those pieces has changed hugely for myself – in terms of how I think about use of space or use of music – use of my body – use of rhythm...” (Colin Dunne in Foley 2010, 61).

Dunne has continued his artistic practice with other choreographic works including *Edges of Light* (2016), *Whitby* (2017) with Joan Sheehy, and *Session* (2019) with Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui.

Choreographing Irish Traditional Dance: Irish Dance Companies and Popular Culture

Following the success of *Riverdance* and the professionalization of Irish dance, a number of Irish dancers established professional dance companies. Above, I discussed Breandán de Gallaí and his establishment of the Éiru Dance Company, here I will look at *Prodijig*, another Irish dance company.

Prodijig was established by another Irish dancer and ex-Riverdancer, Alan Kenefick. It was while touring with *Riverdance* that Kenefick began exploring his idea of where Irish dance could develop further. During downtime in between *Riverdance* shows, he worked with other *Riverdancers* on his vision for Irish dance. Eventually, seven of these *Riverdancers* – four men, including Kenefick as lead dancer, and three women, formed the new company – *Prodijig*. In 2012, the third televised season of the popular British, reality television dance program *Got to Dance* was broadcast. The program was a dance competition open to all ages, dance styles, solo or group, and consisted of auditions, eliminations, and a live final round. Alan Kenefick entered *Prodijig* in the competition; they won the 2012 competition, which provided the company with huge exposure for their style of Irish dancing and catapulted them into social media around the world.⁹

Influences on Kenefick’s style of dancing in *Prodijig* included his years of training in competitive Irish dancing, participation in *Riverdance*, and his years of roller-skating while in his teens. Indeed, amidst the fast-paced rhythmical and synchronic percussive hard-shoe Irish dancing, skating slides, flows and spins can be observed within the *Prodijig* style. The context of the *Got to Dance* competition, a popular television program, dictated the temporal and spacial demands of the choreography. A sense of spectacle, of excitement, was demanded for the popular television audience. Dressed identically in shiny dark blue uniforms, the choreography and its performance illustrated the disciplined bodies of Irish dancers in a robotic, hard-hitting, and highly synchronized manner.

After their success in *Got to Dance*, *Prodijig* continued to choreograph new dance work for the popular stage and popular culture, including *ProdiJIG: the Revolution* in 2016.¹⁰ With the company *Prodijig*, Kenefick aspired to bring about change in Irish dancing: change in how Irish dance is performed and perceived; and a change for Irish competitive dancers, where dancers in the company could engage in new dance work aimed to suit popular tastes and culture. According to Kenefick,

9 See [Prodijig Got to Dance Finals 2012](#).

10 See a sample of the choreography for [ProdiJIG: the Revolution](#).

“It is very hard to figure out what exactly is the next step for Irish dancing, because *Riverdance* and *Lord of the Dance* were such huge moments in our culture, it’s hard to get past that, to reshape the imagination ... I’m obsessed with getting better. I’ve always dreamt of being the Michael Jackson of Irish dancing but I’m getting into other artists like Pina Bausch, Breandán de Gallaí, and Colin Dunne; I’m learning to be an artist... I’d love to dance at the Grammys — there has been hip-hop or contemporary dance in pop videos but never Irish dancers. I would love to go to Broadway and the West End, and I would love to do the Super Bowl. I’m hoping it will happen...” (Kenefick in interview with Marjorie Brennan in *The Irish Examiner*, Saturday 10 June, 2017).

Conclusion

Today, Irish dance is dynamic and vibrant on all levels, amateur and professional. In this paper, I examined how choreographers within the field of Irish dance situate themselves and their dance work within diverse contexts including, the competitive context, the commercial stage-show context, the university context, and the free-lance artist’s context.

Within the competitive context, Irish dance teachers choreograph for the dance students in their schools of Irish dancing, and in this paper, I focused on team choreographies for the Figure and Dance Drama competitions of *An Coimisiún*. These competitions have specific guidelines and teachers as choreographers are confined to these guidelines; however, there is room for creativity with thematic, music, and movement choices; in the Dance Drama competition, additional creative choices are made concerning the use of costumes, props, and lighting. Although there is no official training for Irish dance teachers on the act of choreography within *An Coimisiún*, these teachers use their Irish dance training and experience, and their skills in telling a story through movement, to meet the requirements of these competitions.

Within the university context, undergraduate and postgraduate programs in Irish dancing exist at the University of Limerick in Ireland, which provide opportunities for students to develop their dance training, skills, and knowledge further. By engaging with traditional Irish dancers and professional dancers and choreographers from Ireland and elsewhere, dancers work and perform both traditional dance and the creation of new dance works, both solo and ensemble; students also undertake independent research projects to develop their critical awareness and academic skills. All the above provide students with the skills to find their individual voice in choreographing and performing new dance works, while honoring and respecting the tradition from which they have come.

The commercial stage-show contexts, initiated by *Riverdance* in the 1990s, continue to be an important source of employment for Irish dancers and a site for choreographic work for the popular stage. From their experiences in *Riverdance*, a number of dancers choose to become freelance artists, some going solo while others established companies of Irish dancers. These free-lance artists and new dance companies emerged in the 2000s. This paper focused on some of these, including Breandán de Gallaí, Colin Dunne, and Alan Kenefick, all *ex-Riverdancers* and all, in their different ways, aspiring to express themselves and to develop Irish dance by choreographing and performing new dance works. These artists’ works have been received successfully both in Ireland and abroad and as these, and other artists, continue to creatively choreograph and perform new dance works for their bodies and that of other Irish dancers’ bodies, understandings of Irish dancing will be richly expanded.

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Позиционирање кореографа у ирском традиционалном плесу

Сажетак: Рад је истраживао начине на који данашњи кореографи из области ирског традиционалног плеса ситуирају свој рад унутар и око различитих система културне праксе. Чинећи то, они се прилагођавају или изазивају границе дискурса повезаних са одговарајућим естетским системима ових пракси. У раду сам се осврнула на кореографе који раде у оквиру такмичења, универзитетских програма, комерцијалних сценских представа и уметничког рада за позориште.

У оквиру такмичарске арене, испитала сам како наставници кореографишу тимски плес за ученике у школама ирског плеса; ови плесови укључују фигуралне игре и плесне драме. Кореографи се у овом контексту налазе у такмичарској арени, и придржавају се смерница које им је прописала организација *An Coimisiún*. Прегледала сам ове смернице и фокусирали се на један фигурални плес (*The Changing*), и једну плесну драму (*The Girona*) и илустровала сам како су кореографи успели да буду креативни унутар ових смерница.

Након успеха Риверденса (*Riverdance*), 1990-их, ирски плесачи из различитих делова света, укључујући велики број бивших ‘риверденсера’, одлучили су да даље развијају своје вештине у вођењу универзитетских програма, на пример, на Универзитету у Лимерику. Рад се бавио овим програмима и начином на који су ирски плесачи у њима добили подршку и платформу за стварање нових кореографија. Тврдила сам да се унутар универзитетског контекста „границе ирског плеса могу одржавати, редефинисати, обликовати и оспорити уз поштовање традиције из које потиче“. Студенти мастер студија извођења ирског традиционалног плеса, кореографисали су соло плесне форме као начине изражавања и као начин проналажења сопствених индивидуалних гласова кроз медиј ирског плеса. Поред тога, студент Breandán de Gallaí, створио је пригиналне кореографије као магистарски рад из етнокореологије – Firebird, и још два плесна рада за његов докторат из области истраживања уметничке праксе на Универзитету у Лимерику: *Noctú* and *Rite of Spring*. Ова дела су била кључна за помоћ де Галају (de Gallai) да изрази своју визију ирског плеса. Рад је такође испитао рад слободних кореографа, укључујући Колина Дана (Colin Dunne) и његова нова соло дела *Out of Time* и *Concert*, као и оснивање ирских плесних компанија као што су Éiru и *Prodjig*.

Да закључим, тврдила сам да у овим различитим контекстима, кореографи из области ирског плеса настављају да стварају, истражују и постављају важна питања своје праксе. На тај начин помажу у развоју и ширењу разумевања ирског плеса.

Кључне речи: ирски традиционални степ плес, Ирска, политичке идеологије, кореографија, кореографи

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Display, Preserve, Perpetuate. Logics of Performance in some Yemenite Ethnic dance troupes in Israel

Abstract: Created in the 1970s, the so-called “Ethnic dance troupes” (*lehakot etniot*) exhibit the rich cultural heritage of some of the many groups composing the Israeli society: Jews from Yemen, Morocco, Kurdistan, Libya, Iraq, Ethiopia, or India, but also Arabs, Druzes or Circassians. By displaying elements of their culture, these troupes have participated in an important political claim of the 1970s in Israel: to be recognized and treated as equal to other parts of the population of this multicultural State.

My anthropological work, conducted in Israel for the last twenty years, has focused on the dance repertoires of Jews coming from Yemen (or whose parents/grandparents came from there). This article intends to show how the repertoires they brought from Yemen have been used to construct the various performances of some Yemenite Ethnic dance troupes within this political framework of cultural recognition, and later, to preserve and perpetuate this heritage. More recently, turning their gaze towards the future of the dance troupes and their perpetuation, dancers and managers are proceeding to a radical transformation of what is performed on stage. The politics and perception of change will be explored, as well as performance logics that I have named “pedagogical” and “aesthetics”.

Keywords: Change, Dance, Performance, Recognition, Yemenite Jews

This article is dedicated to Selena Rakočević, a sharp and wonderful ethnochoreologist, whose premature death has deeply affected me and the international community of ethnochoreologists and anthropologists of dance.

Introduction

What I will present today stems from research I started more than 20 years ago.¹ I have never really stopped it, although since then I have been and still am exploring various other anthropological domains. When I started this research, the aim was to use dance as an entry point to understand how a Nation-State builds itself through varied processes, including the creation of a culture. To do so, I looked at various types of dance coexisting in Israel today (1998-2019) and tried to understand where it comes from, how it has been created, how it might have changed over the years, who had participated in the transformations, and how and why. For various reasons that I have detailed elsewhere (Gibert 2004; Gibert 2011), I decided to focus on the repertoires of Jews coming from Yemen to Israel, arriving from different regions, and at different moments.²

In Israel, there are many dance forms that might be called “Jewish Yemenite dance” for many reasons that will be unveiled in the course of this article. One of them is performed by what are called in Hebrew “*lehakot etniot teymaniot*”, which can be translated as *Yemenite Ethnic (dance) troupe*.³ These are the ones on which this article will be focusing.

First, this article will offer an overall presentation of these troupes: Who are the various actors involved? In which ways? And what is the social, historical, and political context of their creation and existence? Keeping this in mind, we will then go deeper into the logics of performance and try to unfold them in order to understand what are the processes which govern the creation of staged performances in these troupes, and why.

The Yemenite Ethnic dance troupes

What are these troupes?⁴

Most of them were founded in the 1960s and 1970s within a process of cultural and political recognition described below. Today only a few troupes remain active.⁵ Depending on the troupe, they give between one and ten shows per year. Such shows are mainly taking place in Israel, sometimes for private events (weddings, etc.). However, some troupes are also participating in international festivals abroad. One troupe is particularly

1 I would like to thank the various colleagues and guests of TradicjaNova 3, colleagues and students of the Seminar “La danse comme objet anthropologique” (Paris, France), colleagues of the CRACE Seminar Series (U. of Roehampton, UK) and students of the Master Choreomundus who heard earlier versions of this text and helped me, with their questions and remarks, to sharpen my thoughts. Nonetheless, I take responsibility for any flaw in this text. I am also very much in debt to Jean-Baptiste Cabaud for the professional design of the diagrams.

2 The biggest wave of migration from Yemen took place between 1949 and 1951, years during which approximately 50.000 Jews arrived in Israel. Before that, approximately 3.000 arrived in the last decades of the 19th century and 7.000 between 1919 and 1928 (s. Parfitt 1996). Later on, very small groups arrived sporadically up until the late 2010s. According to the official statistics (Central Bureau of Statistics-CBS) of 2022, 18.4 thousand Israelis were born in Yemen and 106.8 were born in Israel from a father born in Yemen, leaving aside those born from a Yemenite mother! These figures are to be read within a general Jewish population of 6.928.3 thousand. See tables 2.8 and 2.1 on the Central Bureau of Statistics website:

<https://www.cbs.gov.il/en/publications/Pages/2022/Population-Statistical-Abstract-of-Israel-2022-No.73.aspx>

3 Technically, “*lehaka*” (pl. *lehakot*) means “troupe” and can also apply to a music group for instance. But in the context of this article, I will systematically translate it as “dance troupe”. I have adopted Latin transliteration of Hebrew in order to facilitate the reading.

4 See also Gibert 2007 and Ingber Brin 2011.

5 To my knowledge, only four have remained active to some extent until today. They comprise between 10 and 25 dancers. The troupes are mostly referred to by the name of the place where they live in Israel and/or the area they are coming from in Yemen. The most active ones today are the troupes from Moshav Amka (coming, in Yemen, from the region of Taiz – South West of the country), Moshav Bareket (and in Yemen, from the region of Haban, South East), Kiriath Ekron (and in Yemen, from the region of Heydan, North), and “Sei Yona”, a troupe based in Shaar Efraim (Israel) and presents repertoires coming from the South West region of Yemen. The troupe of Hadera (to my knowledge not active anymore) was one of the rare troupes to officially declare presenting repertoires from various regions in Yemen. Among the dormant (or dismantled?) troupes, the Troupe of Midrach Oz, was studied carefully by S. Staub during the 1970s-80s (Staub 1986).

active: the one created in Moshav Amka in 1972. It is the troupe with which I have been working particularly closely for many years.

Who composes these troupes?

Dancers are mostly only Jews coming – or those whose parents/grandparents came – from Yemen. Each troupe focuses on the dance repertoires of only one specific area in Yemen (Center and Southwest: south of Sanaa, around the city of Taïz; North: around the city of Heydan; Southeast: around the city of Haban).⁶ Dancers are not paid; they perform as a hobby. Each troupe has a manager. He or she often has a profile similar to the dancers', i.e. of a Yemenite background. Less often it is a non-Yemenite. If so, it is mostly someone invested in Israeli Folk Dance – this dance form, created in the 1940s, will be presented below. Some troupes deciding together what to dance and how to do so, while others have their own choreographer (for instance, Saadia Amishaï in Hadera). Some troupes are also working punctually with external choreographers (Lea Avraham, Shmulik Gov-Ari, Reena Sharet, and so on). In that case, most of the invited choreographers are connected to some kind of Yemenite ancestry, and/or knowledgeable on dance repertoires coming from Yemen. Many of them are also trained in other types of dances (Israeli Folk dance; Modern or contemporary dance; Ballet; Theatrical dance; etc.).

What is shown?

The general idea is to present dances practiced by Jews in Yemen. As most of the Jews had left this country by the beginning of the 1950s,⁷ and since for political reasons, Jews, or at least Israeli citizens, are not allowed to visit Yemen, there are no possibilities to draw on what is going on there currently in terms of dance. For these reasons, the fundamental elements called upon for the creation of staged dances were, and still are, based only on the dancers' memory of what was done in Yemen, and/or on what they saw in their neighborhood or village when they were children, soon after immigrating to Israel. Yet such dances have been progressively dropped after a few decades of living in Israel, the number of events during which they were practiced having drastically reduced for a few decades, before coming back in the 1960s-70s, often with transformed dances (Staub 1986). Some of the troupes also used elements from the collects conducted in Palestine in the early 1940s by the creators of Israeli Folk Dance (see below), but this influence is minimal. A direct or indirect influence can also come from the Dance Theater Inbal,⁸ in particular in performances created with the help of Lea Avraham or Malka Hagbi, themselves dancers of Inbal.⁹ Therefore, in the case of this article, my reference point is the various repertoires which were brought from Yemen to Israel in the late

6 A Moshav is a semi-collective village. Amka is situated in the north of Israel, near the city of Naharya. It was exclusively inhabited by Yemenite Jews when it was built in 1949, and it has mostly remained so to date.

7 A new wave of immigration constituted by most of the remaining Jews from Yemen has taken place in the early 1990s, but their arrival has not really impacted the repertoire of the troupes.

8 The company was founded in 1949 by the Israeli-Yemenite choreographer Sara-Levi Tanai who was working with Jewish Yemenite dancers as well as with repertoires that she had collected around Palestine-Israel. However, strongly influenced by the choreographer Jerome Robbins and his musicals, she has introduced modern dance and theatrical dance in the shows she wrote for this Company. See for instance her piece called "Yemenite Wedding" created in 1962: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWnldrG-Yaw>

9 See for instance this performance of the Ethnic Dance Troupe 'Sei Yona', staging an entire story mixing dance and theater about the coming wedding of a man already married. One can successively see stylized dances and choreographed dialogues: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWnldrG-Yaw>

1940s-beginning of the 1950s or brought earlier but recorded at that period.¹⁰ However, it must be clear that they are only *one reality at one point in time* and were undoubtedly transformed many times before that specific moment!

Tradition or Change?

Over the several months and years that I spent with dancers, managers, and choreographers of these troupes, and throughout interviews and archives, many of the actors' discourses are bringing to the fore the words "tradition" and "change" while describing their dances and their work to present them in shows.

Let's first listen to some of them and see how "tradition" and "change" are therefore used as categories of practice:¹¹

"We must (...) change a bit: make some variations, realize some choreography. You must change: everyone comes together, and then they scatter. The stage is fuller; the audience has more to look at. Yemenites did not have choreographies... And those are things that have influenced many troupes. It is not possible for any choreographer – including me in my own work with the troupe – to remain static.

(...) Tradition is here, it is in the songs, and in the dance. But the choreography must change because it is not...In Yemen there was no choreography... They were dancing freely, spontaneously. Here, in Israel, you must show to the audience what is going on. Therefore, you must occupy the entire stage, change the forms, the structures so that it becomes interesting, and not boring. Those are the elementary rules".¹² (Saadia, Former manager and choreographer, Troupe of Hadera, May 2000)

"Choreographers have simply tried to work with us on the steps, nobody gave us the dance, the authentic, the traditional, because nobody knows it. So, for instance they would tell us 'Why do you do like that? Maybe you should put your hand like this'. Or one choreographer would tell us «Smile» and the other one would say 'Don't smile'". (Zion, Manager, Troupe of Amka. January 1998)

However, while constructing "tradition" and "change" as a categories of analysis (Brubaker 2005), researchers have shown that they are very complex notions. Emphasizing the fact that "the more it is the same, the more it changes"¹³ (Pouillon 1977), Jean Pouillon suggests that "tradition is a 'back projection', the reading of the past through the filter of present necessities, a quest in the past for a legitimization of the present" (Pouillon 1975, 159-160). Therefore, before coming back to the shows, it is important to understand what the politics of change at stake are here. What were the "present necessities" as Pouillon would say, when these *Ethnic Dance Troupes* emerged, and what was leading this "quest in the past for legitimization"?

¹⁰ Very few video documents exist, or remain, from that period. A very short clip, extracted from a collect made by Gurit Kadman with Yemenite men in 1951, has been used in a film. Although this clip can be found in various places on the web, I have not been able to discover the exact reference to that film.

¹¹ I use the distinction between "category of practice" and "category of analysis" made by R. Brubaker in his analysis of diaspora (Brubaker 2005).

¹² All the interviews quoted in this article have been conducted either in English (1998-1999) or in Hebrew (2000 onwards). Hebrew quotes have been translated by me.

¹³ Unless specified, all translations from French or Hebrew are mine.

This question calls for a larger contextualization, which will permit us to situate this emergence within a historical and political perspective of the uses of dance and music in the creation and development of Israel as a Nation-State.

The politics of change

To be brief – but with the risk of being a bit too sketchy¹⁴ – I will focus on the two main periods for dance’s use and transformation: (a) the creation of a Nation-State and its first decades of existence (1930s-1950s) and (b) the turning point (1960s-1970s) and its aftermath.

(a) 1930s-1950s: Creating a Nation-State and Dancing the Nation

Israel declared its independence in May 1948. Yet the idea of creating a Jewish cultural core, and later a Jewish State, had already started to develop several decades earlier in the 19th century when Jews realized that it remained impossible for them to be treated as “normal citizens” in most of the countries due to their Jewishness (even as non-religious citizens) and would continuously be persecuted. Therefore, the necessity of creating a safe space emerged and slowly became a will to construct a Nation-State. Based on the 19th century ideological framework of a Nation (in particular, the equation of one people, one territory, one language and one culture), the creation of the State of Israel calls upon a process of ‘culture building’. Its aim to construct a new common and single Israeli culture which would unify all its (Jewish) inhabitants, in body and soul. Such (new) culture is also seen as a social and corporal tool to integrate as fast as possible the numerous immigrants who have arrived immediately after the independence in 1948: the exact expressions usually used are “fusion of the exiled” (*mizug ha galuyot*) and “absorption of the immigration” (*klitat ha alya*)¹⁵.

This process of building a national culture is underlined by the strong ideological framework of Zionism¹⁶, which follows three main principles:

- To forget everything from the life in Diaspora and Exile which took place during the last 2000 years – i.e. the long period during which no independent Jewish state was subsisting – and thus to discard the cultural specificities of each diasporic place.
- To reconstruct, or be strongly inspired by, the culture possessed by the Hebrews who lived in Palestine during the so-called “Biblical times”, considering the Bible as a source of historical and cultural reference rather than as a religious text.
- To depict the construction of a new modern country at the beginning of the 20th century, hence acknowledging what one of the State’s founders, Ben Gurion, considered as “a leap” forward (quoted by Gorny 1995). This construction includes the (re)construction of the “New Hebrew”, a human being physically strong and culturally equipped of the new “Eretz Israeli” culture in the making (Zerubavel 1994; Ingber Brin 2000; Shavit, Sitton 2004; Brenner, Reuveni 2006; Presner 2007; Gibert 2014).

14 For a more detailed and complex account of Israel’s social, political and cultural situation of the creation of Israel, see for instance Segev 1985; Dieckhoff 1993; Zerubavel 1995; Sternhell 1999; Divine 2009.

15 During this period, the Jewish population doubles in three years: between 1948 (650 000 inhabitants) and 1951 (1 400 000) due to vast immigration from different parts of the world (on the demography of Israel, see for instance Anteby, Berthomière, Sheffer 2005).

16 Zionism is a wide movement, composed of multiple branches, mainly secular. Among them, cultural Zionism which aims at creating a cultural home (see for instance Ahad Ha-Am 1894), whereas the goal of political Zionism is to establish a Nation-State (See for instance Nordau 1909; Herzl 1902).

In this process, the development of dance and music is seen as an important tool for the construction of a national culture based on a single identity. To fit into this process, the creation of a new dance form, called *Rikudei Am* (literally “Dances of the People” in Hebrew, but usually translated in English by “Israeli Folk Dance”) had to follow the above Zionist framework. In response to it, the creators of this dance developed the following process:¹⁷

- Collect as many dance repertoires of inhabitants of the country (Jewish or not) as possible, and select from them separate kinetic, rhythmic, or choreographic elements.
- Erase from them any reference to their cultural, geographic, or ethnographic original context (place of origin, gender specificities, costumes, connections to music, and so on).
- Reorganise these “neutralized” elements into a new form of dance, which sets brief choreographies (a few minutes) and is then taught and disseminated throughout the entire country to enforce a similar way to dance and perform in every citizen of Israel.
- This dance form can be practiced either during leisure evening of social dance (*harkadot*) or as shows of performing groups.

As Yemenite repertoires were among the collected ones, some Yemenite dance motives have entered Israel Folk Dance, largely disconnected from their original context (see Kadman 1952, 1972, 1976; Ingber Brin 1974, 2000; Bahat-Ratzon 1982, 1987/88; Staub 1986; Gibert 2011). Indeed, new Yemenite migrants are themselves caught in this period of nation-building. Although a small amount of them arrived in the late 19th century, the main migration from Yemen took place between 1949 and 1951 thanks to an operation of “rescue” from the Jewish Agency for Israel.¹⁸ Within the general population, they occupy an ambiguous position: their cultural “input” is very valued (songs, dances and crafts are considered as beautiful), and they are symbolically seen as the “closest” to “Biblical Jews” (“Their Ballet is 2.000 Years Old” 1948).¹⁹ However, in everyday life, they are considered a cheap labor force and seen as uncivilized (a wide grey literature shows how, upon arrival, they were considered in need to be taught how to eat or to take care of their children). Hence, they are caught in what I call an “inversed diaspora”:²⁰ they are seen symbolically as “returning home”, yet treated as poor and uncivilized migrants who must adapt to their “host country” and discard their own previous culture.

(b) 1960s-1970s: the turning point and its consequences

The late 1960s are the theatre of many socio-political changes in Israel: the War of 1967 followed by a strong divergence of opinion about the occupied territories; an increased religiosity (while the first decades were characterized by a secular trend); the arrival of the right-wing in the government, and so on. This constitutes the overall social

¹⁷ On the creation of the *Israeli Folk Dance* form, see also Kadman 1969; Kadman 1972a; Berk 1972; Ingber Brin 1974; Ingber Brin 2011; Bahat-Ratzon 1977; Bahat-Ratzon 1978/79; Friedhaber 1985; Friedhaber 1986; Friedhaber 1987/88; Spiegel 2000, 2013; Kaschl 2003; Gibert 2004; Gibet 2014; Hirshberg 2007; Spiegel 2013.

¹⁸ By the end of this operation in 1951, 50.000 Yemenite Jews had arrived in Israel (within a Jewish population of 1.4 million).

¹⁹ On the perspective of the general Israeli population on Yemenite Jews, see Berreby 1953/1954; Bensimon, Errera 1977; Tobi 1999; Gibert 2004.

²⁰ To my knowledge, this expression is not used elsewhere. T. Trier speaks of “reversed diaspora” (Trier 1996) when presenting the case of Russian migration to Israel. D.R. Divine uses the title “Exiled in the Homeland” (Divine 2009) to express a similar idea.

and political backdrop of the story of dance that we are following (Peres 1971; Smooha 1978; Cohen E. 1972; Cohen E. 1983; Cohen E. 1995; Cohen M. 1987; Dieckhoff 1993, 2002; Zerubavel 1995).

In the first decades following their arrival in Israel, most of the Jews of Asian or African origin²¹ were treated as second-zone citizens, asked to adapt to the Israeli society by forgetting their cultural heritage in order to have access to a socio-economical level equal to the one of Jews of European or North American backgrounds. However, several decades later, it has become clear that albeit their compliance to fit into this new culture and ways of life, a strong socio-economic gap between the two groups remains. Slowly, they realize that these socioeconomical inequalities stem from a lack of cultural legitimacy within Israel. A strong movement of protest therefore emerges by the end of the 1960s-beginning of the 1970s, also claiming for a recognition of their diasporic cultural heritage as part of the national culture. Such claims are slowly recognized, and it is to feed this recognition process that *Ethnic dance troupes* are created.²² They develop stage performance of the dance and music repertoires which were brought by Jews immigrating from Yemen, Morocco, Bukhara, India, and so on, as well as dance and music repertoires from non-Jewish Israelis: Christian and Muslim Arabs, Druzes, Circassians. In addition, along with this creation of Dance troupes, one can observe the entrance of musical and dance diasporic repertoires into the public sphere through at least four channels:

(1) The so-called *Musiqat Mizrahit* (“Oriental music”) enters the commercial sphere, bringing to the fore a combination of “oriental” musical specificities (such as non-metric introductions, the use of micro-intervals, vocal inflexions) with Western standardized pop music²³. The Israeli-Yemenite singer Ofra Haza, who finished second at the Eurovision in 1983, is a good and widely known example of it.²⁴

(2) The blooming of *henna* celebrations (pre-wedding event) and other specific events (*Mimuna* of Moroccan Jews, *Saharaneh* of Jewish Kurds, etc.) which had been repressed previously, yet continued quietly to some extent, become more and more publicised. For Yemenite Jews at least, dance practices deriving from repertoires brought from Yemen are thus officially re-entering life cycle events and are subject to new developments.²⁵

21 Also mistakenly called “Oriental Jews” or *Sefaradim*, and hence opposed to “Ashkenazim”. See Dieckhoff 2002, Smooha 1978.

The use of the term *etni* (heb. for “ethnic”), and its corollary *eda* (heb. for “ethnic group or community”) is particularly problematic as a characteristic difference exists in its use: only Jews of African or Asian origins are qualified of “etni” and organized into such Troupes. Therefore, a difference in symbolic recognition remains to some extent. Beyond the Israeli case, on the use of “ethnic” to qualify some dance forms only, see Kealiinohomoku 1969-70; Buckland 1999.

22 On the “Israel Ethnic Dance Project” and the creation of these troupes, see Ingber Brin 1977; Ashkenazy 1978; Kadman 1982; Staub 1986; Goren 1986; Bahat and Bahat-Ratzon 1998.

23 Such music has been defined by ethnomusicologists as music which “incorporates various ethnic “colors” (for example Yemenite, Arabic, Kurdish, Greek and so on) within the standardized forms of Western popular music” (Regev and Seroussi 2004, 191). The “oriental” dimension comes from the introduction of different musical instruments, the use of micro-interval of 1/4 tones; vocal inflexions (melism); different harmonic systems, or improvised sections in free rhythm. Yemenite specificities can mainly be seen in terms of texts; rhythms; and a special organisation in suites of successive pieces. See also Shiloah 1997.

24 Her song, “Im Nin’Alu” is probably her most famous song, placing to music a poem written in the 17th century by the Yemenite Rabbi Shalom Shabazy. You can find the first version, dating from 1978, here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2xNTzIF-Sk0>. A later and remixed version was created ten years later, bringing together pop and techno rhythms with Yemenite-Jewish musical and vocal technics. An official clip (1988), is staging this mix with traditional costumes and a strong imaginary of what could have been life in desertic Yemen. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-R-Z8DYb5s>

25 See Ashkenazy 1978. For a visual example, see for instance the video recording of dances during a hinna in Moshav Yakhini in 1988: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uCI_o42AAko

(3) Some deep changes appear in the Israeli Folk Dance, as a new type of dances emerges: dances strongly and officially influenced by a specific cultural heritage are created, bringing together several kinetic, rhythmical, and musical elements coming from a specific country to create a “Yemenite dance”, “Moroccan dance”, “Kurdish dance” and so on.²⁶ Such dances are either created for the social dance form or the performance form, the later henceforth offering panoramas of what are now seen as the various components of Israeli culture.²⁷

(4) Cultural events aiming at learned or academic presentations of the dance and music “traditions” of Yemenite Jews are organized.²⁸

Such changes are therefore attesting to a failure of the national Israeli identity as a monolithic construction and the redefinition of this identity. In this process, a shift of the position towards a recognition of the ‘ethnic’/‘geographic’ origins of its various inhabitants occurs and permeates every part of the society. Positive reference is made to the cultural specificities of every community composing Israel, leading to the redefinition of a new Israeli identity multifaceted, and rich because of its heterogeneity. Hence many Israelis start using a hyphenated expression to identify themselves: Yemenite-Israeli, and so on.

Logics of performances

Armed with a better understanding of this social, cultural, and political context and aware of its specific issues, let’s enter Yemenite Ethnic Dance troupes’ shows and meet the various actors involved in their construction. How did they proceed to construct the shows? What are the logics of such performances?

According to my various interlocutors, the starting point of such a troupe or a staged dance is often a meeting (formal or informal) of older people bringing their memories together.

“In 1972, I have started to work in Amka at the community center (...). Whenever we would travel with the old people of Amka, when we would sleep on the beach for instance, they would be really happy and they would start to do a [mock] wedding, just like that, for fun! Men would make a zaffa [procession] to the groom. They would say ‘OK, tonight, let’s make a wedding!’. So I thought that we might do it as a show”. (Zion, Manager, Troupe of Moshav Amka, November 1999)

“Zion: ‘We cannot really say that someone specific is the choreographer of this or that dance.... This group works with me (...) but I cannot say that it is just me. It is the all group, together: each one says “Let’s do this or that’, and then, after a lot of discussions, I decide what we’ll

26 See for instance a compilation of Israeli-Kurdish dance taking place in various places and events in Jerusalem at the end of the 2010s. It includes various performances of the Kurdish Ethnic Dance Troupe and social dance. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a10HQocVrIA>

27 See for instance a “Yemenite dance” created for a Performing Israeli Dance Troupe (Hora Pardes Hanna) on the Ofra Haza version of Im Nahalu: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5RnUOpk6HkI>

28 Several performances and Seminars are organized in the framework of the Israel Ethnic Dance Project (see above). For a visual example, see for instance an extract of a study day on Yemenite poetry, featuring the group “Bnei Teiman” (Beth Hatefutsoth-The Nahum Goldmann Museum of the Jewish Diaspora, Tel Aviv, undated event, but posted on YouTube in 2014). This group is not exactly an Ethnic Dance Troupe as they mainly focus on music and songs, but some of the singers-musicians are sometimes standing up to dance. Their dances are barely choreographed, if not at all. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t9Pk-ShC4SRo&t=367s>

do precisely. And then, I don't say to them 'We do this two times, or three, or we do like this', I ask them, each time, and then I decide, after checking how it looks like'.

MPG: 'And in concrete terms, how did you proceed? You put some music on and told them 'Ok, do what you want'?'

Zion: 'Yes, something like that. I have several people who can show to others, teach them how to move their body. And we also learned a lot from the old people (...) we have some stars in Amka! (...) We use to see them at parties, there use to be quite a lot of parties in Amka, so we saw them and we've learned the moves'' (Zion, Manager, Troupe of Moshav Amka, November 1999).

As we can see in these extracts, once various dancers have brought together their memories, decisions must be made on what to choose and how to display it on stage. This usually provokes long discussions and negotiations between the dancers and/or between dancers and choreographers. Such discussions are bringing two types of arguments which seem opposite at first glance but are actually the two sides of the same coin.

The first argument can be summarized with this expression that I have heard many times when interviewing various members of the troupes about the creative process of staging: "*Let's keep it exactly as it was done in Yemen*". Here are a few quotes which underline this perspective:

"We didn't want, for instance, that the choreographer develops something. We really wanted what belongs to us, exactly as they did in Yemen. You see, [from the choreographer] we just wanted a bit of polishing..." (Lea, Dancer, Troupe of Shaar Efraim, September 2002).

"No, there has been no change in the origins of our work. Maybe we became a bit more 'Professional' on the way we do it, we are more confident when we are on stage, that's all. I believe that when we'll start to lose the basic elements, it will be the end of the troupe, the end of the founding idea" (Zion, Manager, Troupe of Moshav Amka. January 1998).

The second direction taken by such discussions argues that "*We need to please and interest the audience, so let's make some changes*". As the original aim of such Troupes is to display, and hence legitimize their cultural heritage, the role of the audience (and its pleasure) is often and clearly stated in many discourses, and the semantic field of the view (eyes, gaze, look, etc.) is particularly called upon.

"That's for the eyes of the audience, for him not to get bored. It is not like when I am at home. There I can do as I like... Who will look at me, who will see me? It is to please the audience's eyes, to make it interesting" (Shemesh, Dancer, Troupe of Bareket, August 2002).

"We must (...) change a bit: to make some variations, to realize some choreography. You must change: everyone comes together; and then they scatter. The stage is fuller; the audience has more to look at. (...) Because the eye becomes tired when it sees the same thing all the time" (Saadia Amishaï, Former manager and choreographer, Troupe of Hadera, May 2000).

However, even for those clearly stating their will not to change anything, it is obvious that they do need to make some little transformations to present their dances on a stage

and to an audience. Therefore, these two processes are not alternative choices, but rather the two poles of a continuum according to the *degree of perception of, and will to, change*.



Diagram 1 – Perceptions of change

Indeed, after several years working in the anthropology of dance, it has become clear to me that it is more relevant to consider change as a continuum of perception rather than as a binary opposition (change/no change). Many research has shown that no matter which kind of dance one considers, it is always the product of endless transformations, many of them being untraceable throughout the years, decades or centuries. Yet, one can also trace down, and sometimes even see, moments of crystallization and/or formalization of some elements. Those are voluntary processes of some kind, which depend on specific actors, moments, contexts, issues and so on that we need to study (Nahachewsky 2001; Nahachewsky 2006; Shay 2002; Gibert 2011; Gibert 2020).

So, let's continue to explore further this continuum of perception.

What the reader might have started to distinguish in the previous quotes, is that changes are not accepted, refused, or desired the same way depending on the dimension of dance that is touched (space, time, body, dance motives, songs and music, costumes, props, etc.). Change is therefore a multi-dimensional process.

In the case of the Yemenite Ethnic Dance Troupes (but also for many other ethnic dance troupes in Israel), it seems that the more accepted changes touched upon the relation to space and/or time.

“The choreographer brought us a lot. (...) She taught us ‘How to dance’. How this dance is the same as ours but how to enter or to leave the stage, how to manage time” (Sara, Dancer, Troupe of Moshav Bareket. August 2002).

“They kept the tradition but in a modern way; they did not make modern dances. (...) Changes occur in terms of ‘rules of the stage’. The dances remain partly improvised but you can see lines, dances with a partner, trios, fixed scenes, and so on. And everything is perfectly performed, in a very professional manner” (Shmulik Gov-Ari, Choreographer, about the Troupe of Moshav Amka with which he works regularly. January 1998).

“Yemenites did not have choreographies... And those are things that have influenced many troupes. It is not possible, for any choreographer – including me in my own work with the troupe – to remain static. (...)

The choreography must be modern: a line, some couples, a circle which becomes a line, lines crossing each other and combining into a single one, and so on. Because the eye becomes tired when it sees the same thing all the time. (...)

And if you make something very rhythmic, with a choreography which changes very often, the eye rejoices, the heart rejoices, and that is what one must do!" (Saadia Amishaï, Former manager and choreographer, Troupe of Hadera, May 2000).

This kind of change can go quite far and lead to a deep restructuring of directions and configurations of the dancers in space, as well as a reorganization of time, in particular a cut of dances' length.

On the contrary, what is almost always considered, by the dancers and choreographers alike, as impossible to be modified is closely related to body practices: gestures, body technique, personal style of movement, as well as dance motives.

"People who worked with us did not teach us how to dance but how to do it on the stage. Even if I have them all do the same thing, I also leave them do what each one feels. To dance with feelings, not with steps. So, in the pairs, we dance with our body, the way we feel it. Even if you see them going down and up all together, each one is doing it a bit different from what the other one is doing" (Zion, Manager, Troupe of Moshav Amka. November 1999).

"The main part of my work was to have them understand how important it is to keep their own way of dancing. One of my constant fights was against their artificial smile. They are very popular, and they really like to have contact with the audience, but I had to re-educate them so that they keep their natural expressions. (...) One does not smile in this culture because one does not dance for an audience but for oneself or for his family. Yemenite dance is an inner thing, something which comes from the inside. So, you don't change your expression for an audience, you don't laugh, you don't even smile to it. If you simply let yourself dance, you will adopt your own expression, which is a lot more interesting than an artificial smile" (Reena Sharet, Non-Yemenite invited choreographer working with various troupes, and organizer of many shows for Ethnic Dance Troupes. January 2000).

Yet, changes in gestures do happen, and sometimes some dancers and/or choreographers are aware of it:

"This is an addition which comes from the influence of Inbal [Dance Theater] Troupe. It is a troupe which has been created in order to transform Yemenite folklore, its songs and its [dance] elements. There has been many additions of ballet and modern movements. This is why, when you see today, among women, someone who does that [large arms' movement], it did not exist in the original dance. These are things which appeared because we needed them for the dance [show] to give the audience things that it will like" (Saadia Amishaï, Former manager and choreographer, Troupe of Hadera. May 2000).

Dance material is therefore reorganized to create performances to be shown on stage in the form of brief successive scenes of a few minutes. One can distinguish two main ways to construct such scenes:

(a) Some dance motives are made to serve a brief scene aiming to present an event which used to take place in Yemen but was not danced, or only partly. I call these scenes a *narrative scene*. For instance, the troupe of Moshav Amka have created the “dance of the jugs” (heb. *Rikud kadim*) depicting women fetching water at the local well²⁹ and the “Learning of the Torah” dance (heb. *Limud Torah*), a scene during which dancers are playing young kids being taught the Torah collectively and being distracted. However, according to their manager, they do not really perform them anymore, unless they are asked to present “*a very ethnic show*” (Zion, informal discussion, 2015).

(b) A single dance piece (potentially composed of various kinetic motives) is done on its own, without “a story to tell” (my own words). In that case, I call it a *non-narrative scene*.³⁰

In addition, a combination of (a) and (b) is also often used, in which one or several *non-narrative scenes* are integrated into a larger scene presenting an event which used to take place in Yemen. This is very often a wedding.³¹ In that case, the overall *narrative scene* contains a succession of *narrative* and *non-narrative scenes*.³²

These various ways of treating the dance material when constructing a scene for the stage are guided by two main logics. These logics can be seen as the two poles of another continuum, based on what they want to insist on when displaying dances to an audience. At one end of this continuum, one can find a strong use of *narrative scenes*. This corresponds to an attempt to present and explain life as it was in Yemen. Or rather, as one thinks it was or wants to show it. I have therefore chosen to call it a *Pedagogical logic*. On the other end, one finds a strong use of *non-narrative scenes*, with no explicit story, but rather an accentuation of body forms and aesthetic moves in space. I have therefore chosen to call it *Aesthetics logic*.



Diagram 2 – Logics of scenes' creation

29 This dance (filmed in the 1990s) can be seen on the web at this address: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wly70mX9fYM>

30 However, such a scene can be accompanied by a verbal explanation of someone on the stage, hence adding some narration to a non-narrative dance! See for instance women dance “dance of the candles” (heb. *Rikud haNeyrot*), taken from the feminine hinna celebration, here performed by the Ethnic Dance Troupe of Shaar Efraim (presenting the dance repertoire of Jews coming from North Yemen). See here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJ0iUZy8oSc>

31 See for instance the “women dance” and part of the “men dance” which are performed in the middle of “the wedding”. Troupe of Moshav Amka, recorded in the 1990s but quite similar to what can be performed today: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B98aJk4ALF8>

32 It is for instance the case in the scene “Henne in Haban” (heb. *Hinna beHaban*) performed by the *Ethnic Dance Troupe* of Moshav Bareket which presents repertoires of Jews coming from the South West of Yemen (region of the city Haban). In the version performed during a festival taking place in 1990 in Moshav Yakhini (Israel) featuring different Yemenite Ethnic Dance Troupes, this overall Henna ceremony is constituted by a succession of five scenes: a *zaffa* (procession) for the groom, a *non-narrative* women dance, the (mock) application of henna on the groom hands, a second (different) *non-narrative* women dance, and finally a *non-narrative* men dance. See the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ANjV4y8qUc>

Although these two logics are often not conceptualized as such by the choreographers, various discourses are addressing them and therefore support my analysis.

Emphasis on the Pedagogical logic:

“MPG: In the wedding scene, Amnon is coming with a candle...”

Zion: *oh, that’s only for the show. [In real weddings], once the rabbi is done, we take the man and the woman, we sit down to eat, and people start to dance for pleasure.*

MPG: So why did you create his solo?

Zion: *The exact moment when the rabbi is here is very short. People won’t understand what is going on (...). What Amnon is doing, it is to show to the audience ‘Look this young girl, today she is getting married’. This is something symbolic, to warn the people to look that way. To tell them ‘Watch out, something is going to happen here!’” (Zion, Manager, Troupe of Moshav Amka. November 1999)*

“On stage you must do something which is close to theatre, to give the possibility to the audience to understand what’s going on. Because to stay static, to continue for too long, to stretch a piece which is very long, very simple, what for? People will not understand what it is! We need someone who will explain what they are doing, and then, maybe, they will understand...” (Saadia Amishai, Former manager and choreographer, Troupe of Hadera. May 2000)

Emphasis on the Aesthetics logic:

“The way they lay their feet on the floor, even if they do not dance barefoot anymore today – men, yes, but not the women. It is in this kind of thing that we can preserve the basic style... But on the other hand, if you are on stage, you must make sure that everyone will step at the same moment, things like that. And this is what professional work is about: to do this in order to embellish the performance, but without changing the style. It is a constant search for it.” (Reena Sharet. Invited choreographer working with different troupes, and organizer of many shows for Ethnic Dance Troupes. January 2000).

This analysis shows that both logics (pedagogical/aesthetics) are different in ways and strategies to find a balance between the two previous poles (imagined upkeep/voluntary change). We can therefore place this continuum as a vertical axe crossing the previous one.



Diagram 3 – Perceptions and Logics

After this first level of analysis, which stems from an exploration of dance material and discourses, i.e. from what can be seen and said on stage, during participant observation with the troupes, and formal interviews or informal chats with dancers and choreographers about their staging processes, let's step back one more time to articulate it with the larger issues presented above.

A display for the recognition of a Yemenite heritage

The first issue at stake, which led to the creation of such troupes in the 1970s was a socio-political stance: the full **recognition** of their dance repertoire as a constituent of the national culture of Israel; proof that they have a proper and prestigious *culture*, not just a mere *folklore*. In that context, dance is used with a strong emphasis on the “no change” pole, yet some minor concessions of change are made for the sake of the audience. On stage, they present both *narrative* and *non-narrative scenes*, the former using mainly the *pedagogical logic* to reinforce the political dimension of recognition while the latter emphasizes *aesthetics logics* to strengthen the artistic dimension of the recognition.

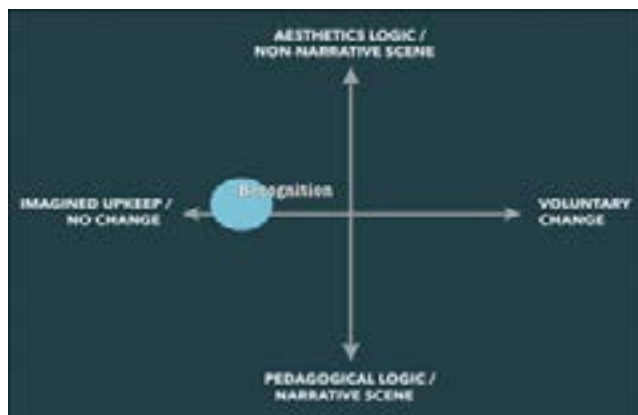


Diagram 4 – Recognition

To preserve

After a decade or so of normalization of their position within the Israeli culture, the will to preserve their repertoires becomes the strongest. This is the second issue at stake. In that process of **preservation**, one can often see a tendency to reinforce the side of “no change” and a strong *pedagogical logic* through a large use of *narrative scenes*.

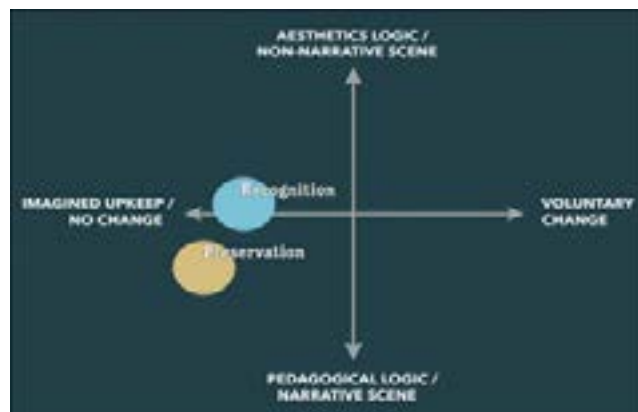


Diagram 5 – Preservation

A need to perpetuate

This issue of preservation had been so much reinforced that some (dancers or audience) see in it some kind of museification, using the word in a slightly derogatory way to qualify the exhibition of something “dead”, or at least something which does not exist anymore in the “real life”.

This negative perception towards a museified preservation often belongs to young Israeli-Yemenite (whose parents were born in Israel already) and leads us to the third issue: the necessity of a **perpetuation** of the troupes. Indeed, in the last ten years or so, several troupes have become either less active or even dormant. This is largely due to the fact that they are struggling to recruit new members. Some are therefore trying to be proactive about their future. They need to pass the torch to the so-called “third generation”, but how to attract them? How to recruit new (younger) dancers to perpetuate the troupes?

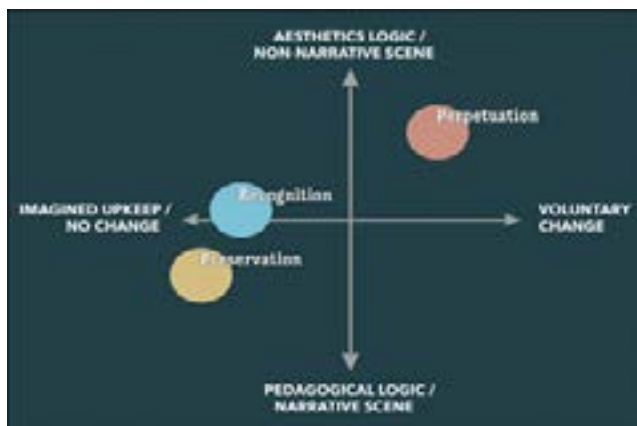


Diagram 6 – Perpetuation

In the case of Amka, in the last five to ten years, the manager and some of the more experienced dancers have put quite a lot of thinking and have tried to find out what do these younger potential dancers want to show and to dance. They have decided to borrow from the Yemenite dances practiced today during weddings, concerts, or parties³³, and to apply to them the same type of “rules of the stage” that were enunciated above. They have particularly emphasized those which aim at pleasing the audience’s eyes, mainly in *non-narrative scenes* responding to an *aesthetics’ logic*. That is, to display them in various configurations of dancers: lines, circles, crosses, and so on.³⁴ The aim is also, therefore, to please a new generation of Israeli-Yemenites, dancers, or audience.

The dance form used here partly corresponds to the informal development of the repertoires brought from Yemen and used freely at parties and life-cycle events since the 1950s. These have not been frozen in time through a staging process in ethnic dance troupes nor formalized in Israeli Folk Dances. They have developed and transformed freely and informally. This new source of raw material permits to

³³ See for instance the video of a *hinna* in Moshav Bareket (mainly populated by Yemenite Jews coming from the South West region of Yemen, near the city of Haban. In the video, one can see at the front three men performing the *athari* dance, while at the back a large circle of mixt dancers are performing the “regular step”, also called the “Yemenite step” in Israel Folk Dance, and performed slightly differently. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDOs6EH3giE>

³⁴ One can see an example of such a scene, performed by the youth group of the Troupe of Moshav Amka, during a Festival in Porto Alegre (Brazil) in 2013 (see the youngest group at 3’): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HyduObpVxys>

accentuate on stage the contemporary Israeli-Yemenite dimension of their culture (i.e. neither only Israeli nor only Yemenite), which is nourished by a combination of pride that Yemenite Jews have a beautiful heritage and a will to go “forward”.³⁵ Hence, these younger dancers are embracing, claiming and evaluating voluntary changes:

“I don’t want to dance like our grandpas, I want my own style. And anyways, I couldn’t succeed!” (Mor, 22 years-old, 2016).

Which could be read, if one adds the subtext that this young dancer provided me with during our various informal talks:

“I don’t want to dance like our grandpas! [It is beautiful but], I want my own style. And anyways, [even if I was trying to dance like them, it is too difficult.] I couldn’t succeed!”

These younger dancers recognize the beauty of this previous way of dancing, but also its difficulties. They also often state that they do not want a museum of what was done in Yemen, and therefore no “stories”, i.e. *narrative scenes*. On the contrary, they have a strong interest in the beauty of the dance motives and body forms, hence favoring the *aesthetics logic*. And even more so, amongst these young dancers, the invention of multiple variations is strongly valued, arguing that “[they] *want to develop it*” (informal talk with a group of young dancers who did frequent assiduously the Yemenite disco of Tel Aviv before its closure).³⁶ Therefore, their arrival in the troupes brings a radical shift towards *non-narrative scenes* and *voluntary change*, as shown on diagram 6. Yet, by joining such Troupes, they also signal their wish to preserve a Yemenite dancing specificity.

By way of conclusion: To create is to preserve...

What can be seen today, under the indirect influence of the younger dancers, is a change in the perception of what it means to preserve. For them, unlike for most of the previous generations, to create *is* to preserve. Therefore, this article has aimed to show how the notion of “change” is a lot more versatile than it might look. In terms of dance practices, changes happen all the time, but sometimes they are hidden, without dancers and/or other actors of the field realizing it, or at least not desiring to assess or accept the changes. Sometimes, on the contrary, such changes are confirmed by the actors, recognized, if not even looked for and claimed. The anthropology of dance is therefore here to document and analyze such processes, listen to their actors, and unveil what is at stake.

³⁵ See for instance a video created by “the Yemenite dancer” (his internet name, followed by 9,14k people- last consulted on Feb. 11th, 2023), featuring himself and another dancer in a private home, in 2011, performing on a song by one of the current most famous Yemenite singers, Zion Golan. They first dance the *da’assa* (slow and fast tempi) with many variations (most of them were not existing when this dance, originally a feminine dance, was brought from south east Yemen), and then (from timecode 4’28 onwards) the *athari* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-KpmRLW-Ig>

³⁶ Many videos shot during weddings and familial parties are circulating on the net, often accompanied by various comments emphasizing how skilled the dancers are, and how beautiful and “cool” Yemenite culture is. See for instance this video, untitled “Very cool Yemenite dances at a wedding”, recorded in 2007. The young dancers (only male) are successively dancing the *da’assa* (originally a women only dance) and the *athari*. At some point, one can distinguish on the back a few older men slightly puzzled by the younger dancers’ way of performing the steps. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=huO_3E9Y_Dw&t=6sc. Another representative video, also posted by the internet “the Yemenite dancer”, obviously promotes this dance form. It is composed of *da’assa* slow tempo and fast tempo, as well as *athari*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xIqY9_OJuIU

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Прикажи, сачувај, овековечи.

**Лоика насџуџа у њојединим јемењским еџничким џлесним
џруџама у Израелу**

Сажетак: Основане 1970-их, такозване „Етничке плесне трупе“ (*lehakot etni-*
ot) у Израелу, излажу богато културно наслеђе неких од многих група које чине израелско друштво: Јевреја из Јемена, Марока, Курдистана, Либије, Ирака, Етиопије или Индије. , али и Арапи, Друзи или Черкези. Приказујући елементе своје културе, ове трупе су учествовале у важном политичком захтеву из 1970-тих у Израелу: да буду признати и третирани као равноправни са осталим деловима становништва ове мултикултуралне државе.

Мој антрополошки рад, спроведен у Израелу последњих двадесет година, фокусиран је на плесне репертоаре Јевреја који долазе из Јемена (или чији су родитељи/баке и деке одатле). Овај чланак има за циљ да покаже како су репертоари које су донели из Јемена коришћени за конструисање различитих представа неких јемењских етничких плесних трупа у оквиру овог политичког оквира културног признања, а касније и за очување и овековечење овог наслеђа. У скорије време, окрећући свој поглед ка будућности плесних трупа и њиховој перпетуацији, плесачи и менаџери прелазе на радикалну трансформацију онога што се изводи на сцени. Рад је истражио политику и перцепцију промена, као и логику перформанси коју сам назвала „педагошка“ и „естетска“.

Кључне речи: промена, плес, перформанс, препознавање, јемењски Јевреји

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Romanian dance ethno-choreography: past trajectories and evolving approaches

Abstract: This paper investigates the history of Romanian ethno-choreography and its proponents by drawing from documentary sources and the author’s long-term field-work. It explores multi-layered notions of local cultural norms, choreographic authority and knowledge, presentational performances, and ‘modes of representation’. The first section outlines the history of Romanian ethno-choreography from the early twentieth century, when Romanian dances were included within staged art productions. It outlines the framework of the network of folk ensembles established after the Second World War that contracted between 1990 and 2005, then expanded following a renewed enthusiasm for local culture. The second section follows the choreographers and dance instructors placing these individuals according to their generations and investigates available options for choreographic training both past and present. The third section examines the evolution of the structure of Romanian ensemble performances, and ethno-choreography styling, the role of the choreographer as mediators between the dance moves and the creation of their dance performances and various strategies used to construct choreographies. Finally, this paper looks forward at the notion of continuity and ethno-choreography in relation to evolving performance in Romania, the future of the genre, its mediators and their pupils, audiences, and funding bodies.

Key words: Romanian-dance, ensemble, ethno-choreography, choreographers, continuity

Introduction

Romanian dance ethno-choreography¹ is the combination of local Romanian dances into “choreographies” for organized presentational performance. The history of Romanian dance ethno-choreography can be traced back to the early twentieth century (or slightly earlier), when Romanian dances were included within staged art productions.

¹ I use the term „ethno-choreography“ to distinguish choreographies of dances that originated in a local (usually rural) setting from choreographies of other dance genres.

Separate to this, groups of Romanians began to travel away from their home locations to perform their local dances for non-local audiences which necessitated some adaptations due to this change in context. The aim of this paper is to provide the reader with a history of Romanian ethno-choreography and its proponents by drawing from documentary sources and the author's long-term fieldwork among Romanian dancers and choreographers.² It explores multi-layered notions of local cultural norms, choreographic authority and knowledge, presentational performances and 'modes of representation' (Shay 2002, 20) involving local and performance aesthetics, visibility, continuity and the factors necessary for this. After a short contextual and theoretical discussion, it moves on to a brief history of Romanian dance performance from the 19th century to the present. The next section turns the reader's attention to the choreographers (and dance instructors) who are the mediators (Ivanova 2003b, 6) for these groups between the dance moves and the creation of their dance performances. It places these individuals into generations, which also reveals different dance backgrounds. It then examines ways that choreographic experience is acquired by Romanian dancers and the available options for obtaining their choreographic knowledge, and the ways that this experience is reflected in the format of the arrangements that they create. The following section presents Romanian ethno-choreography styling and the various strategies used to construct the arrangements of local dances for performance by amateur and professional Romanian dancers. Finally, this paper looks forward at the notion of continuity and ethno-choreography in relation to evolving performance in Romania, the future of the genre, its mediators and their pupils, and audience and funding bodies.

Contextualizing Romanian ethno-choreography in east and south east Europe

The challenge faced when talking about choreography, choreographers, and ensembles in Romania to an audience from outside is to attempt to highlight the ways in which the situation in Romania contrasts with similar situations elsewhere. Each country in central and south eastern Europe has a unique history of its professional (and amateur) folk ensembles³ based on the Moiseyev model dating from the post second world war period, and an in-depth analysis would reveal parallels that can be drawn between countries and differences that can be highlighted. Further investigation exploring the basis for these ensembles traces backwards in time to the period prior to 1945. Recent publications that follow the "internal" histories of ethno-choreography reveal nationally specific histories with trajectories following on from 1930s "nationalisms"⁴ key personalities involved in

2 The contents of this paper were presented during the Tradicija Nova Ethno-summit in 2017, 2021 and 2022, in presentations entitled: Romanian dance choreography: past and present variations (2017); New generation choreographers and evolving approaches to Romanian dance choreography (2021); The historically greats' - (forgotten) pioneers of Romanian dance ethno-choreography (2022).

3 In this paper I use the term folk ensemble, but avoid the term folk dance which can have pejorative meanings, instead using the term Romanian dance or local dance which gives a clearer indication of the source of these dances. Also, in Romania the term *muzica folk* (folk music) refers to a genre of music that has its roots in American folk, and not to the music and songs included in these ensemble performances that is usually referred to as "*muzica populară*". For a discussion on the various terminologies used for these groups in Romania that include "ansamblul folcloric", "ansamblul artistic" or "ansamblul profesionist" (see Mellish 2013a, 28).

4 Zebec explains that "[t]he tradition of folklore festivals in Croatia has roots in celebrations of peasant culture from the late 1920s and the latter half of the 1930s" (Zebec 2018, 183), whereas in Slovenia Kunej says that „[m]ost of the folk dance groups were established after 1945, although the beginnings of the earliest Slovenian folk dance groups date back to the period before World War Two" (Kunej 2018, 258). In Hungary during the Pearly Bouquet movement encouraged village groups to maintain their local dances and customs with the aim of revitalising the latest „folklore of the region in its entirety" (Kaposi and Pesovár 1983, 57).

high art productions, composers who drew on folk themes, dancers with classical training, and trained choirs and singers.⁵

Shay's (Shay 2002) seminal work "Choreographic Politics" and his other works on key folk ensembles, provides a background frame work for the study of these ensembles and although each ensemble has its individual history there are many underlying conceptual issues in common. He covers professional dance companies in Eastern Europe and further afield, including "Lado" (Croatia) and "Dora Stratou" (Greece), and in his other publications "Kolo" (Serbia) (Shay 2008). However, he has never written about the Romanian professional ensembles that he saw during their US visits prior to 1989.⁶ Other authors draw on both personal participation and academic involvement when writing on ensembles including "Tanec" in Macedonia (Dunin and Visinski 1995), "Lado" in Croatia (Niemčić 2014; Niemčić 2016; Shay 2016; Antoljak 2009), the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble (Tarr, Varjasi, and Horváth 1956, 7), professional ensembles in Bulgaria (Ivanova-Nyberg 2011; Ivanova-Nyberg 2021; Panova 2018; Panova-Tekath 2021) and Ukrainian ensembles in Ukraine and Canada respectively (Nahachewsky 2012).

When it comes to Romania there are few published works that cover even part of the history of presentational Romanian dance performance or the genre of urban folk ensembles in Romania. Giurchescu commented on this gap in research in 1999 (Giurchescu 1999, 52) and in my research over the past around twenty years I have only found two short articles by Baciú (Baciú 1965) and Bucşan (Bucşan 1982), however and the latter only covers the period from 1848 to 1918!

Folk ensembles now have a long history, and this can raise the question as to why they have continued to exist, and what role do they play in their respective countries. However, there is not a universal answer. In certain cases, the national professional ensemble, and to a lesser extent other ensembles that travel abroad, have a nationally recognised role as national icons, but in the Romanian case, especially since 1990, this does not apply, so we have to look for other reasons. To do this I move to the other end of the spectrum, to the local. In a local context in order to continue their activities folk ensembles need to fulfil two key factors, firstly to attract a local audience, and secondly to continue to receive local funding. In order to analyze these, I turn to Appadurai and his research on an Indian temple (Appadurai 1981:203) in which he proposes that consensus is necessary on a minimal set of four constraints for the maintenance of local norms. I propose that his proposals can be applied to local cultural institutions including folk ensembles. His four constraints are that cultural consensus is necessary regarding; the source needed for credibility of the past (the "authority"), the nature of linkage with this source of authority ("continuity"), the relative values of different time-depths in the mutual evaluation of the authority cited, and the convention about how closely a past must be interdependent with other pasts to ensure minimum credibility (see Figure 1).

In the paragraphs that follow I explore these constraints. The first section deals with the time-depth that looks backwards into the history of Romanian ethno-choreography from the first presentational performances of Romanian dance for an (non-local) audience. The next sections follow the choreographers as the authorities and the role they play in continuity of the genre (linking backwards and forwards in time), and their interdependence (horizontal linkages) as part of a network of Romanian dance choreographers. The third

5 See Nahachewsky on Ukraine (Nahachewsky 2006, 168), and Panova and Ivanova-Nyberg on Bulgaria (Panova 2018; Panova-Tekath 2021; Ivanova-Nyberg (this volume).

6 Personnel conversation between Anthony Shay and Liz Mellish June 2009.

section reveals their choreographic strategies that result in their presentational performances, have to retain credibility so as to continue to attract a local audience and, also these constraints act as regulators to limit the effects of variations in respect of performance content in the work of the key choreographers (see Mellish 2013a, 24).

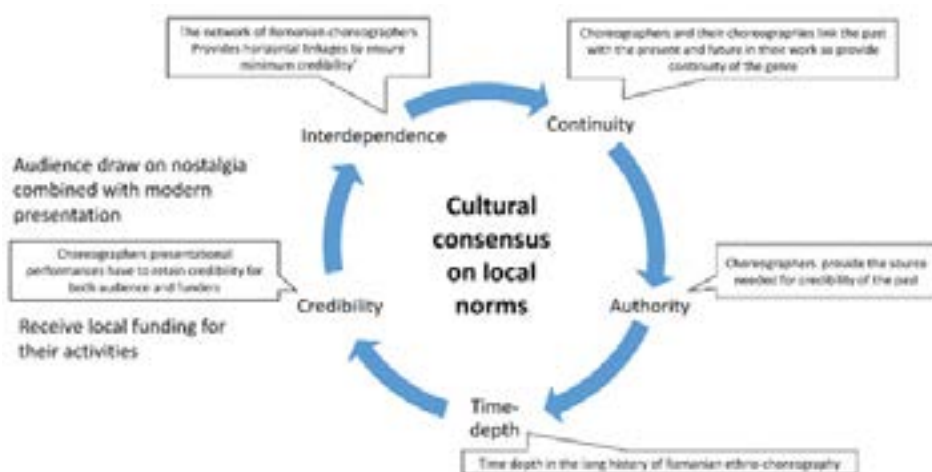


Figure 1. Cultural consensus on local norms.

Kaepler comments that “[c]horeographers, performers and viewers are socially and historically placed individuals who operate according to socio-cultural conventions and aesthetic systems” (Kaepler 1999, 23). Presentational performances have to fit within local expectations by drawing from their local (and regional) past, which generally requires a local respected choreographer/director to maintain a format that draws on nostalgia among the potential audience but at the same time incorporating elements of modern staging, so performance do not look dated and stale.

In order to attract local funding ensemble artistic directors (and choreographers) have to ‘comply’ with the requirements of their funding bodies, and adapt as these requirements change over time, and there has to be local consensus regarding the status of these individuals. To justify funding, they also have to maintain visibility of their activities, both to attract audiences and new members. Slobin sees visibility as being „the quality of being known to an audience“ (Slobin 1993, 17), a process which Slobin terms as „validation through visibility“ (Slobin 1993, 21). His proposed three levels of visibility; local, regional including groups of linked people (choreographers network) and trans-regional and these levels apply to the activities of the folk ensembles who take part in performances in their locality, regionally (travelling to festivals and other events) and nationally (on TV and social media including YouTube).

Presentational dance performances: performance aesthetics and parallel traditions

The other theoretical notions that emerge in this paper involve definition of performance styles, traditions, and aesthetics. This work deals primarily with presentational dance performances, not participatory social dancing. Presentational dance performances involve an audience that is (non-participatory) in the sense that they are separated from the performers, either seated or standing around a space set aside for the performance, whereas participatory local dancing takes place in a social setting usually (but

not always) in a rural area (Nahachewsky 1995, 1; see also Turino 2008, 25–26).⁷ In “Choreographing Politics” Shay famously proposes the concept of parallel traditions (Shay 2002, 17–18) to describe, ‘two types of performances—those for stage and those found in the field’ although whether these are parallel, juxtaposed, overlapping, or on a spectrum as Nahachewsky (Nahachewsky 1995, 1) suggests is a question of much debate. I would suggest that the concept of parallel traditions applies mostly to designated national ensembles, or other urban based professional or semi-professional ensembles that include in their repertoire dance suites from all (or many) of the regions within their nation and often travel abroad with the role of presenting their home nation; where the dancers mostly have urban backgrounds and no connection to the participatory settings from which the dances they perform originated see (Shay 2002, 19).

Interplay between local and performance aesthetics

For local ensembles it is important that their presentational performances continue to resonate with their local audiences. In my PhD I follow Kaeppler’s definition of the term aesthetic as “a society’s standard for production and performance of cultural forms” (Kaeppler 1971, 175). I proposed the term “local cultural aesthetics” to refer specifically to the bundle of aesthetic qualities that locals consider looks “right” in presentational performances by local ensembles (see Mellish 2012, 149). I also suggested that local cultural aesthetics work within the bounds set by local cultural norms (see Appadurai above). I distinguish between these “local cultural aesthetics” and aesthetics that relate specifically to presentational performance that I term as “performance aesthetics” that Giurchescu (Giurchescu 2003, 165) sees as ‘characterised by a physical and mental distance making possible the segregation of an art product from its social context’ where it can be evaluated “only in terms of its structural features and composition”. I also observed that performance aesthetics predominate when the continuity within the dance genre in both place and time is lost outside of the local (Mellish 2013a, 24, 236) and that what resonates with a local audience does not necessarily resonate with a national or another national audience.

History of Romanian ethno-choreography (time-depth)

The history of Romanian dance ethno-choreography (*coregrafia*) can be traced back to the mid-19th, around 80 years before Moiseyev, and similar to other eastern European countries has two distinct trajectories/threads (see Figure 2). The first emerges from occasions when village groups travelled outside their locality to demonstrate their dances and/or customs for a non-local audience. This necessitated some adaptations to their local material due to this change in context such as arrangement for viewing by a seated audience and shortening the material to fit a defined time slot with the aim to retain the interest of an outsider audience. This could be regarded as a ‘bottom up’ or from the source presentational form of performance. In Romania language there is not a specific term for this form of organised performance.⁸

7 Turino sees participatory performance as a “special type of artistic practice in which there are no artist-audience distinctions, only participants and potential participants performing different roles, and the primary goal is to involve the maximum number of people in some performance role’ whereas presentational performance ‘refers to situations where one group of people, the artists, prepare and provide music for another group, the audience, who do not participate in making the music or dancing’ (Turino 2008, 25–26).

8 In Bulgaria the term “Izvorni” (sources) or “groups for authentic folklore” is used. These are mixed-age and ability village

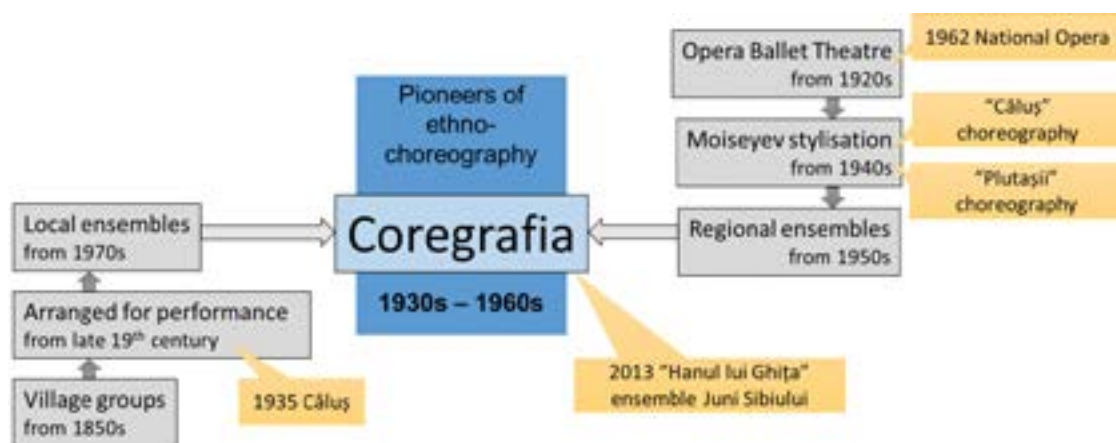


Figure 2. History of Romanian ethno-choreography

The earliest recorded instance of this form of ethno-choreography took place in Transylvania around 1850 as part of the drive to promote Romanian nationalism (Martin 1985, 119; Buçsan 1982, 88) when urban dance masters adapted *călușer* dances that were normally danced as part of the winter custom complex in villages to make a short performance item that was included in upper class balls arranged in Transylvanian cities (Clemente 1998, 140; Mellish & Green 2020). During the last two decades of the 19th century groups of *călușer* dancers also travelled outside Romania to perform at key occasions, including in 1886 at a Conference in Stockholm to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Astra organisation, that was founded to promote Romanian identity in Transylvania (Preda 1944, 127) and in 1896 in Budapest at the millennium anniversary of Hungary (Turcuș and Milin 2007, 34). Twelve years later in 1908 the history of the “Arcanul” group from northern Moldavian village of Fundu Moldovei records that a group of twenty dancers went to Vienna in 1908 to take part in the 60th anniversary celebrations for Emperor Franz Joseph (Strugari 2004, 1).⁹

The most renowned occasion for this form of presentational performance dates from 1935, when a group of *călușari* dancers from the southern Romanian village of Padureți-Argeș was selected to travel to the first international folk festival in London. Harry Brauner, an ethnomusicologist from Bucharest assisted them in their preparations for the trip. In his memoirs he explains that:

“Another very significant task, was the organisation of the team from the artistic point of view. It was one thing to ‘make căluș’, as one says, in your village or on the streets of Bucharest, another for you to present it abroad on the stage. It was necessary to synchronise the figures, careful timing of the steps, and the arrangement of the entire dance, to include the movements with the greatest effect because, as we know, the dance of the călușari is able to last an hour or even more, but we must reduce it greatly to fit within the time limit that we have at our disposal” (Brauner 1979, 45–6).

groups who perform what is termed as “authentic village folklore” (Mellish 2013b, 157).

⁹ Kunej in her history of Slovenian dance groups mentions this event. “Few, groups with the longest tradition associate their origins with participation in the ceremonial imperial procession held in celebration of the 60th anniversary of the reign of Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria, which took place in Vienna on 12 June 1908. Groups [c]lad in folk costumes [...] walked past the Emperor’s grandstand; however, the procession involved no demonstration of their dance tradition” (Kunej 2018, 258).

In this quote Brauner acknowledges the need for some “choreography” in order to present local traditions and dances outside their locale.¹⁰ There have been many debates about the extent of “choreography” necessary for these occasions but although this forms an interesting topic, it falls outside the remit of this paper.

1930s Romanian dance on stage – ballet and opera

The second historical thread of Romanian dance ethno-choreography, the inclusion of stylized folk or character Romanian dances in urban staged (high) art productions, opera, ballet, and plays, involves what I term as a ‘top down’ approach. In this case elements of local (or national) dances are incorporated into dramatic productions, usually with an underlying story line, often based on folk tales or poetry. The dances are performed by dancers usually trained in classical ballet or more recently contemporary dance. This inclusion of Romanian dance in high arts productions, opera, ballet and plays, can also be traced back to around the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries when, according to Baciu certain productions included dances in costume from various regions of the country and ended with a *hora* by the actors (Baciu 1965, 6). He attributes the start of professional choreography in Romania from 1920 when the Romanian national opera company was founded in Bucharest and Cluj.¹¹ This company had its own ballet section and it is worth noting that the pioneers of Romanian ethno-choreography initially worked within this company although later taking on roles as choreographers in folk ensembles in Bucharest and some of the main regional towns in Romania.

When the Moiseyev company first toured Romania in 1945, Chudnovsky reported that, “the dancers attended performances given by many choreographic groups among them those of the ballet company of the State Opera, the Army Dance Ensemble, the National Confederation of Labour’s company and of amateur groups” (Chudnovsky 1959, 83).

This comment reveals that Romanian dance companies already existed by 1945 so although Moiseyev is widely considered the father of folk ensembles, he was not responsible for the introduction of ethno-choreography in Romania as this had its origins several decades earlier. Also, the Bucharest folk ensembles set up around this period had their roots and drew their choreographers from the existing organisations.

Post Second World War folk ensembles in Romania

During the years following the Moiseyev company tour in Romania, the first professional folk orchestra, the Barbu Lăutaru Orchestra, and the first professional Romanian dance groups were established in Bucharest: these included the “Perinița” ensemble in 1946, “Ansamblul de cantece și dansuri al armatei” in 1947¹², the ensemble of the ministry of interior “Ansamblului Artistic Ciocârlia” (also known as ‘the Romanian Folk

10 This example from the film: by Amice Calverley, “Romanian Folk Dances” (1939) recorded in 1938 and shows a village Căluș performance for visitors, see <https://youtu.be/OFjr8nsz09I>.

11 Two examples: Operei Nationale din Bucuresti 1962 <https://youtu.be/8GOU5GkgaSM> and Dorin Teodorescu – Teatrul de Opereta-București <https://youtu.be/burqTK9UHRw>.

12 Baciu explains the apparent contradiction in dates for the founding of the Army ensemble. “The first artistic collective in this genre in Romania was organised in the autumn of 1945 in the army. It began its activities with a formation of dancers, a choir, a small orchestra for accompaniment and a group of actors; one and a half years later it was transformed into the *ansamblul de cantece și dansuri al armatei* who presented their first spectacle in May 1947” (Baciu 1965, 9). See also (Popescu 1972; Ansamblul de cântec și dansuri al armatei 1967).

Ballet, Ciocârlia’) in 1949, and “Cununa Carpaților” ensemble in 1947, several of which provided the dancers and musicians for the consortium, *Rapsodia Româna*, (Petrescu 2006; Alexandru 1962, 1), the closest to a national ensemble in Romania in this period.

Moving outside the capital city, during the 1950s the first regional professional ‘folk’ orchestras and dance companies were established, that were later combined under one director forming a single entity, the folk ensemble. These included several that are still prominent including “Ciprian Porumbescu” Suceava in 1953; “Maramureșul” (later renamed “Transylvania”) Baia Mare in 1959; and “Mureșul” Târgu Mureș in 1956. In 1968 following an administrative reorganisation the number of counties (at the time known as *regiunea*) in Romania was increased from fifteen to thirty-nine, and renamed *judetul*, a structure that has remained until today with some minor modifications (Giurescu 1972, 390). This led to additional professional folk ensembles being founded in the newly nominated county cities, for example “Doina Gorjului” for Gorj county in 1969, and “Banatul” for Timiș county in 1970, as well as numerous semi-professional and amateur ensembles for students, teenagers and children.

This situation continued until 1989 after which, as elsewhere in south eastern Europe, central funding for the arts was severely reduced and a dip in enthusiasm for Romanian dance and music related activities emerged as a reaction against the centrality of the nation prior to 1989, and the forced participation in large events in honour of Ceaușescu in particularly the massive festival “Cântarea României”. During the 1990s some professional ensembles severely curtailed their activities retaining only a few dancers and musicians, whilst many amateur ensembles closed. A few ensembles flourished counter to this trend, in particularly “Junii Sibiului” in Sibiu that was founded in 1944 as an amateur ensemble that took on professional status in 1992 (Mellish 2016, 159).

Since around 2005 a growing regional awareness, has emerged as a reaction to Romania’s entry into the EU in 2007 and the increasing influences of globalization (Mellish 2013a, 12) which brought with it an increase in enthusiasm for local music and in particular popular singers. For the following ten to fifteen years there has been a steady increase in the number of both professional and amateur ensembles throughout Romania, together with competitions for young singers and musicians, and although many paused their activities in 2020–2021 the majority have restarted and their members continue to enjoy the benefits of membership and being part of their ensemble “family”.

Structure of folk ensembles and Romanian dance groups today

Nowadays, in the second decade of the 21st century the hierarchy of groups continues to be based on that established in the years following the second world war (along the same lines as in other central and south east European countries but with certain differences) (see Figure 3). The most important factor to note is that Romania does not have a “national” professional ensemble although in the communist period favoured ensembles toured internationally under this heading. Prior to its closure in 1990 the closest to a national ensemble was the grouping “Rapsodia Romana” that toured throughout the world in the latter years of the communist period. This “consortium” was made up of dancers, musicians and singers from several of the Bucharest professional ensembles combined for each tour, and for performances in Lipscani theatre in central Bucharest mostly for tourists.

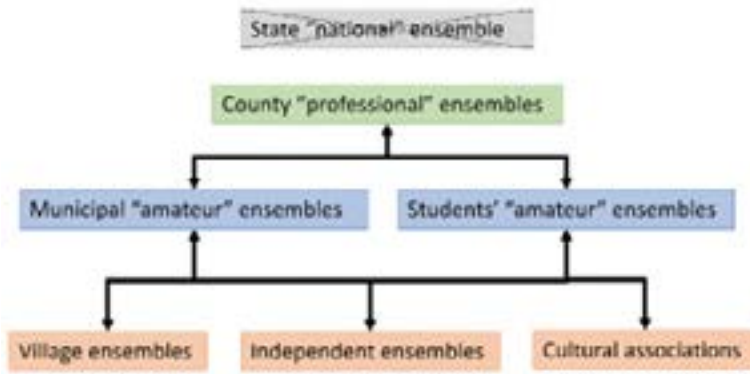


Figure 3. Structure of folk ensembles and Romanian dance groups

There are currently around twenty-five professional ensembles in Romania that are funded by the country cultural centres in the major county towns (see Figure 4). These mostly have their own professional folk orchestras with musicians that play a mixture of folk and classical instruments, a group of salaried dancers (ranging from 8 to 20 dancers) and work with respected local vocal soloists. These ensembles can be places in a form of unspoken and flexible ranking similar to that observed by Buchanan in Bulgaria (Buchanan 2006, 229), that is determined by popular appeal and present day audience perceptions from their live performances and visibility on TV and in social media, and has a close correlation with the popularity of the vocal soloists who collaborate with each ensemble (Mellish 2016, 159).



Figure 4. Romanian professional ensembles 2022

It is worthy to note that the contemporary highest-ranking ensembles in audience perceptions are based in the major regional cities in Romania and not in the capital. This reveals that there is little correlation between the size or economic importance of the city and the ensembles' ranking. This ranking is also reflected in the participation of these ensembles in the annual "Ioan Macrea" festival of professional ensembles held in Sibiu in every November when each year around 8 to 10 ensembles travel to Sibiu to take part in three long evening performances that are broadcast on national TV.

In addition to the professional ensembles there are many semi-professionals urban based groups where the dancers are unsalaried and fall into the age range of 14 to around 25 years. These include,

- ❖ Students' ensembles based mostly at the major universities in Romania and funded by the Ministry for Youth and Sport. For example, "Doina Timișului" (Timișoara), "Mărtișorul" (Cluj), "Arcanul" (Suceava), "Doina Cărpăților" (Iași).
- ❖ Teenage feeder groups for the professional ensembles that operate as both an independent ensemble and as a pool of dancers to supplement the professional dancers for larger scale performances.
- ❖ Municipal ensembles funded by the local mayor.
- ❖ Teenage ensembles funded via a private cultural association, for example "Mărginimea" (Sibiu), "Pusta Banatului", and "Pro Datina" (Timișoara).

In the case of these semi-professional groups the associated orchestra if this exists is made up of young musicians and the vocal soloists are also young. This provides these young singers and musicians a route to taking part in regular performances and the opportunity (visibility) to be noticed by the local audiences.

For performances locally, and within Romania, the performance programmes of these urban based ensembles generally focuses on a combination of dance, song and music from their locality, whereas when they travel outside Romania they include dance suites from other regions of Romania. Thus, they play a dual role, performing their locality and performing their nation depending on the occasion.

There are many amateur dance groups where the dancers are mostly local children from age 6 to 18 that are usually linked to the local culture house in villages or the children's palace "*palatal copilor*" in cities. These mostly work with pre-recorded music, seldom have funds to secure their own musicians, but almost always include young singers in their performances. These can be subdivided into "urban based" or "village based". The children and teenage urban based groups perform dances mostly from their own ethnographic zone or region but also learn dance suites from other regions of Romania whereas village-based groups generally only include dances from their locality.

In addition, the most recent development is the popularity of recreational groups for adults in most of the major towns of Romania and some villages. These are frequently organised as an independent "*scoala de dans*" and are often but not always are connected to one of the above institutions.

In some villages there are mixed age groups whose performances incorporate local customs, dance and song. These groups usually include the term *datini* (customs) in their names, for example "Grupul de datini si tradiții" (Negreni Cluj) or "Ansamblul datini" (Ghiroda Timișoara) and are broadly the equivalent to the Bulgarian village (*izvor-ni*) groups. In Bulgaria the focus of such performances has been the national Koprivshitsa festival, although Romania has never had an equivalent. The renowned "Cântarea Româniea" involved these groups together with all the other groups listed above but its purpose was more a glorification of Ceaușescu with a biased competitive element that the intention to 'preserve' village folklore.

The above list of categories is a broad outline of the structure of groups that take part in presentational performance in Romania. However, in reality, as with Romanian culture and life in general in Romania, the distinctions between the types of groups are more ambiguous. Village groups that dance their social dances on stage morph into urban ensembles into regional professional ensembles.

Role played by the choreographer as the authority

The history of Romanian ethno-choreography cannot be fully explored without considering the role of the choreographers who are responsible for the performances. In the following discussion I use the term choreographer for simplicity although the Romanians use a combination of the terms – *maestru coreograf*, *coreograf*, *profesor instructor coreograf*, *instructor-coreograf*, or *instructor* to refer to each other or self-designate themselves, and their status in the hierarchy. The nuance in these terms reflects that the umbrella term of choreographer can encompass a variety of roles. The most widely acknowledged role is that the “*coreograf*” or “*maestru-coreograf*” is “the person who creates his/her own dances” (Ivanova 2003a, 1-2). He may also be the “manager of the dance group” (Ivanova 2003a, 1-2). However, the manager can also be a musician, famous singer or administrator. The dance instructor is usually an experienced member or ex-member of the adults’ ensemble (Nahachewsky 2012, 151) who is usually the person who supervises dance classes or ensemble rehearsals (Gore 1986, 59) although in many cases the ensemble choreographer also supervises rehearsals in which case they could be terms an “*instructor-coreograf*”. The term ‘choreographer’ is even sometimes applied to the person who is in charge in the tour bus even when they have no role in supervising rehearsals or making choreographers.

The most revealing definition is in my opinion Daniela Ivanova’s reference to the choreographer as a “mediator” (Ivanova 2003b, 6) between the dance moves and the creation of their dance performances, a role I will elaborate on in the following sections. First, I will provide a broad ‘division of Romanian choreographers into their respective generations (see Figure 5).¹³ This division reveals that variations in life backgrounds (urban versus rural), genre of dance and methods of dance training of the ethno-choreographers in Romania has varied over time and among individuals.

1. Key pioneers born in the early twentieth century.
2. Communist period choreographers born before 1945, currently aged 80+.
3. Communist period choreographers born approximately between 1945–1955 whose careers spanned the latter part of the communist period continuing into the 1990s.
4. Communist period dancers and current generation choreographers born approximately between 1955–1975 so currently aged 45–65.
5. New choreographers under 35 born in late 1980s or after who do not have memories of dancing prior to 1989.

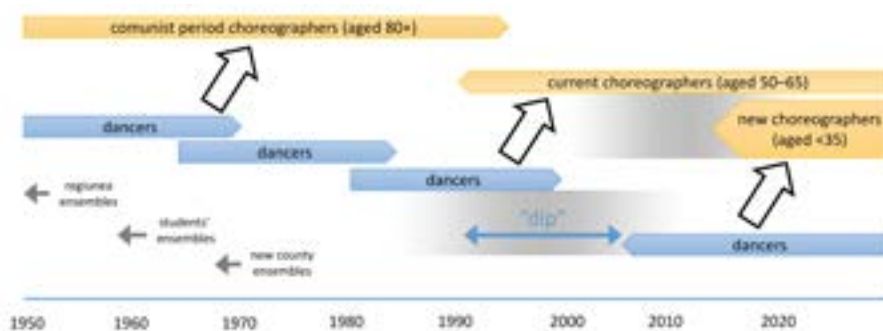


Figure 5. Generations of Romanian choreographers

¹³ Ivanova-Nyberg in this volume provides a similar division for Bulgarian choreographers into generations. It would be interesting to make a detailed comparison between the equivalent generations of choreographers in Bulgaria and Romania in a future work.

Key pioneers of Romanian dance ethno-choreography

The key pioneers of Romanian dance ethno-choreography were born in early decades of the 20th century and include names such as Floria Capsali (1900-1982), Gheorghe Popescu-Județ (1911-1972), Vera Proca-Ciortea (1912-2002), and Gheorghe Baci (1923-2004). They were appointed as the founding choreographers to the Bucharest professional ensembles in the period immediately after the second world war: in 1947 Capsali and Popescu-Județ at “Ansamblului Ciocârlia”, and Baci and Popescu-Județ at “Ansamblul al Armatei”, in 1949 Popescu-Județ at “Perenita” ensemble, and 1951–1953 Proca-Ciortea at “Ansamblului Giulești” in Bucharest. They were mostly trained in classical dance, and both Capsali and Proca-Ciortea had considerable experience as choreographers of art dance productions prior to being appointed to these newly formed Romanian dance companies.

In other countries (Bulgaria and Serbia) the names of names of the early pioneers are usually fossilised in their key choreographies that are kept as an ‘artefact’ a treasure in national cultural memory, and are credited in each repetition, but not in Romania.

Generations of active choreographers

This generation of early pioneers was followed by choreographers (born before 1945, currently aged 80+) who were prominent during communist period, although only a few of these are still alive, and even fewer are still active. For Bucharest ensembles and regional professional ensembles founded from 1950s to 1970s the choreographers appointed were generally trained in art dance or dramatic art (and many had previous experience in the Opera companies in Bucharest and Cluj) and in certain cases the choreographer appointed to regional ensembles was from a different region, usually southern Romania so had not detailed knowledge of the local dance repertoire. During this period the dancers trained in the Bucharest and regional professional ensembles has the greatest degree of balletic techniques and dance character stylisation.

After the 1968 political reorganisation when many amateur ensembles were founded outside of Bucharest the newly appointed choreographers were mostly from local villages. They were generally (with some exceptions) local dance specialists who often spent their childhood living in a village where they gained their first dance experience dancing during social events. Their only formal training was in local folk arts schools, and subsequently the part-time state-run choreographers training where the focus was on ethnographic knowledge not art dance techniques. The most prominent choreographer of this generation was Theodor Vasilescu (1932-2024) who made choreographies for the professional ensembles including “Junii Sibiului” (Sibiu), “Baladele Deltei” (Tulcea), “Doina Gorjului” (Târgu Jiu) and “Mureșul” (Târgu Mureș) and passed on advice from his long career to younger choreographers who respected him. This generation was followed by the generation of choreographers born approximately between 1945–1955 whose careers spanned the latter part of the communist period continuing into the 1990s. The majority of these individuals are pensioners so no longer active choreographers, and many have passed away.

The currently active choreographers can be divided into two generations; those born between 1955–1975 so currently aged 45–65 who were professional or semi-professional dancers prior to, and during the 1990s, with exceptions and mostly took posts as

choreographers during the later 1990s, and the younger generation of currently active choreographers, now between 30 and 45 years old (born late 1980s or after), who are what I term as the “post dip” choreographers and started dancing in the 1990s so have no memories of dancing during the communist period. During the period between 1990 and the early 2000s (the dip period) many ensembles closed when central funding was withdrawn, and many dancers took “western style” jobs or left Romania. This generation of choreographers danced with one of the ensembles that continued to exist and took on the role of choreographers or instructors after 2005 when the number of children’s dance groups and ensembles started to increase.

The currently active generations (4th and 5th) of Romanian choreographers in many cases group their activities under the umbrella of a title such as “scoala de dans de XXXXXX”. These organisations incorporate children’s dance classes, teenage ensembles and recreational dance classes for adults. Often due to funding sources the parent ensemble (whether professional or amateur) operates as a separate entity but is closely linked. In addition to their dance activities, some choreographers have diversified their economic and cultural profiles with associated enterprises including costume making workshops with computerised embroidery, applying for EU project funding for specific ethnographic projects – cross-border collaborations, Erasmus + projects, fieldwork connected to intangible cultural heritage applications and ethnographic publications.

The youngest generation of choreographers, dance instructors and prospective choreographers (from 16 years old to about 30) lead children’s groups in villages or are instructors for urban based children’s groups based at the children’s palace. This generation enthusiastically attend dance seminars with their group leaders and are forming a new network that will hopefully develop into the next generation of maestro choreographers in the future.

Acquisition of choreographic knowledge

I agree with Ivanova-Nyberg (Ivanova-Nyberg 2024) that “dance transmission and choreographic (knowledge) transmission are different things” (Ivanova-Nyberg 2024, 52). I have discussed dance transmission and how dance knowledge is acquired in Romania in previous publications (see Mellish & Green 2022; Mellish 2013a) and a detailed discussion on this is not part of this paper.

However, the acquisition of choreographic knowledge in Romania is (and has been for decades) very different to Bulgaria and is a constant source of discussions among Romanian ethno-choreographers today. As Ivanova-Nyberg explains in Bulgaria choreographic (knowledge) transmission is taught at higher education level in four universities in courses that “address the history of their discipline and acknowledge the names of the founding mothers and fathers [...] It includes knowledge and talent to create choreographies, to teach someone else’s choreography [...] it is inspired by ‘classical’ folklore traditions” (Ivanova-Nyberg 2024, 53). In contrast to this, in Romania, both dance knowledge and choreographic experience is acquired by Romanian dancers mainly through time spent as dancers in ensembles and is strongly influenced by their personal fund of knowledge from their backgrounds in villages or urban settings and this experience is reflected in the format of the arrangements that they create.

In the late 1960s a part-time state-run training scheme for ensemble choreographers was organised in Romania by the central arts office and on successful completion of the

relevant course a diploma was given as a “choreographer” or “maestru choreographer”. This continued until 1990 and also during this time ensemble dancers met regularly at camps and events during which choreographic knowledge was informally shared. For around ten years after 1990 Theodor Vasilescu organised a part time scheme of for choreographers. However, those that completed this course express regret that the course was not recognized by the Romanian state as an educational qualification. For a short period between 2006 and around 2012, a master’s degree and bachelor’s degree in (ethno)-choreography, was organised by the Gheorghe Dima National Music Academy in Cluj and a number of the established choreographers at that time took these courses. Alternatively, since the mid-1990s choreographers also pursued an academic qualification at masters level based at one of the academic institutions in the major cities in Romania in either artistic choreographic staging (not ethno-choreography), the art of musical spectacle or else in choreographic pedagogy.

Currently, there is not an academic qualification, nor a course, that teaches the skills necessary for folk ensemble choreographers, which presents a dilemma for the young choreographers who are seeking a formal qualification that is often requested by local cultural managers or mayors for potential group leaders. Many are following courses in theatrical skills and classical or contemporary dance choreography at universities in Bucharest, Sibiu or Chisinau in the Republic of Moldova (see Figure 6), but part way through their courses they are expressing concern that these courses are not giving them the skills that they need for their jobs, and the assignments that they are asked to complete have no relevance to their dance knowledge, ethnographic knowledge or even interest.



Figure 6. Universities with choreography programmes 2022

Aside from academic qualifications, practical choreographic training is taught during regular choreographic seminars for amateur choreographers that have been organised by several choreographers, or groups of choreographers, since around 2014. These seminars last three or four days during which dance and choreographic instruction is given by several respected choreographers from different regions in Romania and problems related to choreographic strategies are discussed. These seminars are open to both established choreographers and enthusiastic ensemble dancers (and also non-Romanian enthusiasts¹⁴). In addition, during the evenings, music is put on for social dancing thus the participants have the opportunity to watch, and dance next to, respected dancers from various regions so as to gain dance transmission in nuances of

¹⁴ The author of this paper regularly attends these seminars.

local styling through imitation. The regularity of these seminars during the last few years (excluding 2020) has enabled a strong inter-generational network to be established among the currently active choreographers and enthusiastic young dancers in Romania (ages between 20 and 70).



Photo 1. Magia Dansului seminar October 2021, Moneasa, Romania.



Photo 2. Seminar for students group organised by Doina Timișului ensemble, October 2021, Buziaș, Romania.

Romanian ethno-choreography styling

In Romanian language the term “*coregrafia*” (the choreography) or “*folclor coregrafic*” (which translates as *choreographic folklore*)¹⁵ is used to refer to a combination of village dances into a simple suite suitable for watching by a non-participant audience. In the majority of cases this structure also persists when the choreography is framed with thematic acting portraying local customs, life cycle and calendrical events or a historical event or a story. For Romanian choreographers, a key element of choreography is dancing steps in a defined order as the following quotes from informal conversations with choreographers reveal “this makes a choreography...because the steps are in an order” or “choreography is geometry”. This usage reflects the more widely referred to choreographic structures used by Moiseyev, the dance suite, and thematic (subject or pro-

15 Footnote: the term “*folclor coregrafic*” is most often used for the collection, notation and arrangement of local dances.

gramme) choreographies where dramatic and dance elements are merged (Chudnovsky 1959, 46). However, in practice the dance styling in Romanian ethno-choreographies retains links to the local village dances and is not stylised to the extent seen elsewhere for example among ensembles from the Republic of Moldova, or the early Bucharest ensembles.

Structure of Romanian ensemble performances

In Romanian ensemble performances the popular vocal soloists take the central place, and are the draw for the majority of the audience and this applies to all the levels of ensembles and local dance groups even to the extent that the main purpose of the dance suites and instrumental items often appears to be only to provide an infill between singers. This situation is the opposite to that in other countries where the purpose of the singers' performances is to allow the dancers time to change costumes between dance suites! It is also interesting to note that choral singing is very rare in Romanian ensemble performances.

A presentational performance by a Romania dance ensemble typically has the following structure:

- ❖ Dance choreography
- ❖ Vocal soloist
- ❖ Dance choreography
- ❖ Instrumental item
- ❖ Dance choreography
- ❖ Vocal soloist – (note that the 'star' vocal soloist that collaborates with the ensemble usually is the final item in the performance)

This sequence takes approximately one hour. If the performance is one ensemble for a whole evening, this cycle may be repeated several times.

The performances by vocal soloists are generally separate from dance suites, although more recently, the dancers may provide "moving scenery" behind the singers by dancing basic social dances. The instrumental items are either a suite of tunes (often classics from the Romanian repertoire such as *Ciocârlia* "the lark") or selected instrumental soloists who play a folk instrument (or demonstrate how many different folk instruments they can play). This format continues to draw in the local audiences largely due to the continuing popularity of the famous popular singers whose names are placed prominently on the advertisements for each performance.

In Romania attachment to the 'national' is largely seen as something from the "Ceaușescu period" so is not a factor that draws audiences and participants to Romanian dance, music and song performances. Even on major national holidays including Romania day (1st December) and Union day (24th January), performances only may include one or two Romanian songs that could be regarded as national rather than regional and the southern Romanian *călușari* dance suite, which is the closest to a national icon, that is performed mostly by groups from the regions of Oltenia and Muntenia in the southern parts of Romania.

Changes in choreographic styling over the years

Variation in Romanian ethno-choreography structure and the level of stylisation of the dance techniques can be seen both diachronically and geographically. Over time choreographic styling has evolved from the balletic to the less balletic and choreographies are subject to constant adaptation from group to group although certain basic ideas and motifs have been repeated numerous times during the last 70 years.

It is interesting to note that in Romania (in contrast to other countries in east and south east Europe), the choreographies of the early pioneers, or the early communist period choreographers, are not included in the programmes of folk ensembles hence their names are not perpetuated through their works. This leads on to an additional key point regarding Romanian dance choreographies and presentational arrangements in that there are not issues regarding copyright and royalties. The same applies to the musical arrangements that are made by the conductors and musical directors for the folk orchestras. Music is usually played by local musicians with live music used where possible, otherwise pre-recorded tracks specifically for the choreographic arrangement are used.

There are only a few key choreographies created during the communist period that continue to be performed by Bucharest ensembles (“Doina Bucureștului” and “Cununa Carpaților”), either in their entirety or as a basis for a revised arrangement. These are the choreographies that Anca Giurchescu referred to in many of her publications, including the (spectacular) “căluș tower” where four dancers enter the stage carrying a platform made of sticks with another dancer standing on this (Giurchescu 2001; Giurchescu 1987; Giurchescu 1990),¹⁶ and the raftsmen (*Plutașii*) choreography created by Gheorghe Băciu, described in a programme from a performance in 1979:

“This popular dance is from the Maramureș region in northern Romanian [...] The dance suggests one of the traditional activities of the inhabitants: to cut trees in the forest, make rafts from the logs and float them down the river to the mills” (Abbey 1979, 9).¹⁷

In the regional ensembles choreographic structure and stylisation has generally been subject to ongoing processes of change through time and is affected by influences from prevailing fashions in dance performance aesthetics. Ensembles are respected for their embodied knowledge and performance of the dances from their locality even in cases where they also include dance suites from other regions in their repertoire. As elsewhere the professional ensembles have influenced the amateur ensembles, essentially because many of their choreographers are professional dancers with the regional ensembles. However, this influence flows only from regional to local ensemble and not from the centre across the country.

There are regional differences in the construction of the dance suite choreographies both at the level of the motif construction and the ordering of the dances. In Transylvania and Banat the order of the individual dances within the suite usually follows the order that these are danced in the dance cycle in the social setting, starting with the slower dances and building up to the fastest dance. When dancing socially the local dances are made up of an ‘improvised’ sequence of individual motifs, whereas in presentational choreographies the choreographer decides whether to organise the motifs into a fixed

¹⁶ Căluș choreography see <https://youtu.be/EFcY0sAEAbE>.

¹⁷ Plutașii (raftsman) choreography see <https://youtu.be/n7r6m4-pIv4>.

sequence or else ‘allow’ the dancers to make a personal selection from the possible motifs within the overall frame of the choreography. In southern Romania and Moldova there is not a fixed order of dances in the local setting, so the elements of the choreography are made from the linking of entire village dances (themselves made of two or three strings of motifs) that are arranged in an order by the choreographer (Giurchescu & Bloland 1995, 141).

Choreographer as mediator

The previous paragraphs have focussed on the “products”, the dances and their arrangements, these cannot be totally detached from the choreographers who shape these arrangements that are subject to ongoing processes of change in fashion and personal aesthetic preferences. In the above I referred to the choreographer as the mediator between the source material and the presentational dance suites. In Romania, the choreographer’s authority is recognised for their local knowledge of the dance material, and local customs and traditions all necessary for putting together a presentational performance (and not necessarily for their artistic creativity). They use their selected “modes of representation” in their choreographies to transfer local cultural aesthetics into performance aesthetics, based on their personal visions, but also closely linked to their backgrounds and experience. In a few situations local “political” or personal influential people may try to take on this authority and impose their desire for performance aesthetics on to the choreographer, but in general the choreographers have a ‘free reign’ to produce their performances within their own aesthetic preferences.

Although the majority of performances, especially those during festivals, largely follow the standard format described above, over time participation in academic courses teaching the art of staging has resulted in a few choreographers of prominent ensembles (both professional and amateur) experimenting with different forms of staging that sometimes incorporate dramatic elements, although the Romanian choreographers have not so far tried the “modernised” show performances seen for example in Bulgaria, or attempted to follow the success of “Riverdance” despite this being very popular in Romania.

Dance material is generally shared freely between choreographers from all regions of Romania. If they wish their dancers to become more skilled in the dances from a particular region then they invite a colleague from that region to teach their dancers during a 2-to-3-day workshop. This does not usually involve teaching choreography, only the dance material. It is often left to the resident choreographer to put these together in an arrangement for stage presentation over a period of several months following the workshop. In this case it is most often the resident choreographer, the ensemble’s artistic director, or sometimes their assistants, not the visiting choreographer who is credited with the resulting choreography by the announcer during a performance. The only exceptions to this in contemporary presentational performances are the two national choreographers Theodor Vasilescu and Marin Barbu who make ‘top level’ thematic choreographies for some professional ensembles, although it should be noted that their contribution involves the overall framework of the show spectacle, it does not include the precise arrangements of the dance material that is taken from the ensembles own fund of knowledge.

One example of this is the 2013 spectacle by the professional ensemble, “Junii Sibiului” based in Sibiu, entitled “La hanul lui Ghița” that was re-run in 2022 and was cre-

ated by Theodor Vasilescu. The story for this 3-hour 20 mins hour long spectacle revolved around groups of visitors to a traditional inn from different parts of Romania and beyond. Continuity between the travellers' visits was sustained by several professional actors who portrayed comic figures of the inn owner and staff, interspersed with performances by well-known Romanian vocal soloists.¹⁸ Two other more recent examples were both based around classic Romanian literary works which resonate with much of the Romanian population. In 2019 “Mărginimea” and “Ghiocelul” ensembles from Sibiu presented a theatrical and dance interpretation of the myth of the master builder, Meșterul Manole, and in 2022 “Mureșul” ensemble in Târgu Mureș presented a portrayal of the Romanian pastoral ballad, Miorița (see Photos 3 & 4).



Photo 3. Poster for Meșterul Manole, Sibiu 2019



Photo 4. Poster for Miorița, Târgu Mureș 2023

Final thoughts on continuity, performance aesthetics, audience expectations

Drawing towards a conclusion I summarize the ways discussed above in which ethno-choreography, folk ensembles and the situations of their choreographers in Romania differs from their counterparts elsewhere:

- ❖ Romania does not have a national ensemble.
- ❖ Vocal soloists are the focus of folk ensemble performances and the main draw for the audience.
- ❖ Complete choreographers are not repeated as artefacts nor are they necessarily credited to their creators.
- ❖ Neither choreographies nor their associated musical arrangements are subject to copyright.
- ❖ There is not state organised or further education courses specifically for ethno-choreographers.

In conclusion, this paper looks forward to continuity in relation to evolving performance strategies in Romania, the future of the gene, its mediators and their pupils, and audience and funding bodies. Continuity into the future will only happen whilst folk ensembles attract a pool of (competent) dancers who choose to participate. For this their activities have to be visible and ‘modern’, and their presentational performances have to

18 “Hanul lui Ghița” – Sibiu professional ensemble see <https://youtu.be/t6ZjcqhPeMo>.

fit within the current trends in presentational performance. In order to continue to have access to a reliable source of funding these ensembles must also be seen to continue to play a role in the visions of those who provide this funding through both the visibility of their activities and their success in drawing draw a local (and national) audience. In Romania this draw relies strongly on the popularity of the vocal soloists who collaborated with the folk ensembles for performances both locally and in the media. As the vocal soloists are regional ‘specialists’ the visibility of these performances acts more as an aid for the reinforcement of regional identity and provide a link to cultural collective memory (nostalgia) among their audiences whereas in countries other than Romania this can be regarded more as a demonstration of nationalism.

Continuity implies time-depth and the maintenance of a connection to the accepted past within activities in the present. In Romania this connection is maintained through the on-going presence of the key personnel, the choreographers, who provide continuity and stability in the genre. They act as mediators between the local dance material and the presentational performances and transmit their knowledge to the younger dancers. Over its long history Romanian choreographic styling and construction has been subject to ongoing processes of change in fashion, and personal aesthetic preferences of the choreographers and the audiences, whilst retaining its close linkage to the local dance material from which it is constructed. There are many initiatives and networks but not a fixed hierarchical and organised structure, and no over-riding need for conformity in presentation or activities.

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Румунска плесна етнокореографија: минуле иушњање и ирисијуи који се развијају

Сажетак: Румунска плесна етнокореографија представља комбинацију локалних румунских плесова у „кореографије“ за организовани презентацијски наступ. Историју румунске плесне етнокореографије можемо да пратимо до раног двадесетог века (или мало раније), када су румунски плесови били укључени у сценско-уметничке продукције. Поред тога, групе Румуна су почеле да путују даље од својих места пребивалишта како би изводили њихове локалне плесове за неколокалну публику, што је захтевало адаптације услед поменуте промене контекста. Циљ овог рада је да читаоцу пружи историју румунске етнокореографије и њених заговорника, на основу документарних извора и ауторкиног дугогодишњег теренског рада међу румунским плесачима и кореографима. Рад истражује вишеслојне представе о локалним културним нормама, кореографском ауторитету и знању, презентационим наступима и „начинима репрезентације“. Први део описује историју румунске етнокореографије с почетка двадесетог века, када су румунски плесови били укључени у сценске уметничке продукције. Она оцртава оквир мреже фолклорних ансамбала основаних након Другог светског рата која се смањила између 1990. и 2005. године, а затим проширила након обновљеног ентузијазма за локалну културу. Други одељак прати кореографе и инструкторе плеса који постављају ове појединце/ентузијасте према њиховим генерацијама и истражује доступне опције за кореографску обуку како у прошлости тако и у садашњости. Трећи део испитује еволуцију структуре румунских ансамбл представа, етнокореографског стила, улогу кореографа као посредника између плесних покрета и креирања плесних представа и различите стратегије које се користе за конструисање кореографија. Коначно, овај рад сагледава континуитета у етно-кореографији и у развоју перформанса у Румунији, његових посредника и њихових ученика, публике и финансијских институција.

Кључне речи: румунски плес, ансамбл, етно-кореографија, кореографи, континуитет

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Choreographing eyes in Ukrainian staged folk dance

Abstract: Dancers use their eyes very differently in participatory contexts, as opposed to performances on proscenium stages. In an earlier publication I demonstrated that, during social dances, eyes are very often unfocussed or used casually as in regular interactions. In staged folk dance, the participants are often instructed to sustain strong eye contact with each other (an intra-diegetic gaze), which is used in part to reinforce the illusion of the dance’s imputed setting “there and then” (often in an idealized traditional village in the past), and to help the audience to follow them in their imagination. A second dominant gaze strategy is extra-diegetic (making eye contact beyond the proscenium with the spectators). This option emphasizes the “here and now” of the shared performance event. In this article I extend that exploration and introduce complexity, to focus on how Ukrainian staged folk dance choreographers, Pavlo Virsky and Vasile Avramenko, have manipulated these two dominant and contrasting options differently in their compositions. Standards for intra- and extra-diegetic use of eyes have changed over time in Ukrainian dance. I introduce suggestions on how the cultural and political environments influence choreographers’ decisions on gaze.

Keywords: presentational dance, folk-staged, eyes, gaze, Ukrainian.

*“Gaze remains one of the primary sources
for understanding the dance” (Foster 1986:64)*

In this article, I extend an earlier exploration of how dancers use their eyes in participatory and staged dances respectively (Nahachewsky 1995; Nahachewsky 2017). I found that dancers use their eyes very differently in these two contexts. In the present text, I introduce complexity to this issue and focus particularly on how choreographers manipulate dancers’ gazes. I examine two contrasting Ukrainian staged folk concert programs to show how strategies for using stage dancers’ eyes can vary.

In my research for “Using the eyes in Ukrainian dance”, film materials showed that participatory dancers overwhelmingly used their eyes “to see” – for the dancers to collect visual information during the process of the dance as this enriched their experience and helped them dance successfully. By contrast, in the presentational dances, the dominant uses of the eyes were “to be seen” – to send visual information to others. The eyes of humans as a species are unusual because of our white sclera and the relatively small size of our darker iris (Cohen 2011, 1). This contrasting combination allows one person to quite accurately see where another person is looking, even from a distance. Following a gaze (gaze cueing) is a very powerful and developed core skill in human nonverbal communication (Adams, Nelson & Purring 2013, 236–237). As we shall see, this is extremely important in presentational Ukrainian dance. We are dealing with ocular movements that are intentionally expressive.

In the next sections of this article, I briefly review findings of the various ways in which participatory dancers use their eyes, then presentational dancers. I then engage more specifically with two of the dominant gazes of staged folk dancers, which I call intra-diegetic (looking at their fellow dancers’ faces), and extra-diegetic (looking out to the spectators). I describe how these two gazes represent different artistic intentions, either making reference to the imputed setting (often a participatory village tradition somewhere away and in the past),¹ or striving to engage the spectators with the dancers, sharing an experience here and now in the theatre. Following this, I examine film recordings of two Ukrainian staged folk dance concerts which show contrasting strategies for using dancers’ eyes in particular choreographies, and how the overall Ukrainian staged folk dance tradition has shifted with time.

Participatory dancers’ eyes

In contrast to rhythm, footwork, spacial organization, and other elements, the use of the eyes is not normally prescribed in Ukrainian participatory dances. A close review of numerous film recordings showed that the eyes are used in several distinct and common patterns. The most common use of the eyes in these films consisted of dancers looking somewhat unfocused into a middle distance, not looking at their partner, other dancers, or anything in particular. Dancers often kept their eyes semi-closed, gazed forward-and-upwards, or looked forward-and-down at the floor. I understand these moments as periods of de-emphasizing the visual and concentrating instead on kinesthetic, tactile, and acoustic modes of experience. The overwhelming frequency of this unfocused gaze indicates that it was not incidental, but an active cultural norm.

From time to time, dancers looked down at their bodies or other nearby dancers, perhaps when they were not sure of the rhythm, or perhaps observing particularly notable movements. These gazes were typically brief, except for some moments that highlighted strong unison or following a leader. A few dancers glanced at their clothing, enjoying it as it moved with the actions of their bodies, or simply immersed in the overall kinetic environment. Novices seemed most likely to look at the bodies of other dancers to take movement cues, but even young children used the dominant unfocused gaze, showing that they had become competent early in the conventions for the use of their eyes.

¹ The imputed setting of a reflective dance is the setting alluded to – where and when the performers are “pretending to be”, communicated by programme notes, music, costume, movement, and other means. The imputed setting of many reflective Ukrainian dances is a traditional village in Ukraine in the past (Nahachewsky 2009; Nahachewsky 2012, 28-29).

In couple dances, participants made eye contact on occasion, particularly at the beginning of a dance together or perhaps for a brief acknowledgement at the end. Partners sometimes glanced at each other's faces and eyes during the dance as well, possibly to learn something about their partner's experience, interest, and mood. Women looked at their partners more often than men. During slower dances, such as waltzes, dancers occasionally spoke to each other. In these cases, eyes were used in ways that resembled body language during non-dancing verbal communication, as adapted to "intimate distances".² Listeners more often sustained a gaze at the speaker's face, or specifically at his/her eyes or lips. These moments were not frequent but were the most common moments of eye contact in my entire review of participatory dances. In these videos, I did not observe a couple with a sustained gaze into each other's eyes, though I remember this on occasion from personal experience, for a few seconds at a time. I associate this with intense engagement with each other, flirting, or reflecting on an existing intimate relationship.

In some circle dances, in scattered couple dances, and other situations in crowded dance spaces, dancers looked in the direction they were travelling to reduce bumping into other people. On occasion, the dancers visually checked outside stimuli and distractions, such as other dancers moving near their space, greeting a friend, noting obstacles such as furniture, glancing at the musicians, or perhaps peeking at the video camera. Most participatory Ukrainian dances tend to have fairly simple prescriptions so that the dancers can split their focus among their movements (mostly non visually), those of the other dancers, and other stimuli.

Each dancer in this film sample looked at things primarily on an individual basis, independently of their fellow dancers. There were, however, some elements of synchronization. Partners often appeared unfocused at the same time, simultaneously experiencing the flow non visually. Dancers tended to look at each other more consistently when tight movement coordination was required, such as during a fast-moving circle or a collaborative formation. The participatory dance recordings suggest little that differentiates eye use while dancing from nonverbal communication more generally (Adams, Nelson & Purring 2013; Borg 2013; Toastmasters International 2011). They used their eyes "to see" and to aid them in experiencing the dance as necessary.

Folk-staged dancers' eyes

In contrast to participatory dancers, presentational dancers exhibited a strong tendency to present bright, alert, focused eyes, usually accompanied by an active smile. Careful standardization of eye movements was apparent, particularly in adult groups with advanced technical skills. Various eye movements were prescribed and synchronized, just as the other body parts moved in carefully rehearsed unison.

The first several observations below show that the use of the eyes "to see" was consistently downplayed in these dance contexts. In contrast to participatory dances, the folk-staged dancers never (or rarely) looked at their bodies or at other dancers to orient themselves.

² I find that Ukrainians use their bodies during conversations in ways very similar to Americans and people in other cultures described in the English-language nonverbal communication literature (Toastmasters International 2011, 13–15; Borg 2013, 321; 323). Edward T. Hall proposed the term "intimate space" as the closest of four concentric zones of space around persons (Hall 1969, 113–129). He noted how vision is blurred and eye use is relatively less important at closer intimate distances, such as when dancers are in a closed waltz position (Hall 1969:12). In my research sample, dancers leaned away from each other to see their partner more clearly during a conversation. Alternately, the listener sometimes moved his/her ear closer to the speaker's mouth if the music was very loud.

Similarly, they are discouraged from following distractions with their eyes. Stage dancers do indeed need to arrange themselves in straight lines and other predetermined relationships, and to move their bodies as identically as possible to their co-dancers. Advanced Ukrainian dance groups typically use mirrors in their training facilities. During rehearsals, the dancers look forward and out at the reflection of their bodies, and they develop refined visual images of their bodily movements and positions without looking directly at themselves (Sellers-Young 2008, 2-3). They are trained to refine their kinesthetic capacities, to memorize angles of body parts accurately, perhaps to use haptic information to confirm spacing, to use their peripheral vision, or at most to take very quick discreet glances for orientation. The desired aesthetic is one of effortless coordination and automatic, “natural” perfect group unison. One exception to this rule of disguising pragmatic use of the eyes involved the dancers looking in the direction of their travel on a crowded stage, and another exception was when they used “spotting” during multiple fast spins.

Eye contact with fellow dancers. In stage dance recordings reviewed, the dancers looked at their partners and co-dancers much more frequently and intensely than they did in participatory settings. Indeed, this is one of the dominant patterns of eye usage in these choreographies. These gazes were much more sustained and obvious than typical eye contact in non-dance contexts and were especially notable considering that the rest of the dancers’ bodies were moving so actively.

Gazing directly out to the spectators. The participatory dancers rarely glanced in a direction beyond the dance space, but the folk-staged dancers looked out at the spectators beyond the proscenium wall very clearly and often. This convention is also used extensively in romantic and classical ballet (Foster 1986, 16; 83; 97), and is a familiar device in human nonverbal communication more generally: “Individuals are rated as more likeable and more attractive when they gaze towards us” (Adams, Nelson & Purring 2013, 238, see also 229–231; 239). Ukrainian staged folk dancers are often instructed to “look out to the second balcony”, to keep their eyes wide open, and to appear to be connecting with spectators throughout the performing hall. This is true even if the theatre auditorium is too dark and if audience members are too numerous to allow actual eye contact. For performances in large theatres, they put on special heavy make-up to make their eyes appear larger and the whites more visible. Dancers often look out to the spectators particularly as they enter the stage, when they begin a dance, and any time they are situated downstage. Also very often, dancers look out into the auditorium at the end of a highlighted dance segment to acknowledge the viewers and receive applause.

Other gazes. In dances with narrative elements, the performers often use their eyes to provide “gaze cues” so that the spectators can focus more on specific pantomimic or other movements that are important for advancing the plot of the story. Many Ukrainian folk-staged dance performances have a narrative element, presenting particular themes in short dances or developing elaborate plots in full-length “folk ballets”. In these cases, plot lines are advanced by identifiable characters through pantomime and gestures, supported by program notes, costumes, props, and other theatrical devices. Dancers in character roles emphatically look at other characters or objects, depending on the requirements of the story. These movements of the eyes are often made in conjunction with more elaborate body language that further helps to focus the spectators’ attention. Facial expressions, including the eyes, participate in communicating emotion. All these features help the audience read the intended storyline in the dance as it unfolds.

The staged folk dancers in the films also looked in various other directions to highlight the visual design created by their bodies. Sometimes, for example, their eyes looked at a side angle to complement a significant extension of their arm in the same direction. Such use of the eyes is pre-set in the choreography to help the spectators focus on the key movement that the choreographer wants to emphasize. For the same reason, dancers of the corps often looked directly at a soloist performing a specially featured series of movements at center stage.

On rare occasions, folk-staged dancers presented themselves briefly as looking “inward” with an unfocused gaze. These uses of the eyes were sometimes connected with moments in which the characters were conveying perhaps a sublime experience, profound concentration, intense kinesthetic effort, strong emotion, or perhaps an inner struggle, raising the dramatic effect in the story. I also remember unfocused eyes when soloists performed particularly virtuosic and spectacular motifs, thus dramatizing their efforts and the technical difficulty. This use of the eyes remains very unusual; in Ukrainian staged folk dance, the dominant aesthetic is the opposite – to try to impress the audience that the dancers can perform amazing feats with the greatest of ease.

Intra-diegetic and extra-diegetic gazes

On the one hand, participatory dancers mostly use an unfocused gaze, or diverse glances to observe, to “take in” elements relevant to their experience. On the other hand, presentational dancers use their eyes actively to “give out” information. The strong dissimilarities in the use of the eyes in these two contexts suggest important differences in the experiences and the meanings of the dances. I concentrate on two important gazes for the remainder of the article; looking at fellow dancers’ faces (the main intra-diegetic gaze), and looking out to the audience (extra-diegetic).³ In the examples examined for my 2017 article, the stage dancers’ eyes shifted from on-stage to beyond-stage gazes many times during the performances.

How do these two gazes relate to the idea that folk-staged dances are often theatricalized versions of participatory prototypes? After all, “Hopak” and many other folk-staged Ukrainian dances are specifically named after earlier peasant social dances. Countless choices about stage costumes, melodies, dance motives, sets, program notes, reviews, and overall productions reinforce ideas about continuity and tradition. The use of eyes, however, is generally not included among the elements that choreographers manipulate as they try to replicate the heritage factor in the new context.

One important exception takes place when the stage dancers look at each other. Though eye contact is much exaggerated in comparison with participatory uses, they use the eyes in this way to reinforce the message that they are “dancing with each other” – the core feature of participatory dances. I understand this use of the eyes in part as an attempt by the choreographers and dancers to refer to the participatory nature of the dance in the imputed setting. This gaze, then, is linked to the heritage dimension of the folk-staged dances – their connection with tradition. The dancers portray peasants (to a certain degree), pretending (to a certain degree) to be dancing “then and there” in some villages in the past. Their gazes are set within the frame of the imputed world for that

³ I use the terms “intra-diegetic” and “extra-diegetic” according to one of their simpler definitions: In photography and film, intra-diegetic elements are those that are contained within the world portrayed in the photograph itself – such as in a photo of two people looking at each other. Extra-diegetic elements are those that reach out beyond the world of the photo, such as when the subject looks into the camera lens as if making eye contact with a future viewer of the image (Chandler 2014, 1).

moment, and the spectators' role is that of voyeurs, peering into the proscenium frame at the traditional villagers as they dance, hopefully being drawn in themselves.

When a stage choreographer prescribes eye contact and inter-dancer focus, he/she is invoking a subtext of “authenticity”, “tradition” and perhaps “mystique” and “exoticism”. These looks were not practical strategies to orient the dancers' bodies in space, nor did they reveal intense emotional relationships between partners: Gazing into a partner's eyes should be understood as body language primarily intended for the spectators – viewers can read this gaze and receive impressions of strong inter-dancer connections. They read that the performers are dancing “with” each other. The eye contact among staged folk dancers is more intense and more sustained compared to participatory dance practice because it is a symbolic re-presentation of participatory interaction, specifically exaggerated to be readily observable by the spectator.

On the other hand, the second of the two most common gazes in these folk-staged dances involves looking directly out to the spectators. This use of the eyes is also designed for the benefit of the spectators, aiming to create a stronger direct connection with them, to increase empathy, and to bring them symbolically into the dance. This look communicates somewhat of opposite meaning to the previous one, emphasizing the current actual setting of the performance, the contemporary performers linking with the equally contemporary spectators on each side of the proscenium arch in this shared moment. The dancers intentionally break the “fourth wall” of the theatre stage, and their gaze explicitly emphasizes the theatrical reality of the event.

There is, then, a tension between the meanings of these two dominant gazes. I see this opposition as fundamental to Ukrainian folk-staged dance, perhaps staged folk dance in general. Both types of gazes are desirable, and a balance between the two must be found by the choreographer and dancers. The specific balance between these intra-diegetic and extra-diegetic gazes communicates importantly about the meaning of the dance. The remainder of this article is devoted to an examination of this balance. I do see the activation of this opposition as somewhat built into the definition of staged folk dance, however, it is also culturally constructed within the genre, and I present evidence that the balance shifts from time to time, from choreographer to choreographer, from composition to composition, even in staged folk dance traditions such as this, that are strongly standardized because of their cultivation of national identity and national unity. I assume that it also shifts from culture to culture.

Pavlo Virsky and Myroslav Vantukh

Pavlo Virsky (1905–1975) is undisputably the single most famous Ukrainian staged folk dance choreographer. He was born in Odesa and developed a career as a ballet dancer and choreographer, then transitioned to specialize in staged folk dance, directing the professional Ukrainian National Folk Dance Ensemble in Kyiv from 1955 to 1975. This ensemble later adopted his name and continued to operate at a very high level through the late Socialist Realist period, glasnost', the economic struggles of early independent Ukraine, and up to the 2014 and 2022 Russian invasions (Vernyhor and Dosenko 2012; Nahachewsky 2012, 204–205; Ukrainian National). His choreographic program continues to dominate the ensemble's repertoire, even half a century after his death. His monumental “academic” style of staged folk dance with classical ballet aesthetics has been profoundly influential in Ukrainian staged folk dance worldwide.

Numerous performances of the Ukrainian National Staged Folk Dance Ensemble named after Pavlo Virsky are recorded and posted on the internet. For this article, I selected the second half of the long program in 2015 celebrating 110 years of his birth, published on YouTube by the largest theatre in Kyiv, the “Ukraina Palace”, in which the concert took place (National Palace 2016). I occasionally consulted additional recordings of selected dances included in this program, with varying close-up camera angles, to gain additional information on the use of eyes.

Myroslav Vantukh has directed the Virsky Ensemble since 1980, and his artistic influences may certainly have affected elements of the choreographies such as the use of the eyes. He oversees rehearsals and polishes the dances intensely, attending to the minutest details. He also decides the repertoire and casting for the ensemble’s performances. A preliminary comparison of earlier and later recordings, and published choreographic descriptions, indicates that Vantukh does not often make substantial changes to Virsky’s compositions, and suggests that he has also preserved most of Virsky’s prescriptions for the use of the eyes.⁴ The programme for this concert included nine of Virsky’s most oft-performed, perennial favourites: “My z Ukrainy” (We are from Ukraine), “Povzunets’”, “Khmil’” (Hops), “Kyivs’ki parubky” (Young lads from Kyiv), “Pro shcho verba plache” (Why the willow weeps), “Vyshyval’nytsi” (The embroiderers), “Moriaky” (Sailors), “Chumats’ki radoshchi” (Chumak delights) and “Hopak”.⁵ These dances were nearly all created in the 1960s (“Hopak” and “Vyshyval’nytsi” by 1956) and have remained active in the ensemble’s repertoire ever since. They are thought of as “classics”. Some have undergone revisions over the decades, but others have proven very stable compositionally. Vantukh selected these pieces from among some 60 choreographies created by Virsky throughout his career. He included an active mix among the diverse types of compositions, including Virsky’s “heroic tapestries”, “lyrical poetic pieces”, “humorous scenes from everyday life”, and “Socialist Realist compositions” (Vernyhor & Dosenko 2012, 60-61).⁶ The concert reveals a careful curation of the programme, manipulating the choice of dances and their sequence to start with high energy and to vary the intensity of each subsequent dance to show each in the best light as they build to an explosive climax. Perhaps less consciously, the programme also reveals Virsky’s diverse strategies for the use of the eyes.

“My z Ukrainy” is a very extra-diegetic composition (National Palace 2016, 3:32-10:02). The dancers stand facing the audience as the curtain rises, looking directly into the auditorium, then bowing to, waving to, and even speaking directly to the spectators. The forty dancers are dressed in contrasting costumes, typically in groups of four, two couples representing each of numerous ethnographic regions of Ukraine. Each regional subgroup takes a moment center-stage, featuring movements representative of their recognized regional style, and greeting the audience. The dancers’ eyes shift very often (sometimes as often as every two measures of music) from the audience to their partners

4 Written instructions for “My z Ukrainy” published to promote productions of this dance in the amateur staged folk dance industry, contain 90 explicit instructions for visual focus, respectively (Virsky 1978). Close observation of the film recordings suggests that a great many more eye movements are pre-determined and have been standardized in rehearsals (National Palace 2016, 3:26–10:01). However, see the discussion on change over time below.

5 A children’s section of the “Hopak”, not choreographed by P. Virsky, was inserted as a prelude to the main “Hopak”.

6 The explicitly pro-Soviet Socialist Realist dances have mostly been eliminated from the repertoire since the 1980s. “Sailors” remains, as it was long one of the most longstanding popular compositions by Virsky (who had created many military-themed dances for the Red Army up to 1955). Now simply “Sailors”, the dance had previously been named “Whalers: Sailors of the ‘Soviet Ukraine’ flotilla” (the whaling theme had also been dropped decades earlier). The dance continues to feature recognisable stereotypical Russian melodies and dance motifs.

and back. Throughout the dance, the downstage dancers look beyond the proscenium arch an estimated 75% of the time. The most strongly extra-diegetic sections are the introduction described above, in which the dancers establish themselves as Ukrainians and dance artists, contemporary with the spectators; in the symbolic highlight in which two women bow and present two large loaves of bread symbolically to their guests in the centre, right, and left sections of the large theatre; and in the conclusion, when the dancers stop abruptly with a sudden powerful frontal pose.

Virsky's well-known high-energy "Hopak" (National Palace 2016, 1:09:50-1:17:30) is equally extraverted and extra-diegetic, as is "Moriaky" (National Palace 2016, 50:50-58:10) each relying extensively on virtuosic motifs directed to entertain and impress the audience. These three dances are unabashedly contemporary, making some references to traditional folk culture (in the melodies, the costumes, some of the steps), but set in the present, in which the dancers show themselves proudly as active artists and virtuosic technicians, aware of and pleased by their relationship at the moment with the audience members. These dances have been performed hundreds of times during international tours of the ensemble during Soviet times and continuing after Ukrainian independence in 1991, and the purpose of the concerts indeed has a strong diplomatic element of building positive relationships with people worldwide (in the present and hopefully into the future).

Three of Virsky's dances in this programme involve a much more intra-diegetic focus: "Pro shcho verba plache", "Vyshyval'nytsi", and "Chumats'ki radoshchi". They fit the "lyrical poetic" style or "humorous scenes from everyday life" and tend to be set explicitly in the past. The dance "Pro shcho verba plache" (National Palace 2016, 31:10-42:50) is set in central Ukraine in an earlier time (when people fought with swords). It involves a complex narrative, in which young women are first seen dancing with wreaths, then throwing them into the water to foretell about their future lovers (familiar as a midsummer's folk custom). One woman's fortune-telling brings immediate results, as a handsome young man appears and chooses her from among the group. They fall in love and are betrothed. A call to arms is sounded, and the cossack sombrely fulfils his duty and goes off to war, his beloved having handed him his sword, a hat, a kerchief, and her sorrowful blessing. The woman is heartbroken with worry and is consoled by her friends. Later, two men appear, presenting her with his sword and hat, indicating that her beloved has been killed. She suffers great anguish, and a weeping willow tree grows in empathy and sorrow (a traditional motif from folk songs). The dance ends in a tableau in which their son, some six years old now, takes up the sword and poses with a determined gaze into the future, conveying the continuation of their patriotic commitment (Osvita 2010).

The ending of the dance had been long established, but it became particularly striking in 2015, a year after Russia invaded Crimea and parts of the Donbas, and as a deadly military conflict was ongoing. This made a contemporary layer of meaning to the dance explicit. Even in this salient moment of present-day connection, however, the dancers did not make a visual connection with the spectators. The boy and the cossacks stood frontally but looked sharply forward-upward-right. The eight women surrounding them looked and gestured at the boy. Indeed, through the eleven minutes of the choreographic composition, the dancers rarely looked beyond the plane of the proscenium but remained entirely within the "bubble" of the world within the storyline. They looked at each

other in a group, often in a circle, and sometimes with their backs to the audience. The main couple, performed by Ievhenia Stopnik and Denys Pechenko, looked directly at their partner through most of the *pas de deux* and other sections (National Palace 2016, 36:01-37:15). During intimate or tragic moments, the women often looked down at the ground. The men and women occasionally looked out into the distance to stage left or stage right. When the soloist and her friend mourned the departure of her sweetheart, the two women knelt to pray for him, facing directly downstage for an extended time (National Palace 2016, 39:55-40:22). Their eyes looked forward and up however, ignoring the audience but looking in a heavenly direction. There were three clear extra-diegetic gazes: At one point during the beginning of the dance when they were establishing the imputed setting (National Palace 2016, 31:42-31:59), the nine women sustained a loose gaze out to the audience as if greeting friends and sharing their intimate, pleasant feelings. At one point, when the protagonists declared their love for each other (National Palace 2016, 35:18-35:23), they looked directly at the audience for exactly four measures of music as they walked forward to the downstage centre. This extra-diegetic contact was repeated for two measures during their duet (National Palace 2016, 36:19).

“Chumats’ki radoshchi” is also driven by a clear narrative (National Palace 2016, 58:10-1:06:30). It presents an intimate scene of four salt traders “in the distant past” with a shiny new pair of boots, which they obviously treasure. For one *chumak* the boots are too tight, for another, they are much too large, and by the time they each take their turn dancing in them, one of the boots has a detached sole, and the salt traders’ delight has ended. Like “Pro shcho verba plache”, this dance is performed primarily in an intra-diegetic mode, but the strategies for eye connections with the audience are different. As each dancer tries on the boots, they show off in various directions, and sometimes facing directly downstage. They often focus down on the floor, but sometimes they lift their sparkling eyes to the audience. The fourth salt trader in particular, joyously celebrates with eyes connecting strongly beyond the proscenium. In the eight minutes of this dance, we can see some 20 glances out to the spectators, as if to say, “I’m so happy!” (National Palace 2016, 59:40), “Isn’t this great!” (National Palace 2016, 1:00:27, 1:04:35), “I have to stop this guy” (National Palace 2016, 1:01:15), “Oh, they’ve grabbed me (to take the boots away)” (National Palace 2016, 1:01:10), or “Oh no, the sole is ripped!” (National Palace 2016, 1:06:20). They use their eyes as if they are conscious and comfortable with the audience, who shares “their” space and time, and which they treat almost as a fifth *chumak* in their group. This device invites the audience into the scene and also prepares a striking contrast with the massive “Hopak” that follows immediately afterwards.

Two other dances fall more in an intermediate position in terms of their diegetic balance. “Povzunets” (National Palace 2016, 10:15-15:45) and “Kyivs’ki parubky” (National Palace 2016, 25:50-31:05) are both male group dances. Like “Moriaky” these compositions place great emphasis on virtuosic and athletic solo steps performed one after another. Unlike the sailors’ dance, however, the performers’ gazes remained mostly within their worlds, as if dancing for each other, even though their movements were often oriented directly downstage. They looked out to the audience on occasion, when they were at the front of the stage, when they were about to begin a special movement, and especially at the end of their solo, acknowledging the audience and inviting applause and recognition. In both these dances, indeed in most of Virsky’s choreographies, the entry and finale were particularly extra-diegetic. The dancers smiled and nodded to

the spectators as they entered, and then at the end, they stood facing the audience, smiling at them, bowing, and receiving extended applause.

“Khmil” (National Palace 2016, 16:30-25:50) illustrates yet another type of balance between looking out at the audience versus gazing within their narrated world. In this dance, the composition alternates perhaps a dozen times between narrative sections and sections of more abstract dance. When Susan Leigh Foster describes representation in 19th-century story ballets, she notes that they tended to alternate modes of “imitation” (where movements make explicit connections to the story world of the imputed setting, involving perhaps identifiable characters, pantomime, and gesture) and “reflection” (“moments of dancing for the sake of sheer formal accomplishment and beauty”, with only tangential reference to other events in the world) (Foster 1986, 68-69). This is quite clearly what happened in “Khmil”. The dancers made eye contact with each other and looked intra-diegetically most often during the narrative phrases. Then they looked out to the spectators more frequently during the more pure movement segments. Indeed, this strategy, rooted in classical ballet, is fundamental to most of Virsky’s compositions.

The concert celebrating Pavlo Virsky demonstrates that the use of extra-diegetic gazes is not simply a default “natural” feature of staged folk dances, but that it is a device that can be masterfully manipulated to create an effective performance. Virsky and Vantukh illustrate that diverse strategies of intra- and extra-diegetic balance can be used for dramatic effect and to create contrast among dance compositions. As these conventions are well known and have been engaged tens of thousands of times, they may appear to be “normal” in Ukrainian dance worldwide over the last five decades. In the next section, however, I argue that these patterns are also historically bounded, and performance standards for the use of eyes were quite different in an earlier period. A review of the use of eyes in a second concert, characteristic of an earlier age in Ukrainian staged folk dance, illustrates this clearly.

Vasile Avramenko

Vasile Avramenko (1885-1981) was also an extremely important leader in the history of Ukrainian staged folk dance, born a generation earlier than Virsky, and whose aesthetics were established by the beginning of the 1920s. He was forced to emigrate in the 1920s following the Russian Revolution, the Red Army defeat of the Ukrainian National Republic, and Polish control of what Ukrainians had claimed as western Ukraine. He worked with Ukrainian dance and film over his long career and was profoundly significant in the history of staged Ukrainian dance in the diaspora, especially before 1960.

A film recording of The Ukrainian Folk Ballet at the Metropolitan Opera House is preserved in the National Library and Archives of Canada (Avramenko 1931). The recording documents the largest and most grand Ukrainian dance performance in the diaspora until that time, featuring some 500 amateur dancers before a full house (Martynowych 2014, 59-62). The film records seven dances; “Metelytsia”, “Kolomyika v dvi pary” (Kolomyika in two couples), “Hopak kolom” (Hopak in a circle), “Arkan kolomyis’kyi” (Arkan from Kolomyia), “Zaporozhs’kyi hertz” (The cossack duel), “Kuchuhura” (Snowdrift), and “Hopak parubots’kyi” (Youthful hopak).

Avramenko had explicitly prescribed intra-diegetic gazes in his publication of Ukrainian dances, “Every male and female dancer follows their partner during the dance and does not avert their eyes from each other even for a moment” (Avramen-

ko 1928:15). The film record indicates that this maxim was followed in the dancers' rehearsals, and indeed, the smaller and larger performing cast for each dance looked almost exclusively at their partner, or the other dancers in their group. In "Kolomyika v dvi pary" (Avramenko 1931, 6:19-7:50), the dancers looked directly at their partners for approximately 40% of the musical phrases, at other dancers as they approached each other (approx. 40%), and in the direction of travel forwards or sideways (approx. 20%). Near the climax of the dance, they formed a closed circle, and each looked towards its centre as it rotated quickly in one direction, then the other. During the last two phrases, the circle opened so that all four dancers faced the front of the stage. Even facing directly downstage, with their partners on their sides, and dancing backwards to arrive upstage, the dancers continued to look left or right towards their partners but not at the audience (Avramenko 1931, 7:40).⁷

A similar pattern is observable, nearly entirely intradiegetic, in most of the other dances. The "Arkan kolomyis'kyi" (Avramenko 1931, 9:47-11:45) was performed entirely in a large circle of men holding shoulders, following the shouted commands of a leader as the dance progressed (Avramenko 1931, 9:47). Here the dancers can be seen concentrating and looking at the leader to keep in unison. In "Zaporozhs'kyi herts" (Avramenko 1931, 11:45-13:10), the thirty-two male dancers performed in smaller groups of four arranged about the stage, facing each other, and sometimes striking their swords with each other within these subgroups. Near the end of the dance, however, the quartets broke open, joining to form larger horizontal lines across the stage. The dancers each looked out to the audience for these last two musical phrases and for a strongly accented final pose (Avramenko 1931, 13:10).

The script for consistent gazes within the stage and at one's fellow dancers was diluted at times throughout the concert as the dancers individually looked out into the audience, particularly when they were situated downstage close to the orchestra pit (see especially Avramenko 1931, 7:52; 15:16). This was certainly the first time most of these young people had ever performed in such a grand theatre and for such a large audience, and I am sure that it must have been an exciting experience. Many had parents in the auditorium. I interpret these looks, sometimes quick glances but sometimes outright staring, as not fitting an intentional strategy for extra-diegetic communication in the choreography, but rather a sign of weak discipline, more akin to participatory dancers noticing a distraction in their environment as they move.

The final dance in the film recording is a solo performed by Vasile Avramenko himself (edited into the film twice consecutively, from different camera angles). He seems to improvise the entire composition, and it is clear he is confident and loves the spotlight. This performance contrasts very strikingly with the group dances before it because he beams out at the audience with a huge smile throughout the piece. One camera zooms in mid-range on a single person for the first time in the film. This shows, as I understand it, that Avramenko had a strong sense of himself as a star performer, here, today, in New York, in front of this crowd. He was billed and performed as an individual in contrast to

⁷ Interestingly, in a later recording of the dance, performed in Mundare, Canada in 1946, the dancers follow the same prescription for gaze as in the 1931 recording, except during these ending phrases. In Mundare, the dancers looked directly out to the audience at the conclusion of the dance. It is not clear that they were instructed to do so, but perhaps it felt right for them to acknowledge the audience after the fast-spinning circle and as their choreography was ending. We see numerous dances in later choreographies featuring a grand extra-diegetic finalé, and I sense that this "mistake" hints at a newer feeling for the balance between intra- and extra-diegetic expression, perhaps even if subconsciously, among the performers.

the hundreds of anonymous performers on stage before his entrance.⁸ In contrast to him, the 500 dancers represented the Ukrainian nation as a collective, in distant Ukraine, in a timeless imagined setting. They lived within the proscenium frame for this event, while he transcended it.

Historical shifts

On the one hand, careful observation of the use of the eyes in staged folk dance can be a powerful tool used by active choreographers as they create new works. On the other hand, as Foster suggests in the opening quote, observing gaze can provide important insights into the meanings of a dance; a resource for audiences, critics, and ethnochoreologists as well.

Having become familiar with these two strongly contrasting concerts in terms of gaze, created by two iconic and powerful choreographers, one might be tempted to conclude that the shift from Avramenko's intra-diegetic preference to Virsky's more mixed diegetic balance results directly from their personalities and individual artistic preferences. This is surely partly true but does not give sufficient weight to the larger cultural and political contexts in the first seven decades of the 20th century. Such a larger analysis is beyond the scope of this paper, and necessary archival resources are difficult to access at present in Ukraine during the war. However, biographical, and anecdotal evidence may provide some impressions and point the way for further research.

Avramenko's preference for intra-diegetic gazes seems to result from numerous factors. Ukrainian folk dances had been performed on stages for some 120 years before the Metropolitan Opera performance (Humeniuk 1963, 200–203; Shatul'sky 1980, 46–47; Nahachewsky 2012, 93–94). In the 19th century, most of these dances were embedded in melodramatic plays set in romanticized villages with peasant protagonists, and this is the staged dance tradition in which Avramenko established his career. He inherited many of his aesthetic values (and dance repertoire) from his teachers and predecessors in this "ethnographic" theatre movement.⁹ Little primary data is available about the use of eyes in this tradition through the 19th and early 20th centuries, but it seems that the aesthetics conformed to realism in Avramenko's teachers' time. They strove to create the illusion that the world represented on the stage was as real as possible, taking place without the awareness of the audience gazing in from across the proscenium plane. Intra-diegetic gazes were appropriate to maintain this illusion and draw the audience in.¹⁰

8 Avramenko's role as an individual creative agent was reinforced not only in the promotional material but on stage as he led the group warmup while standing on a pedestal downstage centre (with several hundred dancers imitating him, almost as if he was a puppeteer); as he shepherded dancers into their places during the "Kuchuhura"; as he congratulated a major donor; and at other moments.

9 One of his key instructors, Vasyl Verkhovynets, was a dance and music specialist, and represents the strongest realist proponent of dance in this theatrical tradition. In 1920, he published descriptions of a few dances he observed ethnographically, including a hopak in the village Kryve near Kyiv. "During the dance, the boy didn't look away from his girl even for a moment. He turned towards her either at an angle or directly facing her" (Verkhovynets' 1990 [1920], 109). This claim does not fit the pattern of the use of eyes in any other participatory dance I have observed, and I imagine that Verkhovynets' was not as much an ethnographer as a theatre activist, and he described the boys' gaze as he would prescribe for theatrical performances. His phrasing about "not looking away even for a moment" is intriguingly echoed in Avramenko's publication eight years later.

10 A late remnant of this tradition, the 1938 film *Marusia*, recorded in the United States, provides an example (Bulgakov 1938). The story is set in a central Ukrainian village in pre-industrial times and involves a complex plot with love triangles, jealousy, fighting, singing, and dancing. Production values strive to maintain an illusion about the intact "narrated world". Throughout the entire film, the actors play their roles intra-diegetically, with the camera serving as an invisible window allowing the audience, as voyeurs, into the lives of the characters. At the beginning of a dance scene during a house party, the musicians arrive, one of the boys requests a particular dance, and the youth stand up to join in. They arrange themselves in a loose semicircle around the stage set. Their bodies face the camera and the open dancing space in front of them, but they continuously look sideways at their fellow actors, carefully avoiding any gaze in the direction of the lens. When they begin to move,

Other elements in Avramenko's cultural environment would have provided him with models for more extra-diegetic uses of the eyes. During the years of the First World War, he was briefly a student at the Lysenko Music-Drama Institute in Kyiv (Turkevych 1999, 22; Pihuliak 1979, 17; Martynowych 2014, 11). Kyiv at that time was a centre of diverse dance activities, active in ballet and its contemporary expressions. Bronislava Nijinska, for example, worked as ballet master of the Kyiv Opera intermittently from 1915 to 1921 and operated a studio in the city (in which Serge Lifar trained as a youth, among others) (Turkevych 1999, 123; 141). The leading theatre groups in Ukraine performed in Kyiv, and the city's stages also offered vaudeville, cabaret, and other performance events which certainly provided diverse models for audience-performer interaction and eye contact. Later, in North America, from when he arrived in 1925 until the Metropolitan Opera showcase in 1931, Avramenko developed contacts with a variety of professional artists in theatre and film. From 1928 on, Avramenko spent most of his time in "Little Ukraine" in Manhattan, an enclave sandwiched between the cultural hotspots of the Lower East Side and Greenwich Village. New York at this time was the cultural capital of the United States, with a huge theatre district on Broadway, and powerful modern dance companies such as Denishawn, Graham, Humphrey and Weidman engaging in genre-changing innovation. Jazz, political radicalism, and the avant-garde were everywhere. Avramenko's first years in New York "were a period of incessant and frenzied activity" (Martynowych 2014, 52-55). By this time, however, he seems to have consolidated a position conceiving Ukrainian dance as a wholesome bulwark against modernism (including degenerate dances such as the shimmy, Charleston, and jazz) (Martynowych 2014, 47-50). To help him achieve breakout success in North America, he was encouraged by several of his supporters to focus on refining and updating the art of his dances and developing more sophisticated choreography and music. He preferred, however, to focus on other priorities instead (Martynowych 2014, 50-51). Avramenko's situation in the diaspora, including the community's frustration felt over the failure of Ukrainian independence, appears to have been a major factor in his maintenance of conservative, even anachronistic aesthetics, including in his preferences for dancers' gaze.

Pavlo Virsky was born a generation later than Avramenko and, by contrast, was highly successful within Soviet Ukraine. He also lived through contexts which seem to have significant implications for his choices of choreography and his use of gaze. In comparison to Avramenko, his style may be described as Modernist, actively engaging with, and challenging the "fourth wall" in proscenium theatres, reducing the attempt to create an illusion of the "narrated world" and more explicitly engaging with the shared contemporary reality on stage and in the auditorium. His artistic views and choices for dancer gaze may be illuminated by observations about his experiences before 1955 when he started mounting dances on the Ukrainian National Folk Dance Ensemble that would later bear his name.

Virsky's youth and early career in Odesa's ballet community surely presented him with a variety of experiences in which diverse dancer gazes were used on stage. He and his col-

they perform a hopak-like dance in couples in which each can improvise individually. Eye contact, and sometimes lack of it, is very important to communicate the state of mind of the protagonists, two sweethearts who have quarrelled, while their friends dance happily. The rest of the dancers look most often actively at their partners, communicating their pleasure and engagement with each other, consistent with the strategy described above for folk stage dance. Notably, their extended eye contact here is an artefact of the stage, rather than a realistic replication of participatory dance, as described above. Diaspora examples, such as those given here, are admittedly not necessarily representative of what was taking place in the 19th century nor in Soviet Ukraine. The dance for this film was directed by Andrii Kist, a student of Avramenko. His aesthetic is surely anachronistic, as is the *Marusia* film project overall. Its conservative qualities are useful in our situation, to illustrate the earlier historic trends.

leagues staged primarily romantic and realist ballets in the grand Russian tradition, as well as Revolutionary themes (Vernyhor and Dosenko 2012, 12-15). This style of ballet tended to use a variety of intra- and extra-diegetic gazes, often more muted than Virsky would later use in his company. In the 1920s, Soviet Ukraine was a hotbed of modernist experimentation in theatre, art, and dance. Virsky was involved in the intense debates in the 1930s about staged folk dance and performance arts in general – discussions which ended up as deadly traps for many who did not choose the politically correct position regarding issues of Realism, Modernism, and national representation. Socialist Realism was formally established in 1934, leaning towards Realism as the name indicates (but quietly inheriting the political activism of some of the modernist movements, applied exclusively to the Bolshevik Party). Les' Kurbas, as just one example of hundreds, the leading modernist theatre director in Ukraine, was arrested and then shot by the NKVD in 1937 for his modernist positions (Haievsky and Stech 2006). Vasyl' Verkhovynets' met the same fate in 1938 for Ukrainian nationalism (Ia. Verkhovynets' 1990, 32). Virsky however, managed to survive and even thrive in this context, shifting gradually towards a specialization in staged folk dance in the mid-1930s, and co-founding the State National Staged Folk Dance Ensemble with Mykola Bolotov in 1937, two months after Igor Moiseyev formed his famed Staged Folk Dance Ensemble in Moscow (Borimska 1973, 16-26; 28; Sheremetyevskaya ca1965, 30). Beyond a doubt, Virsky must have considered his ideology and his style, including his use of gaze, very carefully.

Though Modernism fell brutally out of favour in the USSR by 1934 and the establishment of Socialist Realism, we can nonetheless identify elements of it in Virsky's choreographies: "Vyshyval'nytsi" features an extended section in which the women "become" a giant living loom; in the dance "Oi pid vyshneiu" (Under the cherry tree) (Virsky 2009), the performers move stiffly as if they were puppets: Such mechanization of the performers is strongly reminiscent of avant-garde influences of Futurism, Constructivism, Bauhaus, and De Stijl. In these dances too, the dancers' gazes tend to be more inward and muted, rather than personal, consistent with what Lynn Garafola describes as key elements of modernist ballet in Europe in the early 20th century (Garafola 1988, 24). Stalin died in 1953, and Virsky felt he could allow himself to stage such pieces by 1956.¹¹ Perhaps it is related to Stalin's death in 1953 and the cultural thaw that followed. "Vyshyval'nytsi" (as well as "Hopak") was among the dances he staged for the ensemble's 1956 tour to China, just a year after he came to Kyiv as director. Clearly, he and the dancers had previous experience and capacity for such compositions and the staff at the Ministry of Culture allowed them.

There is some evidence of a trend for further increases in extra-diegetic engagement since Virsky's most productive period, a suggestion that merits further research. Pavlo Sydorenko's written prescription for "My z Ukrainy" was published in 1978, identifying an equal number of moments during which the dancers should look at fellow dancers, and when they should look out to the audience (27 and 26 times respectively) (Virsky 1978). Analysis of the 2015 video recording of this dance, however, shows a much greater preponderance of extra-diegetic gazes.¹²

In summary, we note that eyes are used in several ways by Ukrainian staged folk

11 Admittedly, in Virsky's choreographies, the mechanization theme and other Futurist elements are softened by the performers' costumes which suggest peasant dress and some movement motifs consistent with the established staged folk lexicon. His works are neither free of narrative and setting nor non-objective (see Garafola 1988, 24). Avant-garde artists would surely see his pieces as quite "timid" by many Modernist standards.

12 Further analysis of older recordings would be required to demonstrate whether this discrepancy has its roots in Sydorenko's choices for the description, or perhaps Vantukh's more recent production preferences.

dancers. The two most common gazes suggest contrasting meanings: an intra-diegetic gaze refers to imputed settings in the narrated world, while an extra-diegetic gaze engages more explicitly with the present moment in the theatre, shared with the audience. The extra-diegetic gaze is more closely associated with modern and Modernist theatre values and tends to be increasingly dominant over the 20th century. Concert recordings of choreographies by Vasile Avramenko and Pavlo Virsky indicate a contrast in artistic strategies regarding gaze from dance to dance and change over time. The use of differing gazes seems to relate to larger historical, artistic, and political trends.

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Кореографске очи у украјинском сценском народном плесу

Сажетак: Плесачи користе своје очи веома различито у партиципативним контекстима, за разлику од наступа на позорници. Током друштвених плесова, очи су врло често нефокусиране или се користе лежерно као у редовним интеракцијама. У инсценираном традиционалном плесу, учесници се често упућују да одржавају јак контакт очима једни с другима (интрадијагетички поглед), који се делимично користи да појача илузију импутираног окружења плеса „тамо и тада” (често у идеализованом традиционалном селу у прошлости), и да помогне публици да их прати у својој машти. Друга доминантна стратегија погледа је екстрадијагетичка (остваривање непосредног контакта очима са гледаоцима). Ова опција наглашава „овде и сада” заједничког наступа.

У овом чланку проширујем то запажање и уводим сложеност, како бих се фокусирао на то како су украјински кореографи традиционалних плесова, Павло Вирски и Василе Авраменко, различито користили ове две доминантне и контрастне опције у својим композицијама. Авраменко је, са својим старијим кореографским стилем, навео своје играче да гледају скоро искључиво једни у друге. Вирски користи много шири спектар стратегија погледа у својим плесним композицијама, што има велики ефекат. Неки комади су изразито екстрадијагетски, при чему плесачи често гледају директно у гледаоце. Други плесови су више фокусирани на унутрашњост, са већином погледа плесача усмерених једни према другима или другим местима свету плесне приче која се прича. Украјински плес широм света је доживео општи помак са снажног интрадијагетичког баланса на екстравертнију стратегију као што је представљено на концерту Вирског. Сматрам да су културна и политичка средина утицале на одлуке кореографа о усмеравању погледа. Закључујем да посматрање погледа може бити значајно за амбициозне кореографе, али и за публику, критичаре и етнокореологе.

Кључне речи: презентациони плес, фолк-сценски, поглед, украјински

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Professionals - dancers of folk dances

Abstract: In the former Yugoslavia, three professional ensembles of folk dances and songs were founded in the middle of the last century and have been active until today. They are Lado from Zagreb (Croatia), Kolo from Belgrade (Serbia) and Tanec from Skopje (Macedonia). The ensembles are made up of professional dancers and musicians whose task was to artistically interpret former Yugoslavian heritage, but at the present time Croatian, Serbian and Macedonian folk songs and dances in the country and abroad. The author in her scientific research, challenged precisely by the excellent visibility and recognition of the Lado ensemble in the country and abroad, deals with the less visible parts of the mosaic that create the perfect image for the public and the audience. Using the Life History method based on in-depth interviews, she tries to draw portraits, primarily of female dancers and artists who dedicated their lives to the stage. She is interested in what lurks beyond of stage lights, what are all the identities of professional female dancers, both professional and private, how they reconcile and complement each other, and how they have changed in the context of the historical time they live. Through the prism of ethnological questioning of the identity of female dancers, the first question arises about their dancing body, the body as a starting point, and the body that makes that dance visible. For this paper, she focused on the education of dancers, which has changed in accordance and inconsistency with the changes in the artistic policy of the ensemble management. On the other hand, the author points to the working method/strategy within the ensemble regarding on the inquires how to approach the dancers who have become even more singers due to the changes in the artistic policy.

Key words: Lado, Croatia, professionals, dancers of folk dances

Introduction

In the former Yugoslavia, three professional folk dance and music ensembles were established in the mid-20th century which have continued to perform until present day.¹

¹ I presented my research on professional dancers from the Lado ensemble at several academic conferences, and the presentations were published in proceedings from academic gatherings in English (Niemčić 2014; Niemčić 2016). This text has been

These are “Lado” from Zagreb (Croatia), “Kolo” from Belgrade (Serbia), and “Tanec” from Skopje (Macedonia). The ensembles are composed of professional dancers and musicians with the mission to artistically interpret Yugoslav at the past, but Croatian, Serbian, and Macedonian folk songs and dances today both in the country and abroad. Lado was founded at the end of 1949 by a decision of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, with the task to “present artistically arranged folklore treasures of our people through public performances: folk dances, songs, music, and customs” (Sremac 2009, 93). From its beginnings until today, Lado has nurtured a recognizable performance style characterized by a high level of professionalism, established by Zvonimir Ljevaković with his exceptional artistic talent. Ljevaković was the founder of Lado, a long-time artistic director, and the author of many famous choreographies that are still passionately performed by captivatin the audience. Systematically, with few deviations, this style and concept of stage application of folklore became known as the *Zagreb school of folklore* in professional circles (Sremac 2009, 97). This approach was refined and continued by Ivan Ivančan and numerous other choreographers after him. Although Lado has remained loyal to its tradition, which combines chest-throat singing with maximum precision and uniformity in the execution of dance steps and choreographic images based on original stylistic aesthetics and dance steps, today, Lado also ventures into other genres of stage art and different approaches to presenting traditional culture on stage. Lado’s professional dancer-singers participate in theater performances and films, create their own dance shows, such as the vocal concerts that are also an integral part of their activities. They record albums that often receive awards and experiment with other musical genres in projects like *Lado Electro* and *JazzLAnDo*. The performing part of the ensemble consists of 16 male dancers and 22 female dancers, as well as 14 musicians, who perform an impressive repertoire of over 140 choreographies and hundreds of diverse musical pieces (Ivančan Jr. 2009, 15-16). It is important to highlight that all dancers are also excellent singers, and in most of Lado’s choreographies, the dance and vocal components are equally represented, often simultaneously.

For its sixtieth anniversary in 2009, the national professional ensemble of Croatian folk dances and songs, Lado, published a representative monograph titled *Lado – Croatian National Treasure*. This monograph represents the ensemble both as a guardian and a contemporary reflection of the former musical and dance practices of the Croatian people, respectively as the interpretation of them intended for stage and audiovisual media. Despite the existence of numerous newspaper articles, reviews, and historical overviews about Lado, there are very few scientific texts. American dance historian Anthony Shay, who has studied professional folk ensembles, has dedicated special attention to Lado in his research, often comparing it with Kolo from Belgrade or contrasting it with The Moiseyev Dance Company. His initial enthusiasm for Lado developed into a genuine friendship and long-term collaboration with the ensemble:

“From the opening ritual, Ladarke, in which a cast of dancers opened their program with full-throated Slavic singing, I was riveted to my seat...I was unprepared for the simple elegance and majesty of Lado. ... I have never seen any other state folk dance ensemble give equal importance to the singing and dancing and use the dancers as singers” (Shay 2002, 109).

In his book *Choreographic Politics: State Folk Dance Companies, Representation, and Power*, Shay highlights Lado as an example that supports his fundamental theoretical premise: “that the repertoires and performances of state folk dance ensembles reflect the political situation within which they develop” (Shay 2002, 124). He notes that Lado’s repertoire immediately after its founding, in the post-war period, was exclusively Croatian, as Lado was established to represent the newly formed socialist republic of Croatia (Shay 2002, 124). Shortly thereafter, the government decided that professional ensembles from Croatia, Serbia, and Macedonia had to include songs and dances from other Yugoslav republics in their programs. As a result, the ensembles even changed their choreographies (Shay 2002, 124). Finally, with Croatia’s independence, Lado returned solely to its national, Croatian program, while simultaneously, the new state allowed the enrichment of its vocal repertoire. In the last thirty years, Lado has also performed church folk music, which was neither desirable nor possible under the communist regime.

The Professionalization of Folklore

The Lado ensemble was formed by selecting the best young amateur dancers, and this selection approach continued with the ensemble transitioned to professionalism too. Most of these young individuals were employed before joining the newly established Lado, and they would come to rehearsals in the evenings to engage in folklore activities. With the founding of Lado in 1949, coinciding with the birth and development of “the professional state folk dance ensemble in many countries around the world,” folklore became their life calling, a serious occupation, a daily job, rather than just a pastime and entertainment (Shay 1999, 37). After having two weekly rehearsals of two hours each, they began to dance and sing five hours every day. According to my informant, the ensemble took years to form and fill with dancers. Since most of them were young, the dancers did not retire for many years which consequently brought the rare auditions. Both leaders and assistants transitioned “overnight” from amateurs to professionals, so even though the approach to work was more serious and demanding, it did not differ significantly. Despite the intensive daily practice in the hall and the fact that no one questioned the professionalism of the dancers in the ensemble anymore, it was considered :

“...that until you’ve been a professional for 5 years, until you’ve ground out that craft for 5 years, you can’t really say you have a knowledge know it. After those years, when you’ve mastered everything, then you know your place, your role, but at the same time, you can look left and right and already see if something on the side isn’t right, who made a mistake, what went wrong, and where we’ll end up if a mistake happens somewhere—you have to navigate it at that moment. But only then, after several years of work, you become aware of the entire situation around you, but not just yourself.” (female dancer from Lado)

From its beginnings until today, Lado has nurtured a distinctive performance style characterized by a high level of professionalism, established by Zvonimir Ljevaković with his exceptional artistic talent. Ljevaković was the founder of Lado, a long-time artistic director, and the author of many famous choreographies that are still passionately performed and continue to bring audiences to their feet (Niemčić 2014, 155). However, despite his extraordinary talent and authority in folklore, Ljevaković did not have for-

mal education in dance and performing arts. The professional Lado ensemble emerged from the best amateur ensemble, bringing together the finest amateur dancer-singers in Zagreb, who became professionals with the founding of Lado. Today, more than seventy years later, as folk dance has evolved into a performing art and has its place in show business, becoming a professional folk dancer in Croatia still follows the same path: passing the audition to join Lado (Filippou 2006, 55).

Research methodology

Inspired by the great visibility and recognition of the Lado ensemble both domestically and internationally, I decided to embark on a scientific exploration of those less visible pieces of the mosaic that create the perfect image for the public and audience. Using the Life History method, based on in-depth interviews, I aimed to outline portraits, primarily of the female dancers, the artists who have dedicated their lives to the stage. I spoke with retired female dancers who spent their entire working lives in Lado, as dancers, soloists, or assistant artistic directors. In the initial round of conversations, in the first phase of research, we covered basic chronological details, auditions, the ensemble's working methods, training, promotions, reminisced about some tours, power dynamics within the ensemble, and from personal/intimate questions, we touched upon the body as the basic tool for work. I was interested in uncovering what lies in the darkness when the stage lights go out, the various identities of professional dancers, both professional and private, how they reconcile and complement each other, and how they change in the context of the historical time in which they live.

My research into professional female dancers also led me to explore the processes of dancer education, which has changed in accordance with, or in discord with, changes in the artistic management policies of the ensemble. I base my research on in-depth interviews with dancer-singers, drawing on personal experiences as a former student, as well as several years as a teacher at the Department of Folk Dance at the Ballet School, a one-year voluntary engagement in the ensemble as a dancer, and partly as a devoted audience member following Lado's artistic work. I utilize both internal and external perspectives, avoiding limitation to just one approach.

Given that "the performativity of the body is the fundamental medium of its openness to the world" (Biti 2011, 40), it is scientifically imperative to contemplate the profession of dancers by starting with the body to unveil the dancer. According to Marjanić, "the body, in addition to being public – the fleshy/surface of social and cultural meanings, is also private, and the body is not only an indicator of our disciplining into the social order but also a means of anarchic self-expression" (Marjanić 2011, 30-31). Following these theses, I attempted to raise awareness of the meaning, importance, care, and intertwining of the public and private dance bodies of my interviewees. In the initial round of conversations, we mainly touched upon the public body, the body on stage, and the body preparing for the stage. The art of dance does not merely perceive the body as its is but as what bodies can become or do (Biti 2011, 11). Therefore, professional female folk dance performers have dedicated their lives to their dance bodies and, without much support, have learned to nurture and train them in order to keep them illuminated by the spotlight as long as possible while dancing on the boards that signify life.

Dancer education and/or how to become a professional

Since Croatia established its first undergraduate university study program in dance arts in the academic year 2013/14, making dance as an academic discipline, dance art's status in society and consequently its level of funding has been quite low compared to other performing arts disciplines. Within the realm of dance, folk dance occupies a particularly low position in this hierarchy. This is partly unsurprising, as the professionalization of the field only occurred with the founding of the professional ensemble Lado in 1949. For the past forty years, there has been a department for folk dance at the Ballet High School. However, a high school diploma in folk dance, although the only available diploma in dance in Croatia, is not decisive in auditions for professional dancers, as will be discussed further in the text.

The only formal training for folk dancers in Croatia is provided by the Department of Folk Dance at the Ballet School in Zagreb, where students can obtain a high school diploma in folk dance. Established in the 1980s, the Department enrolls students annually, with a minimum requirement of four students to open the first grade, and typically enrolls no more than ten students per year. As stated on the official website of the school (<http://www.skolazaklasicnibalet.hr/>), the curriculum of the Department is based on the repertoire of the Lado ensemble and is organized around the national dance expression. Such a policy of the school and the education of dancer-singers “fully meets the needs for the education of artistic directors in professional and amateur folklore ensembles, schools and folk colleges” (<http://www.skolazaklasicnibalet.hr/plesac-narodnih-plesova.html>). Given the absence of a university-level program specifically for folk dance performers, a high school diploma from the Department of Folk Dance is the only qualification in this field. However, despite this, there are still active dancers in Lado without formal dance school diplomas who come from amateur dance groups and pass auditions. Additionally, most artistic directors of amateur ensembles are former Lado dancers or dancers who emerged from amateur ensembles, with a smaller number having diplomas from the Department of Folk Dance. Several factors contribute to this situation. Before enrolling in the Department of Folk Dance, candidates must undergo an audition. Unfortunately, there has been a trend of negative selection for auditions over the years. Namely, many candidates apply to the audition due to unsatisfactory performance in primary school and inability to enroll in gymnasiums, opting for the four-year art school as a better alternative to the three-year vocational schools. As a result, the candidates often have little or no dance experience at the audition. Given the low turnout for auditions, the pass rate is nearly one hundred percent to ensure the quota for opening the first grade. Moreover, there has been no long-term projection of the need for employing folk dance performers in Lado, leading to a lack of criteria based on actual needs for educating young dancers and targeted selection criteria for enrollment in the Department of Folk Dance.

The Lado Ensemble is a public institution in culture that performs activities of special importance for the Republic of Croatia. According to its structure, the success of the ensemble primarily rests depends on the director in financial matters and the artistic director who crafts and implements the ensemble's artistic expression. The artistic director closely collaborates with the ensemble's conductor, who is responsible for the sound of the ensemble (musicians and singers), and with their assistants who are responsible for the technical readiness of the dancers. A young dancer who succe-

ssfully passes an audition becomes part of the ensemble for a specified (as a substitute for another dancer) or unspecified period. A typical workday for dancers begins at 9 a.m. with warm-up exercises and conditioning training, followed by rehearsal of the dance part of the program from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., and then vocal rehearsals. Dance rehearsals are led by two assistants, usually one male and one female, selected by the artistic director from among the best dancers in the ensemble. With the appointment of a new artistic director for the ensemble, new assistants are also chosen according to their preference. Often, assistants continue to be active dancers, and their position in the ensemble is solely linked to the artistic director and their selection, without a specific term of office subject to re-election. The position of assistant does not require a diploma or additional pedagogical education; rather, it relies solely on talent and skill, as assessed by the artistic director.

For the only national and professional ensemble like Lado, one would expect that professional dance teachers who work with the dancers, should possess both the knowledge of the dance material, and also the ability to transmit that knowledge. However, due to the unresolved national attitude towards dance art in general, especially when it comes to folk dance, highly educated teachers of folk dance do not exist in Croatia.

When new choreographies are being set up, an external choreographer works with the ensemble, who, for the same reasons already mentioned, is mostly self-taught without any diploma (cf. Rašić 2022, 89-90). Choreographers are former or active dancers in amateur ensembles, some even professional dancers who acquired their skills through informal education at various seminar workshops and folk dance schools, as well as through experience on the stage. They cease to be amateurs because their choreographic expression and engagement result in financial gain. According to Rašić, involvement in folk choreography remains within the realm of lay, rather than educated knowledge, but it is commodified as professional, authoritative (Rašić 2022, 92). The choreographer, when setting up the choreography, conducts several rehearsals with the ensemble, demonstrates dance steps, and arranges choreographic images and dance positions with the dancers, while the rehearsal of the performance and the subsequent maintenance of stylistic interpretation remain with the assistants.

The long-standing practice has been that one assistant leads the dance rehearsal with the ensemble one day while the other actively dances in their positions in the choreographies, and vice versa the next day. With new, young dancers who are mostly urban-born individuals (Shay 1999, 32), no special training was provided; instead, they were expected to actively dance on the sidelines, rotating through all positions in the choreographies and essentially preparing themselves for entry into the dance piece. Later on, they were given positions in the choreographies that gradually became more or less permanent over time, but initially often as substitutes due to Ensemble's needs. Even in a professional ensemble, knowledge is often passed down as it is in small local communities, from generation to generation; older members teach the younger ones, and experienced colleagues assist new, young dancers. Since life behind the scenes is relentless, and the sole goal is to get on stage, young people figure things out as best they can because there is no one specifically responsible for them or looking out for them.

The retired female soloist who joined Lado in 1964 and spent her entire career there says:

“...you came in as a young dancer and a young man. I was terribly flattering, completely unaware, pleading and begging older colleagues to show me something. Because I entered the hall, and immediately they put me in Baranja or Bunjevci and I have no idea. I know I have no idea, but then this older dancer who is leading me whispers to me, squeezes my hands to change steps, now it’s the first, now it’s the second, but I’m still messing up. And then I realize when the choreography is danced out that I’m actually not sure, that I don’t know exactly, and then I begged the older colleagues to show me. And in front of that mirror, we worked on elements. Anđela Potočnik helped me the most. She was always willing to help and show. She sweated with me in front of that mirror. And other colleagues showed me when I asked them. Nobody ever refused me. The motto was: figure it out, buddy!”

Although the approach of transmitting dance knowledge and acquiring dance skills through the only national professional ensemble hasn’t significantly changed over all those years of professionalization due to inadequate external support (the state education system, which only opened a dance program at the Academy of Dramatic Art last year in 2013, which currently does not include folk dance!), the approach to other aspects of the ensemble’s activities has improved significantly. Today, warming up at the beginning of the workday is led by professionals from the Faculty of Kinesiology. It’s no longer just warming up but rather an organized one-hour training session focusing on targeted stretching exercises as well as muscle toning to help the body better withstand the strain of daily dancing.

Dance rehearsals, technical rehearsals, and conditioning preparations for full-length concerts are led by assistant artistic directors who are still active dancers and singers themselves. In contrast, vocal rehearsals are conducted by trained experts hired externally, alongside a permanently employed vocal coach and conductor.

The ensemble Lado was primarily conceived as a dance ensemble (Pogrmilović 2009, 87), and in its first decades of operation, dance was indeed the dominant and most recognizable part of the ensemble. Individuals were chosen for the ensemble based on their dance skills, as the ensemble was always led by (former) dancers. Artistic directors selected their dance assistants among the Ensemble’s dancers based on their excellence in dance skills. However, when it comes to dance, that’s where it all ends. Progression and formal advancements in artistic categories are mostly associated with years of tenure in the ensemble and vocal skills, rather than dance proficiency. The daily repetition, practice, and transmission of dance knowledge to younger generations of dancers within the ensemble only superficially meet the needs of today’s national ensemble.

“The learning system simply unconsciously passed through me and probably through most people because daily repetition, daily work, daily rehearsal, and returning must be remembered. The pace of work drives you, and when you practice every day, there is really enough time to master it” (female dancer from Lado).

Such an approach and way of working enable the training of dance bodies for the performance of individual dance steps and even entire choreographies, but without the dancers’ knowledge of what they are dancing, why certain dances are performed stylistically and what is the context of each dance step, and even what they communicate to the audience (cf. Rašić 2022, 103).

The dance body and professionals

Through the lens of ethnological inquiry into the identity of female dancers, the question of their dance body arises first, the body as a starting point, the body that makes that dance visible.

Although aware of their bodies as instruments for earning their bread and butter, and that the entire ensemble lives off their dance bodies, professional female dancers emphasize that external control over their bodies is very limited. Self-monitoring of the dance body is encouraged through mirrors placed in workspaces and dressing rooms, initiatives in self-discipline in practicing and learning dance and vocal material. Unlike ballet bodies, which undergo severe torture to remain slender, supple, and unnatural, there is no such repression over the bodies of female folk dance performers. On the contrary, they are expected to be as natural as possible, not skinny, and capable of dancing often very demanding dance elements for thirty years. However, there are unwritten rules that the hair of the female dancers must be long, not gray, nails must be short and natural, and makeup must be stage makeup. In the early days of the ensemble, stage makeup relied solely on the taste of the authoritative artistic director, who with his multiple artistic talents laid the foundation for Lado's visual identity. However, later it leaned more towards theatrical makeup, which, for example, introduced artificial eyelashes as an integral part of makeup, highly emphasized eyes with darker warm colors, and mandatory bright red lipstick. Unlike theater and theatrical makeup where there are professional makeup artists, female dancers in Lado exclusively take care of the appearance of their faces and bodies on stage, buy makeup themselves, learn from older colleagues which colors are desirable, what complexion withstands the bright lights of the stage. Likewise, without organized assistance, they take care of demanding headgear, dealing with long braids intertwined in their somewhat shorter hair. Although they are not subjected to torture, they feel somewhat deprived because Lado as an institution does not have developed care for its dancers. For example, control by a phoniatriest follows only personal initiative and when something goes wrong, although the vocal cords are the instrument they use for hours on a daily basis. The same goes for orthopedics, although practice has shown that joints, knees, and the spine suffer the most among folk dancers. There is also no developed legal system that allows a permanently injured dancer to obtain alternative employment with adequate compensation and status. Due to such, I would say, employer neglect, self-monitoring and investment in their own dance body have developed, which only gains significance and meaning through its exposure.

Many shortcomings, oversights, and instances of leaving dancers to their own devices, self-monitoring, or learning from experience or older colleagues can be attributed to the young profession, which has been in the professional realm for about seventy years.

The decline of dance within Lado is evident not only in the insufficient training of dancers, assistants, and directors but also in the advancement system within the ensemble. As more attention is paid to the vocal performances of the ensemble while dance ceases to be the most recognizable characteristic of Lado, the ensemble has released about thirty sound recordings, held countless vocal concerts, and won numerous awards for vocal performances in the last two decades.. Indeed, the voice becomes dominant and determines the soloist in the ensemble and ultimately the champions of the ensemble as the highest point of advancement for a professional dancer. Vocals within the ensemble are handled by highly trained individuals with degrees from the Music Academy. Du-

ring Andrija Ivančan's tenure as artistic director (2016-2020), he attempted to refocus on dance by emphasizing mass dance choreographies, giving priority and greater dedication to the preparation and conceptualization of dance concerts compared to vocal ones, and in thoroughly preparing the dancers' bodies for dance. However, due to his exaggerated style, which deviated from established norms and expected performance aesthetics of the ensemble, the idea of returning dance to the forefront was abandoned with his departure and the arrival of a new artistic director.

I consider such an attitude towards the dance unsustainable because it still relies on the legacy of an earlier period, the time of establishment, and the initial enthusiasm of individuals with exceptional talents. Besides founding professional ensembles and excellent, large amateur ensembles that still operate today, they simultaneously created a new profession. In the mid-20th century, systematic research and documentation of traditional dances and dance events in the field began in Croatia (Zebec 1996, 95-103). Ivan Ivančan, an ethnochoreologist who left a deep mark on Croatian folklore and who, alongside Zvonimir Ljevaković, was one of the founders of the Lado ensemble and the leading amateur ensemble Joža Vlahović, was equally productive in science as in application. Unfortunately, neither Ljevaković nor Ivančan left behind a successor of their caliber, nor did the education system in Croatia make an effort to ensure and educate people with adequate knowledge and skills for artistically leading a professional ensemble. According to Filippou, today's "dance teacher is required to have a broad view of traditional dances and therefore be aware of the strong links between ethnography, theater direction, teaching, and methodology" (Filippou et al. 2006, 55-56). Although the model of selecting and leading the ensemble was adopted from the founders, there has been no strategy to maintain such functioning in present times when leadership positions require high education. Higher education in the field of folk dance is lacking for professional dancers, dance teachers, choreographers, and even scientists who study dance (they complete studies in ethnology, while acquiring dance skills independently and informally).

In Croatia, folk amateur performers are still the most numerous among amateurs (although we've seen a worrying decline in numbers after the restrictive measures caused by protection from the coronavirus). Lado, as the only professional ensemble, is the dream and ambition of many of them. As long as it's like this, the auditions will consist of choosing between alto or soprano, tall or short girl, blonde or brunette, with talent and skill in dance and singing. All these characteristics of a female dancer have an advantage over the only high school diploma of a dancer-singer because the educational and artistic system is not harmonized and connected, and not of sufficient quality.

Despite all this, Lado remains flawless on stage, with only connoisseurs able to notice any mistakes, and the ensemble's energy leaves no one indifferent. Perhaps that's why there's no need to worry; it's not the method that matters, but the result!

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Професионалци – плесачи народних игара

Апстракт: У бившој Југославији средином прошлог века, основана су три професионална ансамбла народних плесова и песама који делују до данас. То су Ладо из Загреба (Хрватска), Коло из Београда (Србија) и Танец из Скопља (Македонија). Ансамбли су састављени од професионалних плесача и музичара, а задатак им је био да уметнички интерпретирају наикада југословенске, а данас хрватске, српске и македонске народне песме и плесове у земљи и иностранству. Изазвана управо великом видљивошћу и препознатљивошћу ансамбла Ладо у земљи и иностранству, ауторка у свом научном истраживању бави се мање видљивим деловима мозаика који чини ту савршену слику за јавност и публику. Методом животне историје, који се темељи на дубинским интервјуима покушава да оцрта портрете, у првом реду плесачица, уметница које су свој живот посветиле позорници. Ауторку занима шта се све крије у тами, кад се светла позорнице угасе, који су све идентитети професионалних плесачица, и они професионални, али и приватни, како се они међусобно мире и надопуњују, те како се мењају у контексту историјског времена у којем егзистирају. Кроз призму етнолошког истраживања идентитета плесачица, прво се намеће питање о њиховом плесном телу, телу као полазишту, телу које тај плес чини видљивим. За овај рад, ауторка је фокус усмерила на едукацију плесача која се мења у складу и нескладу са менама у уметничкој политици руковођења ансамблом. С друге стране, указује и на сам принцип рада унутар ансамбла, односно на који начин се приступа плесачима који су менама у уметничкој политици постали чак и више певачи.

Кључне речи: Ладо, Хрватска, професионалци, плесачи народних игара

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Плес у контексту наслеђа: три случаја традиције на савременој плесној сцени

Апстракт: Овај рад представља допринос растућој расправи о историји и традицији у научним дебатама и уметничким круговима. Реконструкција културних историјских дела, као и инсценирања различитог традиционалног плесног материјала из целог света, постали су део савремених кореографских приступа. Ови трендови у уметничким стратегијама отворили су многа значајна питања која се односе на наш осећај историје и наше разумевање наслеђа. У покушају да разјасни нека од ових питања и проблема, овај рад ће анализирати три различите кореографске студије случаја које се, свака на различит начин, баве појмом традиције у савременим дискурсима плеса као наслеђа.

Кључне речи: плесна историја, плесна традиција, наслеђе

Увод

Током последњих неколико година продукција великог броја плесних представа заснованих на идеји реконструкције и цитирања историјских дела или традиционалних репертоара различитог порекла постала је главни тренд западног савременог плеса. Или како плесни теоретичар Тими Делат (Timmy de Laet) тврди „савремену плесну сцену захватила је одређена архивска грозница” (de Laet 2020, 206). Делат промишља шта би овај ретроспективни интерес за реконструкцију прошлих кореографија могао да значи за разумевање савременог плеса. Кореографска реконструкција, наставља Делат „лако се може одбацити као пример онога што је Елизабет Утка (Elizabeth Outka) назвала „комодификовано аутентично“, категорију коју она уводи да би указала на то како тренутна комерцијализација културног наслеђа има тенденцију да претвори искуство и носталгију у утрживе производе” (Outka 2016, 66). Иако Делеат признаје да нека од ових кореографија заиста може да се посматра из аспекта који предлаже Утка, ипак сматра да је потребно подробније размотрити разлоге и процедуре реконструкције

плесних техника и плесних идиома прошлости. Слично можемо да тврдимо и за постављање дела традиционалних репертоара на сцену савременог плеса, јер се у обе врсте реконструкција плеса (историјских дела и традиционалних репертоара) прошлост сматра игралиштем за садашњост, а појам архивирања се посматра као процес који их трансформише актуализацијом. Репродукције плеса могу се видети као нови савремени кореографски тренд, перформативна активност покренута у подсећању, евоцирању, критици, и оживљавању минулих дела.

Ово поглавље је у скраћеној верзији било презентовано на трећем Етно самиту ТрадицијаНова одржаном у Ужицу 2019. године. У презентацији на поменутом Етно самиту покушала сам да повежем локални контекст¹ разматрања питања традиције и кореографског ауторства, који је био фокус Етно самита, са начинима на који су ти проблеми и дебате били артикулисани у савременим уметничким плесним формама широм света. Мој фокус је био на опусу Шобане Џејасин (Shobana Jeyasingh), једне од највећих живих британских кореографкиња, јер је она своју каријеру градила спајањем и мешањем форми традиционалног (класичног) Индијског Бхаратанатуам плеса са савременим плесним техникама. Штавише Џејасинова је, заједно са Акрам Каном (Akram Khan) доајен такозваног „новог интеркултурализма“ у Британској савременој плесној сцени, који се развио крајем прошлог миленијума (в. Mitra 2015). Дакле, моја намера је била да „одвучем“ дискусију са локалног на глобани контекст и то на два међусобно повезана начина. Први начин је да третирам кореографију традиционалног плеса на сцени у равни са „светским плесовима“ (World dance) (в. Foster 2009), у разматрању транспозиције традиционалног у уметничко. Други начин је да посматрам и горепоменути кореографски „тренд“ окренут ка реконструкцијама, који инспирацију црпи из минулих или традиционалних кореографија, кореографских поступака и плесних форми.

У овом поглављу, представићу три микро студије случаја које покрећу и стимулишу дискусије и питања о ауторству и транспозицији традиционалних форми, са специјалним освртом на плесну технику (Пример 1), плесни материјал (моуvement материјал) (Пример 2) и употребу симбола и симболичких слика које се везују за широко схваћен појам традиције (Пример 3). Сва три примера долазе из света савременог плеса и представљају радове признатих кореографа. Сва три кореографска примера доживела су признање од стране критичара и публике као „врхунска“, и на многе начине су постала иконичка дела савременог плесног израза.

Пример 1: Shobana Jeyasingh *Faultline*: Традиција кроз плесну технику

Први пример о којем ћу говорити, јесте плесна представа *Faultline* кореографкиње Шобане Џејасин, у ужем смислу, као и опус наведене кореографкиње, у ширем смислу. Џејасинова је изградила каријеру на свом јединственом кореографском језику који подразумева плесну технику која комбинује класични индијски *Bharatanatyam* плес са језиком савременог уметничког западног плеса. *Bharatanatyam* плес, његова обнова и виталност, везују се за дискурсе индијског национализма који је, након ослобођења од британских колонијалних власти, тражио упориште у културним формама сматраним старијим од колонијалних власти (Meduri 1988; Chatterjea 2004). *Bharatanatyam* је био

¹ Под локаним контекстом овде мислим на чињеницу да су се ове дискусије артикулисале у оквиру специфичне локалне традиције – кореографисаног фолклора, развијаног након Другог светског рата у Југославији и Источној Европи.

погодан у том смислу јер је његова историја оставила бројна сведочанства о техничким и другим детаљима плеса (који су били сачувани у храмовима и академским центрима онога времена), укључујући бројне књиге које су се бавиле анализом форме, конкретне методологије и методичке кодификације корака. Све ово сведочи о важности правилног извођења технике. Заиста, главна сврха плеса је била да се прикаже техника по себи и за себе. Сама техника носила је назив *nritta* што је укључивало технику тела у комбинацији са мимиком лица (у стварању драмског). Према Капили Вацјајан (Kapila Vatsyayan) (Vatsyayan 1968) основа *Bharatanatyam* технике је перцепција људског тела као геометријског идеала у статичној позицији (замишљеног као права линија око које се може нацртати круг), као и у артикулацији кроз плес (која истражује могућности формирања хармоничних геометријских облика у односу на централну линију у оквиру круга).

Други важан аспект *Bharatanatyam* технике јесте и појам мудре. Мудра је домен покрета и сматра се истакнутим начином комуникације у плесу и драмској уметности у Индији. Мудра је, пре свега, схваћена као инскриптивна форма која прати језичке параметре, изражавајући симболичко значење кроз систематски кодификоване обрасце руку плесача. Како Наир примећује изван нивоа језичке симболике, мудра је кинетичка енергија. То је у суштини облик кретања, а ослобађање његовог значења уграђено је у кинетичке модалитете руку (в. Nair 2013). Композиционо, плес почиње неком врстом интраде која се зове *natya aramba*. *Natya aramba* (почетак плеса) је почетна позиција која показује тело спуштено дуж централне линије круга и подељено дуж ње кроз *arai mandī ilī demi plīé*.² Да би се створила ова поза плесач треба да центрира тело тако што ће увући стомак и издужити горњи торзо. Кључан је осећај раста и ширења. Наглашава се изокренутост из кукова, док је дубина плиеа кључна за постојање хармоније између торза и кукова. Према Наир, ово је идеална *Bharatanatyam* слика тела и идеал који плесач покушава да постигне.³ Када се тело покреће из *natya aramba* позиције, оно то чини путем три или четири позиције стопала. За разлику од балета где је *demi plīé* прелазна позиција, у *Bharatanatyam* плесу то није случај. *Bharatanatyam* техника захтева мишићну консолидацију ове позиције тако што га тежина доњег дела тела 'уземљује'. Руке у *natya aramba* стоје у полукружној позицији, карактеристичној за *Bharatanatyam*, и творе тродимензионални ефекат круга осликавајући његову закривљеност. Дискусија о техници не може бити довољна без дискусије о филозофији или емоцији коју ова техника имплицира. Према Вацјајан, тело у изврнутој позицији са уздигнутим торзом има има квалитет отворености и екстремне стилизације покрета. У односу на простор, плес је смирен и сталожен. Постоји специјалан квалитет задовољства које долази од техничких достигнућа вођеним стриктним правилима где су ова достигнућа циљ по себи. Због тога тренинг, као и тренинг балета, има форму готово стриктне индоктринације. Ово учење или индоктринација обухвата учење јединица које се зову *adavus* и које су ограничене у броју. Оне садрже азбуку и граматику плеса. Сваки адави састоји се од положаја тела (вертикала са стопалима у паралели, у *demi* или *grand plīé*-у), позиција стопала, линија руку и образаца за шаке. Да би се извео један адави обично је потребно шест до осам тактова и он обично произведе ритмичку фразу тако што се стопалима удара о тло и захтева да очи дају нагласак и фокус на линије које су створиле руке тако што ће их пратити. Корпус

² *Demi plīé* – получучањ као у балетском вокабулару.

³ Као што Вацјајан тврди „[...] *Bharata Natyam* је серија троуглова у простору“ (Vatsyayan 1964, 56).

адавус-а обухвата све покрете који су могући обухватајући оне који су статични као и оне који дозвољавају телу да путује укључујући окрете и скокове. Према Шобани Џејасин (Jeyasingh 2010), природа и карактеристике нритте могу се разумети и ценити ако се узму у обзир следећи принципи: јасноћа – принцип *angasudhe* или тачног и чистог извођења линија. Без овога плес не постоји. Грациозност (*lasya*) представља тачку сусрета или разрешење тензије између апстрактног и физичког. Енергетичност (*tandava*) односи се на снагу и брзину нарочито стопала у извођењу брзих ритмова у плесу. Прецизност (*tala sudha*) – овај принцип је повезан са специјалним односом који Бхаратанатуам има са временом. Кроз рад стопала могуће је организовати време у веома детаљном кључу – зглоб се користи као перкусионистички детаљ. Прецизност је најузбудљивија кад се повеже са брзином и сви адавуси се према томе изводе у три темпа. Брзина је такође и тест центрираности јер док се удови померају, јасноћу је једино могуће одржати ако постоји равнотежа и контрола у центру. Овај ефекат лакоће који се јавља кроз тихи и стабилан центар је квалитет који се много тражи.

Као и код балета, високо кодификоване технике, поставља се питање кореографије, односно кореографисања као креативног чина кореографа. Где се читава ауторство у техникама које су кодификоване у оволикој мери? Кореограф *Bharatanatyam* плеса приступа свом материјалу на сличан начин на који то чини и балетски кореограф. Његова или њена умешност састоји се у имагинативном комбиновању адавуса у такозвани корваис (буквално уланчавање) и променама које могу да се изведу у постојећем корпусу корака. Кореографија је вођена принципом симетрије (на пример ако су покрети почели на десној страни потребно је да их прате покрети на левој страни) и хармоније (аритметичка прогресија ритма). Чињеница да се прате композициона правила класичне музике наглашава формални и апстрактни квалитет структуре. Виртуозност се огледа у савршеној артикулацији технике и брзине и ове квалитете учена публика познаје и цени.

Bharatanatyam плес је, од своје обнове средином двадесетог века, доживео бројне промене „путујући“ у друге крајеве света. Једна од најпроминентнијих британских кореографкиња Шобана Џејасин као велики познавалац *Bharatanatyam* технике, изградила је кореографски језик који је хибридизовао *Bharatanatyam* технику трудећи се да остане веран њеним техничким основама. Како примећује Санџој Рој (Sanjoy Roy) (Roy 2009) на самом почетку каријере, Џејасинова разбија класичну структуру Бхаратанатуам плеса, тако што је разлаже на облик/обрис, ритам и правац и поново их спаја на нове начине (убацивањем вернакуларних гестова, увођењем кореографије са више играча, физички контакт и плес на поду) који се не могу наћи у Бхаратанатуам плесу. Постепено, Џејасинова развија шири речник покрета који комбинује технике савременог плеса и борилачких вештина са *Bharatanatyam* плесом. Што се тиче тема које Џејасинова истражује у својим кореографијама, можемо приметити да су питања идентитета она која се увек суптилно провуку кроз њен рад.

На пример, у представи *Faultline* насталој 2007. године Џејасинова отворено дискутује питање идентитета у средишту тензија које су настале у Британском друштву након терористичког напада.⁴ Представа је инспирисана романом *Londostani* Гаултама Малканија (Gaultam Malkani) и цела продукција одише мраком и клаустрофобијом са помало језивим вокалима Патриције Розарио (Patricia

⁴ Овде се реферире на терористички напад који се одиграо 7. Јула 2005. у лондонском метроу када је животе изгубило преко педесеторо људи.

Rozario) чији је лик током представе пројектован изнад плесача. Плесни језик ствара драматичну визију генерације младих Азијаца у Британији која се налази у стању расцепа осцилујући између агресије, сукоба и кратких момената нежности. Обучени у тамна, свакодневна одела, четири плесачице крећу се између четири мушкарца повремено изводећи препознатљиве *Bharatanatyam* фразе као што су експанзивни скокови, иконици оштри гестови и акробатско подизање. Ипак, ова представа је једна од најудаљенијих од Бхаратанатуам језика у каријери Џејасинове. И сами критичари ове представе су препознали „нови језик” њене кореографије. Тако, критичарка Индепендент-а пише да

„...постоји мелтинг пот гестова у овом делу јер неки гестови очигледно имају корен у класичном индијском плесу, са зглобовима елегантно окренутим и прстима раширеним као звезде. Али, онда ће исти плесачи трљати палац са прстима сугеришући новац... Плес ствара хибридни језик гангстерског репа, слања порука на телефону и хинди језика” (Anderson 2007).

Дакле, занимљиво је да је Џејасинова увела вернакуларне гестове уличне културе британских градова у класични језик *Bharatanatyam* плеса. У представи такође јасно видимо „класично тело” *Bharatanatyam* технике кроз положај руку, ударање стопалом у под као и кроз *plié* као позу а не као транзитну позицију. Оно што је изостало из класичног репертоара је јако важна мимика лица која је готово потпуно изостала а видимо и постојање формација које се не јављају у класичном плесу. Међутим, оно што ову продукцију дефинитивно сврстава у корпус савременог плеса (савремених плесних техника) је свакако разумевање и коришћење енергије људског тела. За разлику од класичног речника где постоји нагласак на скулптурним и структурним квалитетима покрета, у савременом плесу флуидност и енергија покрета носе превагу над његовим геометријским квалитетима. Оно што чини ову продукцију узбудљивом, тврдим, је управо ово поигравање са класичним и савременим телом плеса односно са дијаметрално супротним разумевањем суштине људског покрета. Плесачи путују простором час геометријским, строго контролисним, ригидним телом класичног *Bharatanatyam* плеса, час флуидним покретом савременог плеса који путује простором и хоризонтално и вертикално. На овај начин Џејасинова остаје верна класичној традицији где плес путем геста прича причу, али и допушта нови динамизам и промене. Џејасинова наставља да развија неку врсту космополитске авангарде која није ни једноставна ни статична. Како каже Санџој Рој „гледајући њен минути рад видимо начине на који класични стил постаје модеран па и постмодеран у периоду од једне деценије” (Roy 2009, 4). Иако њен стил комбинује разне форме све чешће носи ознаку савремености, мултикултуралности и хибридности.

Пример 2: Christian Rizzo *D'après une histoire vraie*: плесни материјал „медитеранских народа“

Кристијан Ризо (Christian Rizzo) је кореограф, визуелни уметник, стилиста и музичар. Његова каријера почиње крајем осамдесетих година када када се бавио музиком и визуелним уметностима. Деведесетих година окренуо се савременом плесу, у почетку као извођач али је задржао и сталну окренутост ка визуелним и музичким уметностима. Од тада је овај концептуално вођени француски уметник створио бројне плесне комаде, перформансе и инсталације, смењујући се са наруџбинама за оперу, моду и визуелне уметности (в. Darling 2019). Од 2015. године

је директор Chorégraphique National de Montpellier – Occitanie, сада под називом ICI (Institut Chorégraphique International). У овом делу рада изложићу Ризоов метод рада са традиционалним материјалом који је изродио једну од његовим најуспешнијих кореографија *D'après une histoire vraie* (Заснован на стварној причи), из 2013. године. О овој кореографији најопсежније је писала теоретичарка плеса Сузана Франко (Susanne Franco) (Franco 2017) која се махом бавила управо критиком Ризоовог разумевања традиције, аутентичности и ауторства у употреби традиционалног материјала. Њену критичку позицију користићу као полазишну у развијању дискусије око ауторства и аутентичности у употреби традиционалног материјала јер су ова питања кључна и у локалним дебатама о транспозицији традиционалног материјала у уметнички плесни контекст.

За почетак, и сама представа је својеврсни истраживачки пројекат који се бави питањима памћења, традиције, аутентичности и заједнице. Даље, и ова кореографија представља извођење врло прецизне кореографске структуре у комбинацији са врло минималистичком сценском и плесном естетиком што је, на неки начин, одлика Ризоовог рада. Ризо је такође одговоран за сценски дизајн и костиме, а сарађивао је са два композитора и музичара, који се зову Didier Ambaht и King K4, и који су компоновали партитуру и наступали на сцени током целог трајања представе (око један сат), заједно са осам мушких плесача.

Представа је створена за Авињонски фестивал и постигла је изузетан успех публике, а критичари су је оценили префињеним примером плеса на западној сцени и једним од Ризових ремек-дела. Ово достигнуће је највероватније једно од разлога због којих је Ризо именован за директора Националног кореографског центра у Монпељеу 2015. године. Теоријске линије које воде креативни процес *D'après une histoire vraie* експлициране су у програмским белешкама и другим текстовима кореографа, композитора и неких критичара пре и после стварања представе.

У напоменама у програму Ризо пише да га је 2004. године, док је присуствовао фестивалу савременог плеса у Истанбулу и док се досађивао током једне представе, изненада очарао турски традиционални плес који је у њега био укључен. Овај плес појавио му се као нешто „архаично“ и „дирљиво“ и као „аутентични“ израз ове културе (Rizo, цитирано у Kabado 2013).

Касније је посматрао народне игре на Блиском Истоку, Магребу, у Француској и Шпанији и слушао народну музику. Ово деконтекстуализовано посматрање покрета и система композиције уверило га је да постоје сличности у мушким медитеранским плесовима. Мање заинтересован за прераду постојећег традиционалног плеса медитеранског подручја него у изналажењу заједничких елемената у различитим медитеранским традицијама Ризо је одлучио да створи потпуно нови плесни комад од ових вишеструких културних корена. Ризо је истакао да га није занимало рекреирање већ постојећег плеса, већ разумевање зашто је толико саосећао са плесом који је том приликом видео у Истанбулу (Rizo, цитирано у Kabado 2013).

Тако, Ризо каже:

„На почетку се овај пројекат састојао у пропитивању фолклора. Фолклор је везан за културу, за географију. Ја сам некако однекуд, и зато једино место које знам су студио и позориште. Ово је моја територија. Оно што ме занима је да видим који су заједнички елементи ове културне разлике. Без сумње се хватам за питање фолклора да бих себи створио земљу и породицу током трајања представе” (Rizo, цитирано у Kabado 2013).

Стално присуство композитора и музичара на сцени има свој контрапункт у физичком одсуству кореографа, што је подвучено са неколико предмета (столица, биљка, књига) остављених на десној страни сцене ограничавајући интимни део простора одакле је Ризо надзирао развој кореографије током проба. Ово одсуство/ присуство кореографа такође је повезано са чињеницом да је Ризо потписао комад који се заснива на серији секвенци покрета углавном прикупљених и пренетим плесачима, који су сви обучени у различитим савременим техникама, од стране турског плесача Керема Гелебека.

Ризо је започео креативни процес допуштајући композиторима да импровизују и својим гестама предлажу неке идеје плесачима, као и различите начине премештања ритмова са једног на други. Дијалог између два бубњара и њихових инструмената – који су конвенционални бубњеви са доданим бонгоима и малим чинелами – главни је мотив дела. Амбахт и Кинг К4 били су инспирисани разноврсним временским потписима који се користе у традиционалној музици на Блиском Истоку, а посебно у Турској, што укључује једноставније попут 2/4, 4/4 и 3/4 и 5/8, 7/8, 9/8, 7/4, па чак и 5/4. Комбинације неколико основних ритмова често резултирају дужим, сложеним ритмовима који се уклапају у временске потписе као што су 8/8, 10/8 и 12/8.

Тежећи стварању акустичке и кинестетичке димензије која је у стању да прецизно ојача ову идеју „фолклора без културе” – дефиниције која обједињује све критичне савремене појмове културе – и да традицију или руралну прошлост учине погодном за савремену и урбану публику, Амбахт и Кинг К4 створили су резултат мешајући звукове народне и поп музике са ритмовима извученим из неколико музичких жанрова који се нејасно именују као етнички, народни и традиционални. У напоменама о програму дефинишу такав микс као „World музику племенске инспирације” (Rizo, цитирано у Kabado 2013).

Са своје стране, Ризо је Гелебеков избор покрета из плесова, где се извођачи држе за руке или рамена, понављао у делу на разне начине. Такође је интегрисао ове покрете са импровизацијом и другим елементима као што су падање и додиривање, са сталним променама у броју извођача, односно са техникама савременог плеса.

Као што је Ризо истакао, кореографија се заснива на идеји да је народни плес „резултат образаца простора, линија или оквира“ (Rizo цитирано у Kabado 2013). Истовремено, његово сопствено кореографско истраживање обележава стална жеља да тело повеже са скоро математичким и апстрактним окружењем. Овај концепт је развио под надахнућем апстрактним америчким сликарима, фокусирајући се посебно на „њихов преплет линија тако да се око никада не заустави ни на једној тачки“ (Rizo цитирано у Kabado 2013).

У овој представи, геометријски обрасци народног плеса (или их је тако схватио Ризо) одзвањају простором и уоквирују стално клизање љуљајућих карлица, блискоисточне валовитости, руку под руку у Сиртакију, рад ногу из северне Африке. Резултат је у програмским белешкама представљен као „нејасна медитеранска традиција” помешана са савременим плесним обрасцима и стратегијама извођења. Према његовим речима, представа „истражује како је плес повезан са заједницама и како покрет повезује појединце” (Rizo цитирано у Kabado 2013). То је такође потпуно нови плес који, према Ризовој визији, припада само заједници плесача коју је окупио за представу. Плесачи стављају руке на рамена, држе се за руке,

подупиру једни друге, наслањају се једни на друге и позивају једни друге на плес. Спора трансформација ове групе у мушку плесну заједницу траје читавом дужином дела и плесачи су повезани једни с другима чак и када изводе соло.

Пажљиво избегавајући оно што Ризо идентификује као родне стереотипе, дело има за циљ да истражи физички однос између мушкараца и њихову потребу да се држе и додирују, те да се отвори према новој перспективи из које ће се гледати на свет. Односно Ризо истражује потенцијал једне нове хомосоцијалности.

Сузана Франко, теоретичарка плеса, сматра да је кореографија проблематична из два угла. За почетак, ту је површно и паушално повезивање уметника са фолклорним материјалом као и литературом везаном за глобализацију које је само појачало стереотипе о традиционалним плесовима и музици који постоје код већине публике. Односно, ова кореографија не даје визију алтернативне заједнице, већ потврђује постојеће романтичне и површне стереотипе о Оријенту као простору „другости” и слободе јер се предства нејасно везује за овај простор. Тако, она каже:

„Кореографи који су се посебно бавили реконструкцијама које се баве плесовима које уметници и критичари неразговорно дефинишу као ‘друштвене’, ‘народне’ или ‘етничке’ схватају их као традиције које се не могу реконструисати на сцени као што су биле у прошлости, већ као дела која се свесно трансформишу савременим кореографским стратегијама и савременим телима која их изводе. Међутим, у неким случајевима, реконструкције плеса такође могу да ојачају старе стереотипе и историјске клишее, као што је перцепција савременог и традиционалног плеса као облика уметности који не насељавају исте временске сфере и не деле исте процесе преношења, већ су укључени у различите историјске дискурсе и трајекторије сећања” (Franco 2017, 177-178).

Ипак, мени се чини да је Ризо успео мало више од пуког постмодерног колажа фолклорног материјала „другог” и западних музичких и плесних форми. Иако Франкова Ризоов поступак да реферише на неку нејасну медитеранску традицију тумачи као паушалан (западњачки) однос према културама медитеранских народа (где се оне сматрају међусобно заменљивим), сматрам да и сама позиција са које полази Франкова јесте одређена западњачка позиција о јасно одређеним, одвојивим и међусобно различитим културама (које су најчешће и замишљене у оквиру националних држава). Друго, његов поступак повезивања и комбиновања покрета различитих, а ипак сродних традиција може да одговара поступку изградње једне нелинеарне културне историје где се повезују слични покрети у различитим извођачким културама, плесним историјама и периодима.⁵ Друга критика упућена је управо питању ауторства. Франкова поставља питање ауторства Кристијана Ризоа у односу на плесача Керема Гелебека који је, ипак, обезбедио материјал за покрет (момент материјал) у кореографији. Занимљиво је да Франкова не поставља питање ауторства Керема Гелебека у односу на традиционални материјал. Материјал покрета свакако није креирао Ризо, али га није креирао ни Гелебек. Гелебек га је ‘пренео’ плесачима а Ризо га је ‘аранжирао’ временски и просторно. Дакле, ко је кореограф? Ризо? Гелебек? Или анонимни народни геније разнородних медитеранских народа? Ова кореографија, дакле, најдиректније поставља питање ауторства у кореографији те се директно повезује са питањима које овај зборник радова истражује.

⁵ Као у Digital Dance Archives у Великој Британији где је омогућен визуелни метод који посетиоцу архива омогућава да претражује архив и овим аналитичким поступком. <https://www.coventry.ac.uk/research/research-directories/current-projects/2015/digital-dance-archive/>.

Пример 3: Ohad Naharin (Ohad Naharin) *Echad mi Yodea*: елементи и симболи традиционалне културе за нови плес

Трећи аналитички пример биће кореографија *Echad Mi Yodea* израелског кореографа Охада Нахарина. Овај пример је другачији од претходна два јер се не бави транспозицијом традиционалног плесног материјала у контекст савременог уметничког плеса. Дакле, овде се ради о савременој плесној представи која користи традиционални религиозни материјал јеврејске културе а која је, парадоксално, постала симболом израелске културе. Савремени плесач и кореограф, Охад Нахарин највеће је име савремене плесне сцене у Израелу и шире. Познат је као директор реномиране Батшева плесне компаније (*Batsheva Dance Company*) од 1990. до 2018. године а светску славу је, поред бројних кореографија, стекао и осмишљавањем јединственог језика плесног покрета и плесне педагогије под називом *gaga* (в. Katan 2016).

Echad Mi Yodea је кореографија настала 1990. године у оквиру целовечерњег дела *Kir*, првог плеса који је Охад Нахарин створио за Батшева плесну компанију као уметнички директор. Ово је кумулативна кореографија са звучном траком коју је саставила рок група *Tractor's Revenge* на познату песму из Хагадеб која се изводи на јеврејски празник Пасха под називом „*Ehad Mi Yodea*” („Ко Зна Једнога”). Ову бројалицу је за потребе кореографије отпевао Охад Нахарин. Политичка прекретница Нахаринове каријере је 1998. година и везује се за ову кореографију. У оквиру прославе педесете годишњице државе Израел у Јерусалиму, од кореографа је затражено да представи мега-верзију ове моћне кореографије, засноване на кумулативној песми (бројалици) Пасхе, у којој се седећи мушки ликови у црним оделима постепено и ритмично скидају до доњег рубља. Побожна жена која је погледала генералну пробу није се сложила са голим ногама извођача и пожалила се тадашњем председнику Езеру Вајцману (*Ezer Weizman*), који је тражио од Нахарина да покрије своје плесаче. Компанија је то одбила и одустала наступа на церемонији; резултујућа национална побуна због верске цензуре учинила је од Нахарина херојем због супротстављање репресији.

Кореографија има веома једноставну структуру и ослања се на релативну кинетику. Дакле, видимо петнаест плесача који седе на столицама у полукругу и током целе кореографије, махом у седећем положају, изводе сет једноставних али енергичних покрета. Плесна техника је у потпуности савремена: ослања се на комбинацију оштрих и флуидних, плутајућих покрета, динамике и успоравања. Чак и ако неко у почетку не препозна песму, ритмом се увлачи у нешто што подсећа на ритуални круг. Понављање омогућава звуку и покрету да уђу у ум и човек је захваћен интензитетом осећаја који поседује фамилијарност. Стефан Фери (*Stefan Ferry*), плесач и члан Батшеве од 1999. до 2008. каже: „Она је немилосрдна...у песму се улази понављањем покрета, у кратком трансу, у медитацији. Ако то схватите немилосрдно, стварно се физички укључујете. Вичете довољно гласно да људи чују, а онда седите и чекате... а ово чекање је као тачка за пуњење” (према: *Dekel* 2009). Ова кореографија, извођена стотинама пута у Израелу и широм света, стекла је статус традиције сам по себи. Ослањајући се на традиционалну музику, њене визуелне слике отворене за разнолику интерпретацију, изазивајући ентузијазам и контроверзу у једнакој мери – *Ehad Mi Yodea* је постала икона израелске културе.

6 Јеврејска обредна књига, која садржи библијске приче, молитве и псалме везане за празник Песах (Пасха) посвећен ослобођењу Јевреја од египатског ропства.

Које то слике и поступке користи Нахарин? За почетак, црна одела са белим кошуљама представљају препознатљиви, готово традиционални костим јеврејске заједнице у Европи.⁷ Затим, „Echad Mi Yodea” је чувени традиционални јеврејски напев коју плесачи извикују на хебрејском језику после сваке секвенце покрета⁸ над хипнотичким квази аранжманом бубњева и баса, нагињући се напред и стежући песнице. Потом, кореографија се завршава са плесачима који грозничаво кидају костиме и бацају их заједно са капама и ципелама у средиште позорнице. Врхунац дела је у овом последњем положају: плесачи стоје бесрамни у доњем вешу и изговарају последње речи хебрејског стиха: „shebashamayim uva'aretz” (који је на небесима и на земљи).

Овај напев врло прецизно прати литургију из Хагаде, наводећи неколико јеврејских учења. Његов се кумулативни облик обраћа деци, питајући од Једног до Тринаестог: Ко зна шта значи Једно? Затим два, три, итд. Један је наш Бог; Два повезујемо са две табле Закона; Три са патријарсима; Четири са матријарсима; Пет повезујемо са књигама Торе, итд.

У средишту пасхалног ритуала није само прича о егзодусу из ропства у слободу, већ и само препричавање. Песма „Echad Mi Yodea” симболична је за императив ‘препричавања’ у рецитовану, понављању и афирмацији битних елемената јудаизма, од једног до тринаест. Без обзира на то да ли се самим чином извођења одбацује, измишља или насумце користе елементе јеврејске и израелске традиције, на тој традицији је уписано кореографско дело *Echad Mi Yodea*. Дакле, овај пример је био специфичан јер, за разлику од претходна два примера он не користи постојећи традиционални репертоар или плесни материјал (ма колико широко схваћен) већ користи друге симболе јеврејске традиционалне културе и историје који се онда уписују у тела да би творила нову традицију. Место овог примера у овом раду оправдавам жељом да скренем пажњу заинтересованим ствараоцима у региону о потенцијалним путевима стварања нових традиција на темељима других симбола традиционалне културе.

Закључак

Овај рад указао је на процесе који обликују савремену уметничку плесну сцену у контексту традиције и нових дискурса о наслеђу (heritage). У извесном смислу, ова три дела могла би да се сматрају као добри примери синкретичких кореографија, да употребим израз Регине Салвање Батисте (Regina Salvaña Bautista) (Bautista 2019), које комбинују различите плесне кодове, кореографски и перформативно, не би ли изазвале, истражиле или пружиле отпор различитим идентитетским формацијама. Концепт синкретичне кореографије долази из синкретичног позоришта развијеног у оквиру постколонијалних студија. Ово позориште гледа на начине на који транснационалне културне позајмице могу да обогате плес у оквиру националних традиција при чему уметници често стварају радове пуне ироније, пост-модерног пастиша са жељом да превазиђу културне разлике (в. Butterworth and Wildschut 2009, 496). Иако концепт делимично одговара дискусијама о кореографији у овом зборнику, наглашава да савремени глобални тренутак захтева да се кореографија

⁷ Мислим на препознатљиву одећу ортодоксних Јевреја.

⁸ Захваљујем се Ваши Челебичић Агилића преводу и тумачењу речи бројалице као и тумачењу значаја ове кореографије у савременој израелској култури.

разматра и са аспекта наслеђа – односно плеса као нематеријалног културног наслеђа човечанства које даје једну нову димензију коју концепт синкретичног позоришта нема. Нови трендови и приступи традиционалној кореографији на сцени не покушавају да деконструишу плесне традиције нити да стварају „хибриде” и „фузије” (барем не само или не нужно) већ претпостављају дубински рад *унутар* једне традиције и посматрају динамичне могућности *изнутра*. Или, како каже један од најпознатијих класичних индијских *Bhataranatyam* кореографа данас Т. Balasaraswati, традиционални плесови већ у себи крију такву дубину и комплексност да омогућавају плесачу да „полети ка облацима слободе... То је слобода кроз дисциплину, а не слобода од дисциплине” (према: Katrak 2011, хих).

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Dance in the context of heritage: three cases of tradition on the contemporary dance scene

Summary: This paper represents a contribution towards a growing discussion on staging history and tradition in scholarly debates and artistic circles. Reconstruction of the iconic historical works as well as staging of different traditional dance material from all over the world have become part and parcel of contemporary choreographic approaches. These trends in artistic strategies have opened many significant questions that relate to our sense of history and our understanding of heritage. In attempting to tease out some of these questions and problems, this paper will introduce three different choreographic case studies that, each in different ways, deal with the notion of tradition in contemporary discourses of dance as heritage.

Key words: dance history, dance tradition, heritage.

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Establishment and the process of development of Turkish national folk dance institutions

Abstract: In 1947, Madame Ninette De Volais was invited to Turkey to open a ballet school in order to establish the National Turkish Ballet. Halil Oğultürk was appointed as a teacher of the ‘national dances’ class. In 1951, Ensemble of People’s dances and songs of Serbia “Kolo” gave a concert in Ankara opera hall as part of the culture week organized by the Yugoslav Embassy. The staging power and cultural aspect of this performance had a great impact. As a result, Halil Oğultürk was sent by the government to former Yugoslavia for a year to do research on how to teach, document, choreograph and orchestrate dances. Thus, folk dance staging started to increase and turn into a modern presentation form in Turkey. The State Folk Dance Ensemble was established in 1975 under the Ministry of Tourism and Promotion as the first official professional folk dance ensemble. The innovative stage arrangements of the State Folk Dance Ensemble, which presents traditional dances with a modern staging approach, added a new dimension to the understanding of folk dance staging. The training activities for the professional dancers of the State Folk Dance Ensemble and the staging approaches created by the famous dance choreographers of the period would be the basis for the creation of the sports and performing arts courses included in the curriculum of the Turkish Folk Departments. In this study, I will discuss the effect of professional folk dance ensembles established in Eastern Europe on the establishment and development process of National Turkish Folk Dance Institutions. The social, economic, and political development of Turkish folk dance performances from the Republican period will be examined. The effect of Eastern European Professional Folk Dance Ensembles in the process of Turkish folk dance departments becoming an independent art branch in universities will be evaluated under this title.

Keyword: folk dance, institution, Turkey, establishment, development

World History of Folk Dance Staging

We can obtain a lot of information about the staging of the dance since ancient Greece. However, the first works in line with today's staging approaches emerged after the 19th century. In the 19th century, various nationalist projects started developing around the world, and studies aimed at discovering the culture and geography of the relevant nation state were given priority. Anna Ilieva reports that after Bulgaria gained autonomy in 1878, with the efforts of Bulgarian intellectuals who tried to develop a national identity, more than 60 volumes of folklore studies were produced (Ilieva 1992). Studies on the folk dance repertoire in Bohemia by the order of the Austrian monarchy in 1819 formed the pioneering documents. Founded in Sweden in 1893, "Friends of Swedish Folk Dance" organisation has documented different dances in the country. In this way, they protected traditional dances and set them to be revived and performed. As Stavělová (Stavělová 1998) claims: "The first example of consciously processing and staging folk culture is the Czech-Slovak Ethnographic Exhibition that took place in 1895". The first folk dance competition was held in Norway in 1898 (Bakka 1992). The Society for the Promotion of Folk Dance was founded in Denmark in 1901. In the same vein, compilation books were published in Lithuania at the beginning of the 20th century, which noted that the dances spread and gained popularity over time. Pioneering these years, Cecil Sharp's works in England documented folk dances and done compilation and standardization studies, several works on the subject were published. Folk dance lessons were added to the primary and secondary education curriculum in 1909, the English Folk Dance Ensemble, founded in 1911, contributed to the developments of folk dance.

Traditional Dance Staging in Ottoman society before 20th Century

By looking at the available historical data, it becomes clear that dance staging was an important cultural element in the Ottoman Empire. For example, the remaining documents of financial affairs of the Ottoman Empire give great information about the dance in the festival scene at that time. For example, *Surname-i Vehbi*, in honor of Sultan Ahmet the III, took place during his three sons' circumcision feasts in 1720. In the miniatures painted by Levni, many dancers took part in the festival. *Surname* pieces give us a lot of information about how the art of dance was realized at the 'street level', outside of official ceremonies (Sevinçli 2006, 390-391).

During the reign of Sultan Ibrahim (1640-1648), dancers trade associations called *Kol takımı* began to be established by the Jewish communities. There were jugglers, acrobats, as well as *köçek* dancers in the *kol* teams, which consisted of (approximately) two hundred members. They used to perform in the open air, under the tents set up in the squares of the various inns of İstanbul during various festivals or at summer weddings (Gazimihal 1997, 125). It is known that the *kol* used to perform in an organized manner with many technical supports such as decor, costume, and accessories.

As And reports, each *köçek* was standing on a round wooden platform floating on the water. There is a weight under the circles to ensure balance. The dancers are tied to a vertical bar under their skirts to keep them from falling. A rope is attached to these circles under the water. One end of the rope is on the beach and the other end is tied to one of the ships in the Golden Horn. When the rope is pulled from one end, the round glides on the water surface, and the *köçek* dances during this gliding. A kind of water ballet! (And 2002, 114).

Overview of Turkish political trends in the 20th century

The organization of dance institutions in the modern sense and the staging of traditional dance performances in Turkey appeared in the 20th century, especially after the Turkish Republic was established in 1923. Dance staging and education have played an important role in the formation of national identity and the dissemination of official culture.

In the first half of the 20th century, the official ideology of the young republic moved away from the Ottoman legacy, aimed at western aesthetic values, and was based on the values of secular nationalism. After the transition to democracy with the multi-party period which started in the second half of the 20th century, with the entry of different ideologies into the political arena, the quality and status of dance staging and educational institutions began to change and diversify.

In the first half of the 21st century, with the ruling of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) since 2002, the elite-based Western policies of the Early Republican period known as *Kemalizm* began to be widely discussed in the field of ethnochoreology. Turkey's interest in the Ottoman past has increased again. A view called 'New Turkey', which is rooted in socially conservative values, has been put forward (Parkinson & Muslu Gardner, 2020). The new view focused on national and conservative values and ideology with policy interventions based on Ottoman aesthetics. The idea of keeping Turkish-Islamic values alive in Turkey was supported by official institutions. A new language of art has emerged in the field of ethnochoreology, as well as in almost every field related to music, theatre, contemporary arts, museums and such.¹

Institutionalization of Folk Dance Staging in the First Half of the 20th Century

There is no precise information about when, how and by whom the organized local folk dance groups were formed for staging in the early years of the Republic. However, in many regions, it has been documented that people make shows by forming local folk dance groups for demonstration purposes with their individual efforts. For example, there were local folk dance groups coming from surrounding towns and performing in front of the coffeehouses in Izmir between 1920-1925. These groups consist of local people (Özblgin 2010).

As a result of the political views of the Early Republican period, it can be considered that the main factors affecting the presentation of folk dances regarding modernization are nationalist policies, women's movements, and political migration.

Nationalism and Modernization Policies

In the Republic of Turkey, which has a multicultural ethnic structure, Folk Dance activities are seen as one of the most important elements that unite communities within the nation-state model. Their dissemination was officially supported.

Just as music and dance embody the dominant values of society, they can also powerfully and effectively mobilize competing principles of social organization. In the young

¹ <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/siyaset/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-kultur-ve-turizm-bakanligi-ozel-odulleri-to-reninde-konustu-2809320>; <https://www.dailysabah.com/columns/ibrahim-kalin/2017/03/07/third-culture-council-discusses-culture-change-globalization>; <http://mevlana.konyaajansi.com/2018/12/cumhurbaskan-recep-tayyip-erdogan-seb-i.html>

Turkish republic, which has adopted the nation-state model, music and dance have been used to dissolve opposition groups, often with state support, to emphasize the benefits of gathering under a single roof, but also through emphasizing that difference can be accepted as a unity.

Modernization and westernization efforts, which were the main goals of the Republic of Turkey, are important factors that are effective in the process of change of traditional dance. The innovations made have led to great changes in cultural and economic life. For example, the Republic of Turkey tried to establish itself on a secular foundation. The use of clothing containing religious symbols was prohibited. After this period, traditional clothing has turned into ceremonial dress in most of the country, especially in the cities. These costumes, which are no longer worn in daily life, have started to be used as special costumes worn in traditional ceremonies such as henna nights and folk dance activities.

In terms of the institutionalization of traditional dances, we can list a few of the pioneering works conducted in Turkey in this period as follows:

The first staging work on folk dances emerged when the physical education teacher Selim Sırrı Tarcan, was influenced by the importance given to folk culture in Sweden, where he went for education in 1909, and especially the conversion of traditional dances to ballroom dances. Tarcan was known to have observed zeybek dances at every opportunity but could not find the elegance in the dances he had seen in Sweden. He decided to create a work that overlaps with western dance aesthetics from the various zeybek dances he learned. Selim Sırrı Tarcan prepared a Zeybek choreography with certain new steps and figure sequences and named it Tarcan Zeybeği. This newly prepared zeybek choreography was performed by the students at the Istanbul teacher school where Tarcan was a teacher, at the training festival at the Kadıköy İttihadi Spor Klübü [United Sports Club] (Ünal 1995, 171). Being the first practice like this in Turkey, then being presented on the stage with the students of İzmir Teacher's School on 14 October 1925 in the presence of the great leader Atatürk has been a turning point for Turkish Folk Dances (Çakır 2001).

The establishment of the Turkish Republic should also be described as a cultural revolution. Aiming at sporting, cultural, and social education by organizations such as Community Centers (1932) and Village Institutes (1940), which were signature institutions of the Republican period, the goal was to create national identity and a dance culture, which was previously practiced in a closed and traditional environment within each community. These were transformed into a group folk dance activity.

With the establishment of Community Centers in 1932, folklore studies were conducted. Local dance groups formed in Community Centers were trained by local people selected among themselves in the first years. The great majority of these teams started to perform in the public houses festivals that were established in 1933, and over time they also performed on national holidays and liberation days.

The Village Institutes became one of the leading institutions where folk dances were taught, disseminated, and exhibited (Ünal 1995). Folk dances were played as morning sports in 14 Village Institutes and the folk dances learned here were carried to teacher schools by the graduated students, and from there they spread throughout the country.

The view of life connected to modernity is the most prominent this period. There is high interest in arts branches that are not yet institutionalized in Turkey, such as ballet,

opera, etc., which are called High and Elite Art. With the effect of admiration for Western aesthetics, an understanding of harmony, order, and elegance, which takes western norms as an example, began to settle in folk dance performances, and in this direction, folk dance audiences were formed in the cities.

In this period when westernization and modernization phenomena came to the fore, folk dance activities institutionalized in the urban environment were often compared with ballet in terms of art. Under the intensity of these ideas and policies, one of the most important goals was the desire to create a ‘Turkish Ballet’ by making use of traditional dances. In 1947, Madam Ninette De Valois was invited to establish a ballet school in Turkey with the aim of establishing a National Turkish Ballet. Due to the concerns of westernization, many bureaucrats opposed the inclusion of folk dance lessons in the school education repertoire. Halil Oğultürk, who was appointed at the insistence of Ninette de Valois, started to teach ‘national dances’ at the conservatory that consisted of folk dances (Özbilgin 2010). As a result, many associated works were revealed: “Ninette de Valois in the Ankara State ballet pieces called *Hançerli Kadın* [Woman with a Dagger] and *Çeşme Başı* presented as an example of Turkish creative power (Bozkurt 2000, 23). Oğultürk staged a folk dance piece called *Köy Düğünü* [Village Wedding] with a group of 45 students from the theater, opera and singing departments of the conservatory. In this work, which is presented in a certain scenario, stage make-up and decor are used for the first time in the staging of folk dances.

Women’s Movements

Significant progress has been made on women’s rights after the republican revolutions. As an indicator of a modern state structure, it was desired for women to take place in all kinds of social platforms. For this reason, many laws and rules were put into effect, especially between the years 1920-50, in line with the decisions taken.²

Selim Sırrı Tarcan transformed his own choreography “Tarcan Zeybeği” into a social dance where men and women can dance together, exhibited in the presence of Atatürk and received great acclaim. Tarcan quotes this acclaim in his work as follows:

“Ladies and Gentlemen! Mr. Selim Sırrı gave *zeybek* a civilized form while complimenting it. The work of this Artisan Master has been accepted by all of us willingly and has evolved enough to occupy a place in our national and social life and has taken a beautiful form. Now we can say to the Europeans that we have an excellent dance, and we can dance it in our halls, at our stage performances. *Zeybek Dance* can and should be danced with women in every social hall” (Tarcan 1948, 3).

The appearance of women on the stage and the dancing of women and men together in social settings later turned into a kind of state policy (Kurt 2017, 28). As a reflection of these ideas, various encouraging policies were put in place to motivate female participants for folk dance activities. For example, while silver medals were given to male participants, gold medals were given to female participants, emphasizing that being a woman had a different value. It is noteworthy that the number of female danc-

² 1926: With the Turkish Civil Code, regulations on polygamy and unilateral divorce of men were abolished, and women were given the right to divorce, the right of custody and the right to dispose of their property. 1934: With the constitutional amendment, women were granted the right to vote and be elected. 1936: The Labor Law came into effect. The working life of women was regulated. 1949: The regulation of old age insurance on equal basis for men and women was provided by Law No. 5417.

ers is also stated in many advertisements and announcements regarding Turkish folk dance festivals.

In the newspaper articles, positive emphasis is placed on female participants and the necessity of women being on the stage in dance activities in terms of aesthetics and modernity is emphasized.

Among the delegations that showed their talents in the open-air theater, those who put women on the stage were more successful than the other teams without hesitation. As one newspaper emphasized: “Always male, always male, results in monotony (...) We need women in the national dances, we should consider this as an idea” (*Akis Newspaper* 18.09.1954).

The ensembles participating in the Folk Dance festivals saw that the dances in which the women took part were more appreciated by the audience. For this reason, they made an effort to dance together by teaching men’s dances to women, although there is no common dance in the traditional repertoire, but the local dances are changed. Over the years, this view has been adopted by many dance groups and spread all over Turkey.

There has been great progress in the visibility of women in the staging of folk dances. However, the formation of all trends and the preparation of presentations are designed only in a male-dominated structure. When we look at the institutional structure of traditional dance in the light of current feminist approaches, it can be said that a completely masculine point of view is dominant.

Ethnic Structure of Anatolia Changing with Political Migration

As a result of the political transformations and agreements that emerged in the last years of the Ottoman Empire, there were massive, forced migrations from the Balkans and the Caucasus to Anatolia. Many exchange associations were established by the immigrants who immigrated to Turkey in order to preserve their unity and cultural memory. They chose folk dance and folk music as the main means of preserving their cultural identity.

Sociologically, traditional dances are staged by the peoples who migrated to Turkey for two main purposes. Firstly, to establish robust symbolic systems that preserve the ethnic integrity of the group and guarantee their own traditions. Later, strengthening ethnic identity, premarital interaction, social integration, strengthening traditional rules of behavior, teaching children to dance, etc. Participants (dancers and spectators) give more importance to the social interaction that occurs through the dance environment, rather than performing a joint action with dance movements. Due to the multidimensional character of the symbols systematic in traditional dance staging, it creates an ideal environment for collectively communicating political-ideological, educational, religious, and economic messages for the immigrant societies, most of whom immigrated from the Balkans and settled in Anatolia (Özbilgin 2012).

Institutionalization of Folk Dance Staging in the Second Half of the 20th Century

In the 1950s, the acceleration of the transformation of the country into an industrial society, migration, increase in mass media, urbanization, etc. all of these problematized the issue of traditional dance. There have been striking changes in the staging of folk dances, especially due to the new staging movements carried out from other countries.

State and private institutions wanted to spread the living traditional dances on the one hand, and to revive the lost and disappearing dances on the other hand.

As a result of the political views adopted in the second half of the 20th century, we can consider the main factors affecting the structure and presentation of folk dances under the headings of internal migration for economic reasons, urbanization, domestic and foreign tourism, international dance events and competitions.

Internal Migration and Staging of Folk Dances in the Urban Environment

During Turkey's modernisation, the rural population started to leave the villages and migrate to the cities with the effect of industrialization. Traditional culture struggled to adapt to modern life with its own values. In a sense, while trying to protect its values from modernity, it also created new values by being influenced by modernity.

There is a 'problematic' relationship between tradition and modernity. Gerard Delanty in his *Modernity and Postmodernity: Knowledge, Power, and Self* (Delanty 1997), defines tradition as 'cultural values from the past' and traditionalism as a commitment to the idea that 'these values will never change'. According to Gadamer and Ricoeur, tradition in modern society is not a relic, it is something that is reconstructed, reproduced. The concern of reviving the tradition seen in the 1950s and transferring it to future generations within the urban phenomenon has led the intellectuals dealing with folk dance staging to find the most 'authentic', that is, 'oldest' form of dance.

The most important development in the field of folk dance in the 1950s was the internal migration movement. People who moved to big cities for business and education have established provincial and regional associations in order to protect their own culture in a diasporic manner. On the other hand, they started to learn and perform different dances by being curious about the new cultures they encountered in the environments they came from.

By the 1970s, Folk Dance Associations had become widespread all over Anatolia, starting from the big cities. Thus, folk dance has become one of the most interesting social activities in all educational institutions from primary school to university level, as well as in private institutions. In Öztürkmen's words:

“The concentration of folk dance activities in cities also led to some fundamental changes in their performance and structure of dances. The first change was with the staging of local dances—generic distinctions between the various dance traditions began to fade, as various geometric shapes such as circles, wheels, diagonal or straight lines were applied to almost every regional dance staged. The main reason for this was that the dancers tried to take the changing places in the imposed stage order without concentrating on the local figures” (Öztürkmen 2002, 153).

Internal - Tourism and International Dance Events

Tourism and international dance events have been another important factor in bringing folk dances to the stage.

As a result of the efforts made to develop Turkey economically, urbanized societies have turned to domestic and foreign tourism. To determine the groups that can participate in the foreign folk dance festival invitations on behalf of Turkey, the General

Directorate of Press and Publications of the Ministry of Tourism tried to determine the folk dance ensembles that started to form associations throughout Turkey. Photographs about the groups, since they have not used a camera yet, the instruments accompanying the folk dances, folk dance clothes, etc., with a survey consisting of 17 questions. This information has officially started to be archived at the general directorate of press and broadcasting.

The desire to market Turkey's cultural values to the world in accordance with universal norms, requires following western innovations and views. For this reason, seeing the folk dance staging, advanced in Eastern European countries, has directly affected the staging and presentation styles of Turkish folk dances. Under these views, participating in folk dance festivals held in foreign countries and performing shows in Turkey by various groups from abroad, turned into a touristic activity that attracted a lot of attention (Özbilgin 2010). As a result, the youth has increasingly adopted folk dance.

In 1953, Ensemble "Kolo" gave a concert in Ankara due to the culture week organized by the Yugoslavian embassy. According to Oğultürk, Ensemble 'Kolo' is a group that has come to the forefront with strong efforts to bring culture, art and sports fields influenced by the communist system of the Soviet Union to the forefront:

"Many officials were invited. So, I went to watch. What are their dances and figures? I examined what kind of costume they are wearing. While we did not know what choreography was at that time, these groups accepted this issue and established an institute. They compiled and archived. They worked on the choreography. (...) What I saw was this; It was a large group, and they were playing with boys and girls. Their clothes were also quite colorful. The lighting arrangement was (eye) catching. Their music was performed by an orchestra of folk instruments. After watching, I saw that there were very few figures in the dances; had the influence of classical ballet" (Oğultürk, 2007, 138).

During the intermission, the Minister of National Education Ahmet Tevfik İleri (duty period: 11 August 1950 - 5 April 1953) asked Halil Oğultürk, "Why aren't we doing something like this?" After Oğultürk said that there were no schools for dance staging and choreography education in Turkey, he was assigned by the state to conduct a one-year study in Yugoslavia in order to obtain information on the education systems, compilation systems, choreography and orchestra formation of the dance.

Halil Oğultürk started to apply his views on the staging of folk dances in Skopje, Priština and Belgrade for 10 months in the folk dance classes he gave in the Conservatory Ballet Department and in folk dance ensembles. This change in the staging of folk dances continued with an increasing momentum. As far as possible, foreign societies were invited to Turkey to see the presentations of foreign Ensembles. The staging of the Ensembles from former Yugoslavia, especially, greatly influenced the staging of Turkish folk dance.

The first information that Oğultürk acquired about staging abroad, in his own words, is as follows:

"It will be danced with the same steps as it is danced on the dance floor, only their numbers will decrease. For example, if it is repeated 4 or 5 times, it will not be prolonged and repeated twice. It will be cleared again. The dancer will not turn his back on the audience as much as possible" (Oğultürk 2007, 138).

In the staging techniques used here, there is a concern that Turkish folk dances will disappear over time if the step variety and step sequence are reduced. For this reason, it has been adopted to present the plays as a theatrical presentation with a dramatic subject by preserving the traditional setup and reducing the number of step repetitions (Oğultürk 2007, 140).

Competitions

Folk Dance Competitions have led to the standardization of Turkish folk dance. The aesthetic and physical differences seen in the step structures have taken on a standard appearance. The aesthetic and physical balances in the presentations prevented the presentation of the unique local features of the dance.

A trend towards stylized dance has been observed in Turkey in order to bring traditional dances to the same level with professional folk dance ensembles of other countries. The necessity of professional groups and academic institutions providing education on folk dances has been widely expressed.

Briefly mentioning the State Folk Dance Ensemble opened within these views, and the Turkish Folk Dance departments opened within the Conservatories will contribute to understanding the trends of the Turkish Folk Dances and the development of their institutions.

State Folk Dance Ensemble

Social movements that define beauty and aim to present folk dances in the most powerful way in search of perfection, have emerged because of the cultural policies of Eastern European countries. Artistic editing of staged folk dance at amateur or professional levels does not guarantee that originality and authenticity will be preserved. Most of such stage productions are located within the boundaries of art and socio-cultural performance. Professional dance ensembles have a great responsibility in the formation of the aesthetic understanding institutionalized in folk dances and in determining the authenticity criteria in this field, having a wide and intense effect on the audience consisting of different social strata.

The State Folk Dance Ensemble, which was established in 1975 as the first and only official institution in folk dances, was founded as a part of official policy aiming to stylize folk dances and present them in western norms. The entire repertoire of the ensemble has been widely used by being widely accepted throughout the country thanks to its television broadcast. State Folk Dances have been effective in introducing the understanding of stage arrangement to the folk dances performed in associations and schools (Öztürkmen 2016, 256).

University Departments of Turkish Folk Dances

Turkish Folk Dance Departments were established to train expert educators, artists and academics who can teach traditional dances with scientific methods and techniques that can be passed onto future generations. After the Turkish Folk Dance Department of the ITU State Conservatory, which was first established in İstanbul in 1984, today, eight different folk dance departments continue their education in various universities.

We can classify the traditional dance education approach, which aims to gain competence and proficiency in Turkish folk dance departments, under five items:

CULTURAL	ARTISTIC	SPORTIVE	SOCIAL	EDUCATIONAL
Research / Collection in the field of Turkish Folk Dances	Artistic Communication	Educational Information and Gymnastics	Social Anthropology	Methods and Techniques of Teaching Turkish Folk Dances
Scientific Research Methods and Techniques	Art and Organization	Ballet	Ethnology?	Instrumental Education
Turkish Folk Dance History	Acting for Dancers	Dance and Sports	Social Work Practices	Rhythm/Rhythmic Perception
Type and Attitude in Turkish Folk Dances	Stage and Production	Physiology	Social responsibility projects	Using of Technical Tools
Traditional Clothes and Finery	Stage Costumes	Kinesiological Anatomy		Beden Dili Eğitimi
Application / Regional Information	Make-up			Movement Notation
				Theory and Solfeggio

Ege University State Turkish Music Conservatory and its Turkish Folk Dance Department aims to conduct pioneering studies on Turkish folk dances with various experimental studies on the presentation of traditional dance since its establishment with the show group named Ekin ensemble, in addition to education. The group, which prepares a new project every year, has had to take a break from its work since 2020 due to the pandemic declared because of the Covid-19 outbreak.

Conclusion

Folk dances were perceived as a social activity for the first time with the enlightenment studies in the Republican period. The efforts of staging dances, arranging the steps, putting them in a certain order and applying universal aesthetic values to the dances are the result of the approaches of this period.

The traditional musical orchestras and their musical arrangements, theatrical performances, the technical use of decor and various accessories, and the inventive presentation styles of the dance ensembles of foreign countries have affected the staging studies of the Turkish national dance society. Local groups looking for ways to make a more impressive presentation have tried to make original stagings by going beyond their own local dance forms.

The performance of the Irish ‘Riverdance’ dance troupe in the 1994 and Eurovision song contest ‘hybrid dance model’, which combines different dance genres around a simple narrative, has paved the way for the views of many folk dance ensembles to change. In Turkey, at the end of the 1990s, ‘Sultans of the Dance’, today’s ‘Fire of Anatolia’, was established as a follower of this model (Kurt 2017, 129). Fire of Anatolia brought together different disciplines such as ballet, contemporary dance and acrobatics based on traditional dances (Bozkurt 2019, 39). This new Turkish style dance model, which became widespread in a short time, paved the way for the establishment of many professional and amateur dance groups in the 2000s.

The movement of national folk dance institutions from traditional to national, from national to the international platform is an effort to create a universal Turkish dance. Institutional efforts of the staging of traditional Anatolian dances have greatly contributed to the fact that folk dances take their place in the field of performing arts in Turkey today with their unique practices and theories.

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Оснивање и процес развоја турских националних институција народне игре

Сажетак: Године 1947., Мадам Нинет Де Валоа је позвана у Турску да отвори балетску школу како би основала национални турски балет. Халил Огултурк је постављен за наставника класе „националних игара”. Године 1951. Ансамбл народних игара и песама Србије „Коло” одржао је концерт у Сали опере у Анкари у оквиру Недеље културе коју је организовала Амбасада Југославије. Сценска снага и културни аспект ове представе имали су велики утицај. Као резултат тога, влада је послала Халила Огултурка у Југославију на годину дана да истражи како да подучава, документује, кореографише и оркестрира плесове. Тако је инсценација традиционалних плесова у Турској почела да се увећава и претвара у модеран облик презентације. Државни ансамбл традиционалних плесова основан је 1975. године у оквиру Министарства туризма и промоције као први званични професионални ансамбл традиционалних плесова. Иновативни сценски аранжмани Државног ансамбла традиционалних плесова, који представља традиционалне плесове са савременим сценским приступом, дали су нову димензију разумевању инсценације традиционалних плесова. Активности обуке за професионалне плесаче Државног ансамбла традиционалних плесова и сценски приступи које су креирали познати плесни кореографи тог периода били би основа за креирање курикулума спорта и извођачких уметности који су укључени у наставни план и програм турских фолклорних одсека. У овој студији говорио сам о утицају професионалних ансамбала традиционалних плесова основаних у источној Европи на процес оснивања и развоја националних турских институција за традиционалне плесове. Био је испитан друштвени, економски и политички развој турских сценских традиционалних плесова из републиканског периода. Из ове визуре, сагледаван је ефекат источноевропских професионалних фолклорних ансамбала у процесу развоја турских одсека за народну игру као самосталне уметничке гране на универзитетима.

Кључне речи: народна игра, институције, Турска, јавност, развој

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The Choreography of traditional dance in Serbia in artistic crisis: towards an anthropological interpretation^{1*}

Abstract: Serbia has a long ethnochoreological tradition, while the art of the choreography of traditional dance is a relatively recent phenomenon, created after the Second World War. Although it is an artistic practice, the choreography of traditional dance is often based on the opposition *original:stylized* and perceived as a practice that “preserves identity”, “tradition”, and “heritage”. I argue that the tendency towards division within the genre is not in favor of art. On the contrary, framing attempts and insisting on a clear commitment to the approach when creating choreography led to limiting the art of the choreography of traditional dance. This paper aims to present the processes by which the discourse on “original” choreographies was built and then to point out the limiting attempts of sub-genre classification of choreographies. Finally, this article will present the show “#MeltingPot” performed by the students at the Ballet High School from Novi Sad. Namely, in this performance, traditional dances inspired professors and students to create new choreographic forms and bring the choreography of traditional dance out of years of hibernation.

Key words: The choreography of traditional dance, art, original, stylized, #Melting-Pot

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Introduction²

In Serbia, there is a tendency to talk about the choreography of traditional dance from several perspectives. While the amateur discourse divides choreographies into “original” and “stylized”, the scientific discourse complicates the divisions by distinguishing: combinations, processing, high stylization, etc. In this paper, I argue that the tendency towards division within the genre is not in favor of art. On the contrary, framing attempts and insisting on a clear commitment to the approach when creating choreography led to limiting the art of the choreography of traditional dance. Another problem that can be seen is the favoring of the so-called “original choreographies” by amateur choreographers, which “authentically” show elements of traditional culture on stage. The narrative of the “original” choreographies and their appearance is constructed through time and practice within the genre. This would not be a problem if “original” choreographies were considered a legitimate possibility. The problem arises because any other attempt, which goes beyond the “original” or “authentic” way of presenting traditional dances, is perceived as a “desecration of tradition” or an attempt to “destroy identity”.

However, with the advent of the Ethno Summit “TradicijaNova”, we saw several choreographies or programs in which the choreography of traditional dances goes beyond the genre framework or where these dances are used only as an inspiration for creating a new piece. Such attempts generally did not meet with affirmative comments or support from the general public but won the space and attention of a significant part of the audience.³

This paper aims to present the processes by which the discourse on “original” choreographies was built, then to point out the limiting attempts of sub-genre classification of choreographies. Finally, this article will present the show “#MeltingPot” performed by the students at the Ballet High School from Novi Sad. Namely, traditional dances inspired professors and students from the mentioned school to create new choreographic forms and bring the art of traditional dance choreography out of years of hibernation.

Amateur discourse

The discourse of amateur choreographers of traditional dances in Serbia recognizes “authentic” or “original” choreographies as extremely important for preserving the traditions and identity of the people.⁴ Those choreographies have been recognized by continual features within this art, such as: the usage and presentation of “original” materials from the field; simplification of spatial patterns in choreography; and “authentic” representation of dances on stage. Although there has yet to be a consensus on complying with all three criteria, the basic choreographic rules are transmitted generationally and orally from older to younger choreographers. In other words, in amateur discourse, it is something “known.”

2 I sincerely thank Katarina Nikolić, Serbian ethnochoreologist and an associate of the Institute of Musicology of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, who read the first version of this work and gave great ethnochoreological suggestions.

3 The Ethno Summit “TradicijaNova” was realized for the first time in 2017. The basic idea of forming such a manifestation came from the director of the Ensemble “Kolo” at the time, Vladimir Dekić, and in the final definition and realization of the entire program, Dunja Njaradi, PhD, Associate Professor (Faculty of Music in Belgrade) and Miloš Rašić, PhD, Research Associate (Institute of Ethnography SASA). The Ethno Summit consisted of three parts: performances by professional ensembles from Serbia and the region; workshops where professional dancers went beyond the limits of their artistic genre; and a scientific conference that brought together scientists from the social and human sciences and artists to reexamine the phenomenon of the stage presentation of traditional dances. In the period from 2017 to 2019 (the first three Ethno Summits), in addition to Vladimir Dekić as editor-in-chief, the editors were Dunja Njaradi, PhD and Miloš Rašić, PhD, while the subsequent three summits, from 2019 to 2022, were edited by Iva Niemčić, PhD (Institute of Ethnology and Folklore research in Zagreb) and Ivona Opetčevska Tatarčeska (Ministry of Culture of North Macedonia).

4 In such attitudes, traces of the romantic-folkloristic attitudes of older authors from Serbia, who approached the phenomenon of traditional dances intending to preserve and collect them “before they disappear” (s. Rakočević 2013), are highly noticeable.

“Original” material from the field

Choreographers interested in creating so-called “original” choreographies tend to present “original” material from the field – traditional dances and music collected by professional and amateur researchers. Over time, amateur choreographers have given the credibility of a few individual researchers by creating authority in the fieldwork research of traditional dances. For example, the most respected are Ljubica and Danica Janković, whose work is the basis for most choreography. Also crucial in this process are the work of Olivera Vasić and the material of the Center for Research and Preservation of the traditional dances from Serbia.

On the other hand, there are amateur collectors, about whom I have already written on several occasions in my papers (s. Rašić 2021; Rašić 2022). Namely, since 1990, professor Olivera Vasić, PhD, in Serbia founded the Center for the Research of Folk Dances of Serbia⁵ to offer amateur choreographers and managers of folklore ensembles an informal form of education in the field of traditional dances. The seminars were held twice a year and lasted 7 to 10 days. In addition, Vasić, gave practical and theoretical lectures on dances from different parts of Serbia to the ensemble leaders with the help of collaborators and demonstrators from the field.⁶ Over time, Vasić trained several seminar participants in the basics of fieldwork who began to research traditional dances throughout Serbia and the region and afterwards presented their results at the Center’s seminars. I call these individuals *amateur-collectors* since they were not educated in social and humanities. Moreover, they only collected material and presented it raw to others, using very questionable fieldwork methods. At the same time, the aforementioned amateur collectors become authorities in the field of amateur folklore in Serbia and the Serbian diaspora (s. Rašić 2016), making choreographies and holding traditional dance seminars more and more frequently.⁷ Also, over time, the fieldwork material brought by the amateur-collectors has increasingly become considered as “real”, “authentic,” and “original”, from which “original” choreographies should be made.

The amateur-collectors mentioned above became, in amateur discourse, “guardians of the truth” (Buckland 1999, 196) or “guardians of the national treasure” (Shay 2002, 15), who are unquestioningly trusted – because they were in the field! However, these “keepers of truth” do not “guard” the complete and unique truth since “The ‘truth’ is a kaleidoscope of possibilities and, in the field, it depends on who lifting that kaleidoscope to his eye, when and in which direction it is pointing” (Buckland 1999, 205).

It is also important to point out that, since the 1990, Serbia has been undergoing a strong transition in the socio-political sense. The dissolution of former Yugoslavia and the construction of a new, nationally defined state implied the design, reactualization, and activation of new or long-forgotten national symbols that would legitimize and maintain the newly established identity. Therefore, folk dance ensembles also had their role in those policies, turning primarily to national programs.⁸ This shift towards national programs required new material

5 Today the Center for Research and Preservation of Traditional Dances of Serbia, from now on the Center.

6 During the seven to ten days of the seminar, the participants had the opportunity to practically learn the traditional dances and songs of specific geographical units of Serbia. In addition, the seminars also included theoretical classes where researchers or academic workers spoke about their research into the traditional culture in the given areas, and the classes of labanotation given by Vasić.

7 Later, from the beginning of the 21st century, a few of the aforementioned amateur collectors whom Vasić trained left the Center and formed their non-governmental organizations and seminars that were not only the same as those offered by the Center but also used the Center’s materials and published books without respecting copyright.

8 A shift towards national policies is also noticeable by looking at the list of all choreographies and the program policies of the “Kolo” ensemble. Namely, since 1986 Ensemble has been starting to perform programs with exclusively Serbian traditional

for creating choreographies which influenced a significant increase in the number of various dance researchers, both professional and amateur, at a given moment.⁹

Simple spatial patterns

In their ideas about “original” choreographies, amateur choreographers were guided by the idea that traditional dances should be shown exactly as they were once performed in social reality. Therefore, they often make choreographies with simple spatial patterns or, as said in the amateur discourse, “simple choreographic images.” Among them, the opinion was formed that in the distant past, people performed traditional dances exclusively in a circle and semi-circle, and exceptionally in some other formation, if the dance itself implied it. Striving to perform “authentic” depictions of the former “everyday life” on stage, amateur choreographers simplify spatial patterns in their choreographies.

Dance style

The “original” style of dancing is the last criterion that stands out among amateur choreographers as necessary when performing traditional dances in “original” choreographies. At the Center seminars mentioned above and in most ethnochoreological publications in Serbia, the authors and lecturers always highlight unique dancing styles as specificities of different geographical entities in Serbia. That “original” style of dancing is reached during the field research itself, when the researcher, amateur or professional, records traditional dances and, through observation, determines how the way of performing dances differs in the area in which the research is conducted. In other words, defining the dancing style of a particular geographical entity is based solely on the free assessment of the researcher with the help of the research technique of observation (with participation). Researchers and collectors would then describe the dance styles verbally or demonstrate independently through reconstructions of what they saw in the field. Those descriptions are mostly reduced and look like this: “It is played, mostly, on the full foot, but in some dances, it is also stepped on with the front part of the foot...” (Mihailović 2005, 7); “Dancing on the front part of the foot, slightly bent and relaxed knees is the first thing we can notice while observing the dancers from this part of the upper Banat... the movements of the ankles, knees, and feet are connected during the dance and function completely coordinated and dependent on each other” (Popov 2012, 87).

The style of dancing was thus reconstructed based on the demonstration of individual subjects from the field or on verbal statements about “how it is danced in their area.” Accepting general explanations and demonstrations mentioned above as truth, amateur choreographers essentialized the style of dancing in certain geographical regions of Serbia, representing them by that “typical style of dancing” (Rašić 2022, 90). In other words, with highly questionable research techniques, based on the claims of individuals from the field, “styles” were constructed that everyone respects *a priori*, because of which “...the entire people and the way of dancing of a certain geographical entity became essentialized” (Rašić 2022, 90).

dances more and more often. In contrast, sometimes choreographed dances of certain national minorities appear, but only those who live in Serbia and which are politically convenient at that moment – e.g., Roma and Hungarians.

⁹ For more on the issue of nation-building, the construction of new ones, or referring to long-forgotten symbols of national identity, s. Čolović 2013; Naumović 2009.

A critique of the concept of “authentic”

In the performing arts, the concept of authenticity has several potential conceptualizations:

„Some people strive for authenticity by attempting to reconstruct or physically replicate the form of the earliest performance. Others understand the goal of authenticity as reconstructing the first creator’s idea of an ideal performance. Others see the goal of authenticity differently again and seek to produce performances that reveal the original values, vitality, and qualities as vividly as possible. These latter groups understand that producing an authentic event may invoke changes in form as the performance adapts to contemporary settings, incorporates contemporary technology, is received by contemporary audiences, and as different values are selected as essential” (Nahachewsky 2012, 29-30).

In a broader sense, the concept of authenticity has a precise role in social reality and comes to the fore, especially when it is necessary to build and maintain newly established identities, when other identity markers lose their importance, weaken, or cannot be used.¹⁰ In those moments, individuals or groups reach for “authentic” and “oldest traditions,” with which they further legitimize their identity as old and, therefore, worthy of attention (s. Antonijević 2023). Authenticity is, also, necessarily connected with the idea of the presentation of the nation. In other words, as many amateur choreographers believe, it is possible to present the nation in the best way exclusively through “authentic” symbolic or material manifestations of the “original” culture. This is what Andriy Nahachewsky observes in his research of Ukrainian dances in Canada, stating that “...one of the features that often validates national dance activity in the minds of the dance community is its ‘authenticity’ – its fidelity to the original forms” (Nahachewsky 1992, 73).

Previous interpretations point to the fact that the concept of authenticity is ephemeral and dependent on the socio-political situation in the social community. However, if the symbolic practice at a given moment has an essential role for a group of people, it begins to be understood with a certain degree of authenticity. The scale of authenticity, in this sense, ranges from rejection, where the symbolic practice is viewed as inauthentic, to absolute acceptance, when symbolic practice is interpreted as authentic (Mušić 2015, 45). Nevertheless, authenticity is always in the “field of belief” - we can believe or not believe in it, but it is difficult to prove it clearly (Mušić 2015, 53).¹¹

Although amateur choreographers strive for “authentic” or “original” choreographies, it should be pointed out that these choreographies are only imagined as such; they are as much the artistic impression of the choreographer and his imagination as those which, often with disdain, we call “stylized.”¹² Traditional dance choreographies, “original” and “stylized” alike, only refer to the past and use elements from the past that the choreographer combines, uses, and instrumentalizes to create his work of art. There is also the central question in this case: what would we define as a source that should be copied? Is it the dancing of the oldest people, who barely showed us any dance structure during the

¹⁰ The idea of authenticity is a familiar phenomenon encountered by anthropology. Namely, from the very beginning, anthropologists had various doubts and struggles with the mentioned concept – it defined it in a way from its disciplinary beginnings (more on this in Filitz and Saris 2015, 2-5; Saris 2015, 28).

¹¹ The processes of authentication presented in this way clearly show that the construction of authenticity rests on the use or mobilization of signs belonging to a system of communication or connotation (Warnier 2015, 87).

¹² Anthony Shay also notes similar activities in which choreographers strive for authentic representations on stage in his research, see Shay 2002, 15.

field research?¹³ Maybe it is a content from the books of the Janković sisters or something completely different? It is interesting to give a comparison offered by Anthony Shay: “...in much the same way that two-hundred-pounds women purchase dresses they see on anemic models in fashion shows: they imagine themselves as looking like and being those representational images” (Shay 2002, 30) – choreographers also at the same way present “authentic” or “original” in choreography.

It is not an “authentic” presentation but rather a process of *authentication* – choreographers do not have the opportunity to present something completely “original” due to the ephemerality of that form. Namely, they choose certain elements - dances, music, costumes, rituals, etc. - to reshape them and place them on the stage to resemble something authentic and original, trying to evoke in the viewer the idea that the given choreography is “original.” Therefore, this authentication process represents a form of instrumentalizing tradition for specific purposes – in this case, for choreographers to construct and evoke “authentic representation” or “original choreography.”

Scientific dilemmas: categorizing choreographies¹⁴

Although most scientists have stopped classifying choreographies according to the criterion of originality, some scientific works still approach the choreography of traditional dance, intending to indicate which of the established categories it belongs to. However, that sporadic scientific discourse on this topic does not dwell only on the original:stylized opposition, but it develops subcategories into which it tries to fit all those choreographies that are not “purely original” or “purely stylized.”

In the paper from 1934, Ljubica and Danica Janković generally mention the basic categories of presenting traditional dances on stage. At that moment, the mentioned authors still did not talk about the artistic direction of traditional dance choreography, as that topic developed much later. However, they give instructions on the possibility of presenting dances on stage. In this sense, they highlight two possibilities: to perform the dances as they were recorded in the field but rehearsed; and to be combined into sets of dances of the same region or mixtures – a combination of dances from different regions (Janković 1934,14). Interestingly, Janković does not deny the possibility of further, as they say, “artistic evolution” and the creation of works based on elements from traditional dances (Janković 1934, 14). However, they conclude that if such reworking or stylization of the dance occurs, then we can no longer talk about traditional dance *per se* (Janković 1934, 14).

One of the first contemporary authors who approached the scientific interpretation of the choreography of traditional dance in the Serbian context and the use of traditional dances for these purposes is Vesna Bajić Stojiljković. Namely, even in her grad-

13 Since its foundation, Serbian ethnochoreology has focused on reconstructing the former village dance practice. Ethnochoreologists, guided by romanticism ideas, went to the most remote villages and conversed with the oldest inhabitants to reconstruct the former dance practice based on their memories. The process of obtaining information about the dance took place through the conduct of semi-structured interviews and the demonstration of individual movement patterns outside the authentic context of their performance, and very often without an adequate musical component (e.g. with sound material brought by the researchers, humming a melodic pattern, without any musical support or with the assistance of whistling) (Rakočević 2015, 53-54; Rakočević 2013, 75).

14 Serbia has no higher education institution for training the choreographers of traditional dance, so anthropologists and ethnochoreologists mainly lead discussions about this art. However, regarding the school system, there are high art schools in Serbia where students can complete courses in traditional dances and then receive the title of folk dance performer. Furthermore, at higher education institutions in the field of traditional dances, they can study for ethnochoreologists at two Universities of Arts (Belgrade and Novi Sad) or anthropologists at the University of Belgrade. In addition, in Kikinda, there is a College for Teacher Education, where it is possible to complete a course for teachers for traditional dance (for preschool children).

uation thesis, Vesna Bajić Stojiljković talks about different levels of “stylization” of traditional dances and music when choreographing in amateur and professional dance ensembles. The author mentioned above implicitly starts from the point of view that all choreographies of traditional dances are stylizations, but that among them, there are different categories: adaptations, processing (I and II levels), and compositions (Bajić 2006, 9-10).

Processing is defined in the mentioned paper as the lowest degree of stylization, which only includes certain forms of “purification” and technical finishing of material collected in the field and its precision in execution (Bajić 2006, 12). The second level of stylization is *an adaptation* that includes the author’s modification of the material from which the choreography is made. In other words, it means a specific intervention in the original material collected in the field – adding elements to the dance patterns, their superstructure, etc. (Bajić 2006, 21). Finally, the *composition* represents the highest degree of stylization, characterized by complete authorship - the choreographer uses the original material only as an inspiration for his interpretation (Bajić 2006, 35).

In her recent works, Vesna Bajić Stojiljković divides the choreography of traditional dance into three primary genres: combination, dramatization, and variation. Furthermore, the author explains each of the mentioned genres individually, pointing out that the combination is characterized by the stringing of different dances into a whole; dramatization means dramatizing a particular event – very often a story or a ritual – where each participant has their role and action; while, in the end, variation means choreographies that vary “on the level of micro formal shaping” of traditional dance choreography (Bajić-Stojiljković 2019, 168).

That classifications are unsuitable for this type of art is evidenced by the fact that classifications of choreographies remain present only in the sporadic works of a few ethnochoreologists in Serbia. Clear classifications and sharp demarcations within the genre of the choreography of traditional dance are almost impossible. The initial division became more complicated over time, and new subgenre categories were added, making it increasingly harder to determine which choreography belonged to which subgenre. In this regard, scientific classifications did not contribute to the development of art. However, they only additionally tightened the boundaries in an artistic direction more ephemeral than it seems at first glance. In other words, molding choreographies into classifications constructed by researchers is not sustainable. In the same way, any other attempts to delimit the approach to choreography by genre did not show their advantages but led to the limitation of artistic expression, because of which all choreographies began to resemble each other.

#MeltingPot as resistance to hibernation

The performance #MeltingPot appears on the stage when, through the activities of the only professional ensemble of traditional dances in Serbia, “Kolo,” it tries to point out the possibility of new forms of presentation of this art. Therefore, this part of the paper aims to show where the idea for such a name for a dance performance came from, what the performance looked like, and to state the impressions of the dancers and participants about what it was like to prepare the concert, what their reactions were, as well as their experiences during and after the show.

About the title of the performance

The Melting Pot concept is widely known in the social and humanities and everyday discourse. However, it is most recognizable as a metaphor for the homogenization of a heterogeneous society. A basic example of the melting pot concept is the assimilation of immigrants in the United States of America. Cambridge Dictionary, for example, defines a *melting pot* as “A place where many different people and ideas exist together, often mixing and producing something new.”¹⁵ While in the Merriam-Webster dictionary, this term is defined as “A place where a variety of peoples, cultures, or individuals assimilate into a cohesive whole “ or “A process of blending that often results in invigoration or novelty.”¹⁶ In America, the melting pot concept was inspired by the 1908 play of the same name by the Jewish-British playwright Israel Zangwill. Since the performance of this play, the melting pot has “become the most popular, positive description of American diversity in the twentieth century” (Carter 2013, 13).¹⁷

The creators of the „#MeltingPot,” aware of the meaning and all the negative connotations of this term, used it to present their process of creating the performance most directly. They interpret the Melting Pot as a process of merging different dance genres into a homogeneous and harmonious whole. The process consisted of combining traditional dances with contemporary dance, modern music, and various forms of music-dance improvisation, as well as with high-quality audio-visual production. By devising the performance this way, the creators/choreographers showed that dance is a synesthetic concept – we do not experience dance just by watching it or performing it. However, we also get an impression of it through the sense of hearing, whereby it produces intellectual and emotional effects in us.

Ethnography of the performance¹⁸

As part of the second Ethno Summit TradicijaNova, held in November 2018, at the initiative of that time director Vladimir Dekić, the students of the Ballet High School from Novi Sad held an all-night concert in the Bitef Theater.¹⁹ #MeltingPot was performed by students of the third and fourth grades of the Department of Folk Dance and Contemporary Dance. The school’s professors prepared the entire program, Mirjana Raić Tepić and Marko Dubovac, with the help of students and other colleagues.

#MeltingPot comprises five parts: Intro/impro; Kalle mio; Birtz; Zbrda/Zdola, and Outro. The authors themselves, in the description of the published program, state that they aimed to review “The use of folk dance and music on stage in a contemporary context, using all available knowledge and starting from the assumption that borders do not exist and that, in fact, everything around us is folklore.” There were 21 dancers on stage - two male dancers and nineteen female dancers.

15 <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/melting-pot>

16 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/melting%20pot>

17 Furthermore, I would not go into the interpretation of the melting pot concept since it is not directly related to this work, but I would only refer to the literature for further information on the given topic: Carter, Greg. 2013. *The United States of the United Races. A Utopian History of Racial Mixing*. New York and London: New York University Press.

18 The entire performance is available at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUKE8rIMyY4>

19 Bitef Theater is a significant cultural spot in Serbia, an avant-garde theater in Belgrade, founded in 1989. Since its founding, the basic tendencies of this institution have been “...discovering new theatrical tendencies in our environment, as well as providing space to artists whose work represents a leap from the traditional and established boundaries of stage expression” (s. <https://teatar.bitef.rs/O-pozoristu/438/O-pozoristu.shtml>). Because of this, Bitef Theater symbolically contributed immensely to the #MeltingPot performance, which stepped out of its genre’s well-known and established boundaries.

The first part, *Intro/Impro*, was accompanied by music made by Ivan Marković and Lenhart Tapes. The students at the Ballet School already performed this part of the performance at one of the concerts, from which the entire #MeltingPot project arose. What can be read from the performance is the authors' intention to play with structures – both musical and dance. In this sense, content improvisation is crucial to the typical appearance in modern dance. However, when it comes to the choreography of traditional dance, improvisation generally has no place but a certain fixedness of patterns and movements. #MeltingPot, on the contrary, included the movement improvisation of the traditional dances in this part of the program. Observing the performers' improvisation manifestly shows the origin of the performers' dance domain. Namely, it was clear who belonged to the traditional dance section but who to the contemporary dance section – the latter performed the dance improvisation more easily. This is not a particular criticism but only a confirmation of the thesis that even improvisation in art is a structured system in which dancers never invent entirely new content but always rely on those practices they have performed before, recombining them to, at the moment of performance, different ways.

The next part, *Kalle mio*, was accompanied by the music of the Italian composer Claudio Monteverdi. Although the very name of the spot is associated with an Italian play, this is about playing with the audience. In the song performed by the dancers, there is a verse about the grafting of flowers: “He grafted, he grafted when he was young” (in Serbian *kalemio, kalemio, kad je momak bio*). The caricatured name of this part reflects the entire message that this part of the performance sends – in it, the authors humorously presented the literalist understandings often encountered in the amateur scene of traditional dance choreography. For example, if a particular song is about a guy giving a rose to a girl, chances are high that the choreographer will resort to that solution and show what the song is about. In the further course of this part of the program, the authors continued to play, using video projection: when the inscription “meadow” appeared on the projector, the players covered the scene with crepe tape so that it resembled a meadow; at the moment when the word “stream” stood instead of the meadow, the dancers made a line with the same crepe tape that represented an imaginary stream, which everyone jumped over as if there was some kind of water there, etc.

Birtz is the name of the third part performed by the dancers only with singing, *a capella*. This part noticeably represented the symbolic inversion of roles. Birtz is an abbreviation of the word bircuz – tavern.²⁰ In a traditional, patriarchal culture, it is a place for men; therefore, most choreographers of traditional dance, in presenting different bircuz, resorted to literal performances – lots of men drinking, and one woman who serves them or sings and dances. #MeltingPot gives a reverse view of the situation where birtz is filled with women while two guys dance the way women dictate with their songs. Symbolic inversion of gender roles has not been presented in traditional dance choreographies until now unless those choreographies depicted a specific ritual practice – which is again a literal copying of ethnographic data, and birtz can be seen as a continuation of the previous point in which dominant approaches to traditional dance choreography are caricatured. It is also important that the dancers performed contemporary dance, although inspired by traditional dance motifs in most cases – this is where the combination of these two arts was most noticeable.

²⁰ Bircuz (birc, birtija) is a type of tavern with regular customers. This term often refers to a small cafe where people from the neighborhood gather, where the atmosphere is relaxed, and cheap alcoholic drinks are served. Bircuz is also characterized by folk music, often live performances with female singers (s. <https://velikirecnik.com/2017/02/28/bircuz/>).

The fourth part, *Zbrda/zdola*, was followed by the composition of Bojan Milinković. This part represents a classic presentation of traditional dances on stage – the dances are presented as they were recorded in the field, without interventions, in simplified choreography. However, what separates the classic and desirable model is the last segment. The dancers performed ‘užičko kolo,’ and the interpretation of this dance was not the same for everyone – it seemed as if this dance was performed on one of the occasions for dancing, where the dancers perform the dance as they feel at that moment. Although the dancers were dressed in black dance gear throughout the performance, the video presentations at this point showed the same dancers but in folk costumes. At certain moments, the dance on the stage and the dance on the video were synchronized. The audience could also see the folk costume – an indispensable stage costume in choreographed folklore- and dancing equipment that the audience at concerts of folk dance ensembles cannot see.

The last point of #MeltingPot was called *Outro* and was performed to the music of Pan Sonic (4, 41 / Lahetyš). Here, the dancers presented the entire choreography and concert preparation process. In the video presentation were the concepts that every traditional dance dancer often hears during choreography and practice: three-step, jump, straighten, smile, emphasize, etc. On stage, the dancers portrayed the teachers in the process of preparing for the performance, as well as the students themselves. One group conducted the other during the singing; the male and female dancers were the ones who corrected the others and showed them how they should stand when to emphasize the movement, and the like. At this point, merging elements from the inventory of traditional and contemporary dance was also visible. The importance of the video presentation within the entire performance was highlighted at the end when the dancers on the stage turned their backs to the audience. At the same time, the dancers in the video bowed by facing the audience.

#MeltingPot from a dancer’s perspective

The history of the choreography of traditional dance in Serbia shows us how the mentioned genre was framed and increasingly lost the status of art and gained a role in the practices of “preserving tradition,” “heritage,” and “identity.” Because of previously mentioned romantic and essentialist concepts, the choreographic processes have mostly stayed the same for decades. Choreographies remain bounded by firm, impermeable boundaries and often extremely strict about the potential influx of new artistic ideas.

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia classifies traditional dances as „contemporary dance” and, at least formally, views them as a form of art. However, contrary to that, informally, even by those same officials from the Ministry, traditional dance is perceived as a tradition that should not be changed but only preserved and presented in its „original” forms.²¹ On the other hand, high schools with courses for training dancers

21 According to its official public policies, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia classifies traditional dances under the Sector for Contemporary Creativity jurisdiction. The mentioned Sector performs tasks “...related to monitoring and analyzing the situation in the field of contemporary literature and publishing, contemporary visual art and multimedia, musical art and discography, stage and music-stage art, cinematography and proposing measures for their improvement and financing..” (s. <https://www.kultura.gov.rs/tekst/63/sektor-za-savremeno-stvaralastvo.php>). In their activities with the co-financing of programs in the domain of culture, they classify traditional dance more closely in the field of “artistic dance,” along with ballet and contemporary dance. So, at least formally and according to the available documents of the Ministry, traditional dance (which they call “folk dance”) represents the field of contemporary creativity or, more precisely, artistic dance and is treated exclusively as stage art. However, informally and through the analysis of the programs financed by the Ministry, it can be seen that it financially supports many projects concerning the “preservation of tradition,” various festivals of “original folklore,” etc. In other

in traditional dances also approach these phenomena in very similar ways, with occasional concessions.²²

Because of all that, the students at Ballet schools remain narrowly limited by the concept of traditional dance, although during their education, they also attend other dance genres - classical ballet, character dances, contemporary dance, etc. After performing the #MeltingPot performance, many students emphasized the realization of the limitations of the KTP genre, often stating that due to the monotony of the approach in this direction, they gave up on it:

“As for the Department of folk dance, I wanted it to happen, for something to change in the folk dance. Because 13 years of dancing the same, constantly, and only one and the same in a different formation is something that needs to change” (I2m23)²³

“I stopped dancing traditional dance because folklore started to limit me. I was sick of dancing the same thing for 5-6 hours daily. They are all different choreographic solutions, but the essence is the same. This is because folklore is so presented in our country as if we are preserving tradition; it is molded a lot. I think that this project also wanted to say that we can and must break out of those molds because otherwise, we cannot progress” (I3f17)²⁴

“When they started working on this project with us, we all wondered - what do they want from us now, that we are losing our tradition?! However, then, over time, we realized that we, too, were molded a lot. So, it helped me get rid of prejudices, molds that, unfortunately, we all have” (I3f17)

After the initial lessons and “breaking the ice,” i.e., understanding that the project’s intention is not to “break” any tradition, nor is it possible to do it with one undertaking, long and hard preparations began. Although the dancers and authors of the performance had truly little time – they staged and rehearsed the entire performance for only two months. The rehearsals were intense and were held two to three times a week for several hours. As a result, despite the complex and tiring work, the students benefited from a different principle of work, and especially the freedom in creating choreography.

In the choreography of traditional dance, the artistic and creative freedom of the performer is not present. In other words, there are clearly defined roles: the choreographer has absolute authority in designing and setting up the choreography, while the dancers are just mere performers. In these processes, dancers are rarely asked for their opinion, nor do they have the opportunity to express their viewpoints if they notice that a choreographic solution is not adequate or that it is possible to solve it better from the perspective of someone who directly performs the given act. However, in the creation

words, they contradict their policies of action.

22 In everyday discourse and more rarely in ethnochoreological papers in Serbia, the term *folk dance* persists, although this term’s shortcomings and negative connotations have already been widely discussed. More about the problem of the term *folk dance*, which is strongly connected with romanticism ideology, see Nahachewsky 2012, 31; Kealiinohomoku 1972, 381).

23 This part of the work is based on the material collected during field research in 2018. I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with four students participating in the #MeltingPot performance. Due to personal data protection, the interlocutors’ names will not be revealed, but a corresponding code will represent each of them. The codes look like this: I1f17 and each symbol has a meaning where (I) means the interlocutor, the first following number indicates the sequence number of the interview in my database, (f) or (m) indicates the gender of the subject, while the last two digits represent the age of the subjects at the time of the interview.

24 In an everyday speech in Serbia, the phrase “I play/dance folklore” is often used for the process of performing traditional dances.

of #MeltingPot, the authors of the performance broke down the traditional strict oppositions' choreographer:dancer and gave opportunities to the performers to intervene in the processes of creating the performance. Mentioned above is also noticeable in some of the dancers' narratives:

"It was interesting because we had much freedom, and every proposal was considered and maybe even adopted. There was much improvisation on our part, as far as the contemporary direction is concerned; we had a lot of freedom, and nothing was planned that had to be like that. We could always say if we thought something should be different if we liked it or if we did not like it, and then the professors, based on that, built the whole project so that it would be more pleasing to us than to be what they strictly outlined for themselves" (12m23)

"From improvisation, we could do whatever we wanted, and then the professor would say it could or could not be done... In any case, it was a challenge because it was not what we normally do. It made us think a little differently about how to fit the dance with that non-standard music. We had that freedom, but it was also a challenge" (13f17)

In addition to challenging them to indulge in new forms of choreography, the dancers also had to learn other dance genres that were not close to them before. As the Department of Folk Dance and Contemporary Dance students participated in the performance, everyone had to master both dance genres equally. Therefore, it is interesting to observe the perspectives of the students themselves and see how they view the processes of mastering new dance experiences:

"Well, it was interesting and not so difficult for us because we were doing something we were interested in" (11f17)

"I think it was more difficult for the folk dancers to do contemporary dance than for us. Because they are used to being told exactly what they are doing, and we are not used to that, it was probably a big change" (14f17).

"For all of us modern dancers, that form of dancing (traditional dance, ed. author) is difficult because our legs are not used to it. I remember we went around the circle at the first rehearsal and played the basic three-step. Then if I did not die, I never would. It was tough in terms of fitness... And that whole repetition process... very scary!" (11f17).

"The study of modern dance remained in my memory with bruises. My knees were blue, and that threw to the floor... our knees suffered the most. However, unlike when I dance folklore, while I was dancing a contemporary dance, I felt a lot more powerful, and somehow, I felt that my confidence was growing when I had to do some modern movements. When we danced the traditional dance, it was not like that, but when contemporary dance comes, I think - well, now you see what else I can do besides what everyone knows! Powerful, that is the right word!" (13f17).

Due to the aforementioned accelerated work on preparing the performance, students and professors invested much capital, primarily physical and time, in its realization. As a result, what the students remember are long rehearsals and complex preparations:

“The plans and programs they organized for us were very tiring, it frustrated us all a bit, but everything was fine afterward. We look at the notice board, and it says: ‘TradicijaNova, from 18:45 to 20:15’. I mean, Friday, great... Oh, we’re at school until 4 p.m. Definitely those rehearsals in the evening, and we never had one rehearsal; we always had two, three, or four rehearsals a week. Moreover, those rehearsals in 90% of cases were in the evening. It was hard to get used to that pace... In fact, we never got used to it; we made peace with it - that is how it is” (I3f17).

“We literally had two months to prepare, and we managed to achieve everything. We practiced a lot and only the basic things; we practiced a lot in other things to figure out what was needed. We were all tired from rehearsal and school. Because we have classes all day and then in the evening, we come to the rehearsal, and everyone is already tired, concentration has dropped, and no one has the strength to work. Moreover, we were pressured to finish it on time and make it look right” (I1f17).

“Everything was interesting at the beginning, and then came the practice phase, where we all thought, we were going to kill each other, but we survived that and were satisfied in the end. ... The constant repetition of the same part until it turns out perfect and the fact that we, for example, had eight rehearsals a week for the entire schedule, with physical and mental effort, was all tiring” (I4f17).

The strenuous rehearsals, in the end, paid off when the moment of the premiere came. As mentioned, #MeltingPot was performed as part of the second Ethno summit TradicijaNova in Belgrade in 2018. The ceremonial performance was held in the BITEF theater, one of the most important places for creating and presenting art in Serbia, where foreign troupes, actors, and other artists are also guests. The reactions of the audience - positive and negative – are also witnessed by the students as follows:

“It was a great pleasure for me. When we heard that we would perform at the BITEF theater and perform there for the first time, I was delighted, more or less, that we were going to Belgrade than it was the BITEF theater! Moreover, that premiere performance was in November, and we have been preparing everything since September 1. When we got there and got ready, I felt professional, like all of us; we just talked about it afterward. It boosted our confidence. After that, those reactions and the audience’s ovations were the same; I get chills even now when I remember it! (I3f17).

“The audience reacted well; there was a long applause. I am glad that people did not react in the sense of criticizing us for what we do, but accepted it nicely” (I2m23)

“My family liked it very much, except for Dad. Dad said that it was incompatible with him and that it was terrible for him and that he did not know what we were doing” (I4f17).

If we ignore the previously mentioned strenuous preparations and the audience’s reactions, their new view towards the art and genre of traditional dance choreography left a strong impression on the students. As many say, working on the #MeltingPot performance broadened their horizons in several ways:

“This opened my horizons. I am involved in the contemporary dance, and this showed me how much it can fit in and expand its expression, way of movement” (11f17)

“It probably made us all more mature, especially that abnormal number of rehearsals; when we survived that, I think we all came to school and, like - we do not have rehearsals today... And then we realize that, well, it is nothing terrible” (14f17)

“Initially, I did not like anything there because I was conservative. I said: ‘Well, it is not tradition, it is not folklore, what they are doing now, it annoys us!’ However, it was inspiring for me afterward. I think folklore limits us a lot. That project contributed to my way of thinking. I liked that we connected everything like that, and it also boosted my confidence. I talked with many people, both from the contemporary and my class... Especially those of us from the folk dance was not used to the fact that something new and different could be done. We are not dull-witted folklorists in costume who, with a smile from ear to ear, molded, hold their hands exactly as they were told; we only look at one point, possibly at our partner... But we could also frown and come up with something at a moment’s notice. We will do that. It all boosted my confidence. I really liked it” (13f17).

“We who dance traditional dances know how to lose that feeling of exhilaration. We hold hands or by the belt, we dance, we laugh... We get to a certain stage when you have been dancing folklore for years, and the feeling of satisfaction, because you dance disappears. We feel the saturation and the need for something new, which folklore, unfortunately, denies us. However, this project has shown that something can change. I realized that tradition is not and should not be static and does not change” (14f17).

The dancers’ experiences testify that the idea of new forms of presentation of traditional dances is very desirable. Also, the entire performance shows that the fear of “destroying tradition” is unjustified since the presentation of dances in innovative ways does not disrupt their existence. Besides, dance troupes, unless it is a narrow specialty, do not necessarily have to deal with the musealization of dances. On the contrary, this performance helped the students to understand all the potential of traditional dances and the possibility of them serving as inspiration for contemporary art. Therefore, breaking the long-established strictures surrounding the choreography of traditional dances is not only desirable but also necessary. Otherwise, this direction will continue hibernating and remain uninventive and not enjoyable to watch. Therefore, the fear of the disappearance of traditional dances will not come true if they are presented differently than those currently acceptable or if there are minor interventions in their structure for performance purposes. Dances will disappear if fixed and consistently performed in the same way so that they become uninteresting to the audience and their performers.

Instead of a conclusion

In the end, the main problem in the choreography of traditional dances and in the expectations of the audience or professional public is the essential starting point built on the opposition *original:stylized*. The mentioned two concepts are set as opposed to each other, and, accordingly, when choosing an approach, choreographers must necessarily decide on the “original” or “stylized” type of choreography. As we have seen, the divisions did not arise alone but were influenced by a robust romantic-folkloristic discourse

that scientists in their respective fields also strengthened. Here, I am primarily thinking of Ljubica and Danica Janković and of Ivan Ivančan, who, through their theoretical works, emphasized the importance of fieldwork for every choreographer, then respect for “authentic” material and, implicitly or explicitly, hinted that the combination of other dance genres with traditional dance can lead to the loss of its essence (s. Janković and Janković 1949; Ivančan 1971). Such attitudes, sometimes in a more radical form, persist to this day and permeate dance ensembles and the ideas of traditional dance choreographers.

On the other hand, the scientific discourse primarily did not deal with the choreography of traditional dance for a long time, viewing it as a product of folklorism, an invented tradition and, consequently, something not worth studying (s. Bošković-Stulli 1983, 228-229; Antonijević 2023, 104-105). Nevertheless, when this discussion was also opened, scholars, mainly from the amateur world of folk dance ensembles, transmitted specific structures of thought and were guided by the ideas mentioned above built on the fundamental opposition of original:stylized. For this reason, they began to build specific systems of classification of the choreography of traditional dance, trying to see if a particular work of art is more or less stylized. Herein lies the fundamental problem with any attempt to classify living and vital phenomena: they have led to rudimentary classifications, crude determinations, and neglect of subtle levels within the genre. Moreover, this is what many researchers have noticed and proved a long time ago: choreographies are not only “original” or only “stylized” but should be viewed as a continuum containing admixtures of both poles. In other words, original choreographies have a touch of stylization, as much as stylized ones have a touch of originality (cp. Nahachevsky 1995; Shay 2002).

In this regard, the #MeltingPot performance served as an outstanding illustration of a performance that dismantles the constraints imposed on the genre of the choreography of traditional dance. Although this performance presents traditional dances and music in inventive ways, radically different from what is expected, it still does not intervene too much in the “authentic” material. In other words, the dances and music are from the inventory of tradition, reconstructed according to the notes of professional researchers. However, conventional forms of choreography were avoided here, and the choreographers played with costumes, lights, and forms. Such new approaches would eventually revive the long-dead practice of traditional dance choreography, which has lain dormant for many years.

Whether something will change in that sense is highly questionable. Any attempt to intervene in presenting traditional dances on stage ends badly. Even the #MeltingPot performance was performed only two or three times. Amateur and professional dancers and choreographers harshly condemned other initiatives of a similar type. The current state of society, characterized by a right-wing and nationalist-oriented state policy, also contributes to the overall critical discourse, which hierarchically spills over to all existing institutions. The new wave of re-traditionalization and the strengthening of the right, directed towards the idea of “preserving tradition” and “defending identity” – although no one attacks them and has no intention of “erasing their tradition,” led to a frantic revival of forgotten customs and the invention of traditions in Hobsbawm’s sense (s. Hobsbawm and Ranger 2011), for the sake of legitimizing the mentioned political strategies. In this sense, traditional dance serves them as a tool for instrumentalization, with

which they strive to achieve their political-ideologically colored intentions. At the same time, art has the most damage in the whole situation.

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Кореографија традиционалног плеса у Србији у уметничкој кризи: антрополошка интерпретација

Сажетак: Србија има дугу етнокоролошку традицију, док је уметност кореографије традиционалног плеса релативно новија појава, настала после Другог светског рата. Иако је реч о уметничкој пракси, кореографија традиционалног плеса се често заснива на опозицији оригинално: стилизовано и перципирано као пракса која „чува идентитет”, „традицију” и „наслеђе”. Тврдим да тежња ка жанровској подели не иде у прилог уметности. Напротив, покушаји уоквиривања и инсистирање на јасној посвећености приступу при креирању кореографије доводе до ограничавања уметности кореографије традиционалног плеса. Овај рад има за циљ да прикаже процесе у којима се градио дискурс о „оригиналним” кореографијама, а затим да укаже на ограничавајуће покушаје поджанровске класификације кореографија. На крају, у овом прилогу биће представљена емисија „#MeltingPot” у извођењу ученика Балетске гимназије из Новог Сада. Наиме, у овој представи традиционални плесови су инспирисали професоре и студенте да створе нове кореографске форме и извуку кореографију традиционалног плеса из година хибернације.

Кључне речи: кореографија традиционалног плеса, уметност, оригинал, стилизовано, #MeltingPot

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Ivan Ivančan – Family, Tradition, Folklore

Summary: It is not easy to be called Ivan Ivančan and not to work in folklore. Already in records from the last century, we find information about grandmother Eva Ivančan, her son Andrija and grandson Ivan Ivančan. The latter (Ivan Ivančan, PhD) is one of the most famous Croatian ethnochoreographers and ethnochoreologists. In the Ivančan family, folklore was the basic fabric of life, so it was almost impossible to grow up in such an environment and not to work with folklore. Ivan Ivančan, who is described in this paper, is the son of Ivan Ivančan (PhD) and he was born in 1953. in Zagreb. As early as 1975, he started his career in the Ensemble of folk dances and songs LADO. He spent 41 years in the Ensemble, including 24 years as artistic director. During the years he spent as artistic director, he put more than forty new choreographies and four hundred musical pieces of secular and sacred characters into the repertoire. He designed and staged about a hundred special programs for various occasions. During his tenure, the Ensemble received as many as 24 Porin discography awards, of which Ivan Ivančan personally received as many as 9. He prepared a representative musical monograph: *Hrvatska tradicijska glazba i sastavi* [Croatian traditional instruments and ensembles]. At the School of Classical Ballet, he taught folk singing and the basics of choreography. Since 1983, he has been teaching folklore singing and dancing at the School of Folklore of the Croatian Cultural Association [Hrvatski sabor kulture]. All the above, which is only a part of Ivan Ivančan's rich and diverse folklore activity, without a doubt ranks him among the greats of the folklore scene.

Key words: Ivan Ivančan, LADO Ensemble, folkdance, traditional culture, heritage

The authors of this paper would like to extend their gratitude to Ivan Ivančan Jr. for his immense patience and detailed description of his rich experience and extensive knowledge of folklore and traditional culture, which he generously and meticulously shared with us during numerous evenings while conducting interviews for the purposes of this study. We would also like to thank Ivan Ivančan Jr. for all that he has done and continues to do for the care, promotion, preservation, and transmission of knowledge to younger generations about the rich Croatian traditional culture and folklore heritage

Introduction

The paper explores the family genesis and a unique phenomenon of the connection between the surname Ivančan and Croatian traditional culture and folklore. The story of the Ivančan family dates back to the last century and begins with Eva Ivančan. Eva Ivančan was seemingly an ordinary woman from the village of Molve in Podravina who, alongside her usual household chores and tasks on the family estate, invested a great deal of effort, love, and time into collecting, preserving, and transmitting the musical tradition of Molva and Podravina to her children. Many of today's most performed folk songs from Podravina have been preserved precisely thanks to the storytelling of Eva Ivančan and the recordings of Dr. Ivan Ivančan.



Photo 1. Grandma Eva Ivančan and others. Ivan Ivančan, 1958 (private archive of the Ivančan family)

Eva's son Andrija was an educator, a diligent collector of folk treasures and cultural heritage, and the author of many folk dramas. Andrija Ivančan had already begun field research and collection of material from storytellers. According to Kokša (2016), it was Andrija who "infected" his son Ivan with a love for folklore, traditional culture, heritage, and fieldwork. Andrija took his son Ivan into the field as an assistant to collect songs and record original storytellers using the techniques available at the time.

Photo 2. Dr. Ivan Ivančan with his parents Andrija and Zlata, 1929. (private archive of the Ivančan family)



Twenty years later, Ivan Ivančan, the grandson of Grandma Eva and the son of Andrija, became one of the most respected Croatian researchers in folklore, ethnochoreography, and ethnochoreology (IEF, 2023). After completing his first degree in chemistry, he enrolled in the ethnology program at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb, where he graduated in 1962 and obtained his doctorate in 1965 (HBL, 2023).

Photo 3. Dr. Ivan Ivančan, 1977. (private archive of the Ivančan family)

The late Dr. Ivan Ivančan had two sons, Ivan and Andrija, who grew up immersed in a ‘folklore’ environment, they travelled with their father, collecting valuable heritage material in the field. Kokša (2016) observes that both of them were destined to be involved in folklore from childhood.



Photo 4. Ivan Ivančan in his young days, 1974. (private archive of the Ivančan family)

the long-standing artistic director of the ZFA “dr. Ivan Ivančan”. After the retirement of his older brother Ivan, Andrija served as the artistic director of the LADO Ensemble for 4 years.

While this paper will delve more into the folklore career of the older brother Ivan, it’s important to mention here that the younger brother Andrija was



Photo 5. Andrija Ivančan during the term of artistic director of the LADO Ensemble, 2018; source: Ensemble LADO



Today, Andrija serves as the artistic director of the Lindo ensemble, while his sons, Ivan and Martin, continue the tradition. The elder son, Ivan, has already authored several successful choreographies and is the artistic director of the ZFA “Dr. Ivan Ivančan” (ZFA, 2023).

Photo 6. Ivan and Martin Ivančan, 2018. (private archive of the author)

The folklore career of Ivan Ivančan

Before delving into the rich folklore career of Ivan Ivančan Jr., here are a few biographic details. Ivan Ivančan was born on Ivanje, June 24, 1953, in Zagreb, where he also graduated from high school with excellent success. He completed music school for piano, and besides the piano, he plays several other instruments.



Photo 7. Ivan Ivančan and Marijan Braco Makar in moments of relaxation, 1985, (private archive of the Ivančan family)

Like most young people at that time, during his high school days, he played in a rock band called “The Cheefs.” However, he couldn’t escape the influence of family tradition and soon turned to his true love and passion: folklore. He actively engaged with folklore in 1968 when he began dancing in the Cultural and Artistic Society “Joža Vlahović,” which was led by his father, Dr. Ivan Ivančan, in whose honor the ensemble is now named ZFA “Dr. Ivana Ivančana.”

After a brief period in an amateur ensemble, in 1975, he was employed as a dancer in the Croatian National Folk Dance and Song Ensemble LADO. He spent 41 years in the ensemble, including 10 years as a dancer, 7 years as a dance assistant, and a remarkable 24 years as artistic director. Interestingly, only two artistic directors - Zvonimir Ljevaković (the founder of LADO) and Ivan Ivančan - have marked a total of 48 years (out of 74) of LADO’s existence. If we add another 5 years of Dr. Ivan Ivančan’s tenure as artistic director and 4 years of his younger brother Andrija’s tenure, then the Ivančan family has artistically directed LADO for a total of 33 years (out of 74) of LADO’s existence.



Photo 8. Ivan Ivančan in the LADO Ensemble, 1975. (private archive of the Ivančan family)

Ivan is the father of Matija, who is also involved in music, although not yet in folklore. Just as Ivan didn’t initially engage in folklore, it’s possible that Matija might one day pursue it and continue the family tradition.

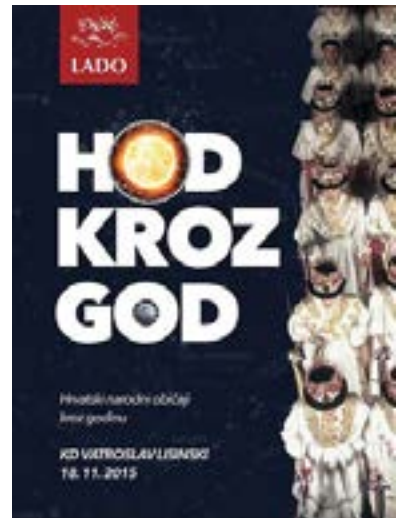


Photo 9. dr. Ivan Ivančan with grandchildren Ivan, Matija and Martin, 2003, (private archive of the Ivančan family)

In 2016, Ivan Ivančan retired, leaving a significant corpus of dance, musical, and artistic achievements in folklore. This paper is dedicated to him in recognition of his contributions (LADO, 2023a).

Throughout his years of artistic work with the LADO Ensemble, he added over 40 new choreographies to the repertoire and devised more than 100 special programs for tours and other occasions. Notably, he created around 30 thematic programs dedicated to all Croatian regions. Particularly noteworthy are the ‘Hod kroz God’ program, which depicted folk customs throughout the year, and a program devoted to the intangible cultural heritage protected by UNESCO (LADO, 2023b).

Photo 10. Poster solution for the thematic annual concert Walk through the Year by the LADO Ensemble, by Ivan Ivančan, 2015; source: Ensemble LADO



There were also programs dedicated to giants of the folklore and music scene (such as Božo Potočnik, Emil Cosetto, Tomislav Uhlik, Marijan Makar, Zvonimir Ljevaković, and others). A slight departure from the norm was the collaboration with the Croatian National Theatre and the folk ballet with singing Veronika, based on the legend of Veronika Desinić. He collaborated with the “Komedija” Theatre on the play “Narodil se mladi kralj” [The Young King is Born] (LADO, 2023c).

In his quest to enrich the program, he incorporated nearly 400 secular and sacred musical pieces into the repertoire. Additionally, he established the male vocal ensemble “Vokalisti LADA”, which held independent programs and concerts, with a special focus on nurturing church folk singing and *klapa* singing from the southern Croatian regions. To reach audiences who typically don’t attend LADO concerts, including younger audiences, he initiated the *JazzLA(N) DO* project to showcase how folk music can sound excellent in jazz and other musical styles.



Photo 11. Poster design for a special concert by Jazzla(n) do Ensemble LADO, by Ivan Ivančan, 2008; source: Ensemble LADO

The second major project he initiated, which continues to this day, is LADO Electro. The LADO Electro project brings a new musical and visual identity to LADO and has been well-received by the audience (LADO.d. 2023).



Photo 12. Performance of LADO Electro in the Vintage Industrial bar, 2019. source: Ensemble LADO

He organized joint concerts with professional ensembles from various European countries and the region. He initiated the independence and promotion of the LADO orchestra through independent programs and concerts. In his choreography from Međimurje, *bandisti* (brass bands) appeared on the LADO stage for the first time. During his tenure in the LADO ensemble, he did not forget the importance of fieldwork and continued actively researching and recording traditional culture and heritage in the field. Additionally, during his time with the LADO Ensemble, he staged 20 of his choreographies, only five of which were performed by the LADO Ensemble, to avoid public criticism of bias in concert program selection. Furthermore, he documented numerous dances using a special notation devised by Vinko Žganec, similar to the international Labanotation, thus continuing the tradition inherited from his father.



Photo 13. An example of the so-called Žganec's recording of dance steps (private archive of Ivan Ivančan)

He also wrote arrangements for the folk choir of several frequently performed folk songs for the LADO Ensemble, as well as for many other cultural and artistic societies.



Photo 14. Example of a musical arrangement for a folklore choir (private archive of Ivan Ivančan)

He advocated for collaboration with other cultural and heritage institutions, resulting in the creation of the exhibition "Iz riznice LADA" [From the

Treasury of LADA] in collaboration with the Ethnographic Museum. The exhibition was organized to showcase the ensemble's extensive collection of folk costumes, including some that are museum specimens still actively used on stage.

It's worth mentioning his performances on world stages, where tickets were always in high demand, such as Broadway in New York, the Royal Albert Hall in London, the Mann Auditorium in Tel Aviv, the UNESCO Palace in Paris, and many other major stages worldwide. Particularly notable were the concerts during a month-long tour in Japan, which included 27 concerts in 21 cities along with numerous dance workshops.



Photo 15. One of the many successful concerts (private archive of Ivan Ivančan)



Photo 16. Seminar for folklore seminar participants in Japan (private archive of Ivan Ivančan)

During his time with LADO, the Ensemble released around 30 albums/carriers of sound, out of which an impressive 12 albums were honored with the prestigious Porin award. Personally, Ivan Ivančan received 9 Porin awards, and the LADO showcase gained another Porin – a Lifetime Achievement Porin awarded to the ensemble. Besides the Porin awards, the Ensemble garnered numerous national accolades and international recognition, with a particularly significant achievement being the “Ivan Lukačić” award at the *Varaždinske barokne večeri* [Varaždin Baroque Evenings]. This award holds special importance as it signifies the recognition of a folk ensemble at a baroque festival (LADO.e., 2023).



Photo 17. Ivan Ivančan Jr. with the conquered Porina (private archive Ivan Ivančan)

He collaborated on the publication of the monograph: *LADO – hrvatsko nacionalno blago* [LADO – Croatian National Treasure], and he compiled the representative music monograph *Hrvatska tradicijska glazbala i sastavi* [Croatian Traditional Musical Instruments and Ensembles]. Besides being an accomplished dancer and singer, he proved to be an excellent pedagogue and educator. Before becoming the artistic director of the LADO ensemble, he founded and led for 10 years the folk ensemble of the Cultural and Artistic Society Zagreb, which was one of the most successful amateur ensembles at that time. As an ethnochoreologist and ethnochoreographer, he collaborated with the “KOLO” Ensemble from Belgrade, the “Svetozar Marković” Cultural and Artistic Society from Novi Sad, the “Tine Rožanc” Folk Dance Ensemble from Ljubljana, as well as many other ensembles from across Croatia.

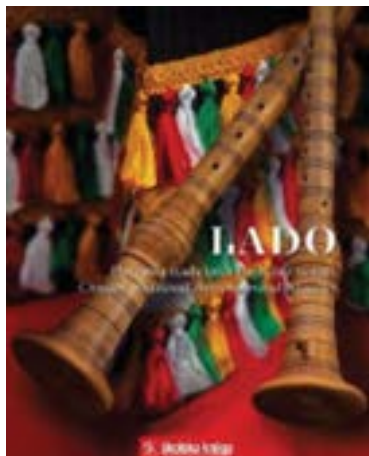


Photo 18. Cover of the monograph Croatian traditional musical instruments and ensembles published by the School Book and Ensemble LADO, 2017: source Ensemble LADO

At the Classical Ballet High School, he taught folk singing and the basics of choreography. Many of today’s dancers in the LADO Ensemble were students of this high school, so LADO indirectly contributed to the renewal of the dance cadre in the ensemble. At the Academy of Dramatic Arts, he taught Stage Movement. Since 1983, he has been teaching folk singing and dances at the Folklore School of the Croatian Cultural Association – the department of emigrants. Interestingly, this school was initiated by his father, Dr. Ivan Ivančan, and is currently led by his younger brother Andrija, thus continuing the family folk tradition. He has conducted numerous professional seminars in Australia, Canada, Japan, Sweden, Hungary, Germany, and many other countries. Often, these seminars were part of the ensemble LADO’s tour program, but independently of LADO, Ivan has been conducting dance and singing seminars for folklore enthusiasts in the diaspora for decades.

He remains active today – serving as a jury member at numerous folklore festivals and recently leading a choir in Ogulin. Every January, he travels to Canada to conduct dance and singing workshops for the Croatian diaspora in several cities over 12 days. In the last two years, he has published 2 collections of haiku poetry, with a third in preparation. Upon retirement, he was awarded the Order of the President of the Republic for exceptional contributions to the promotion of culture in Croatia and worldwide.

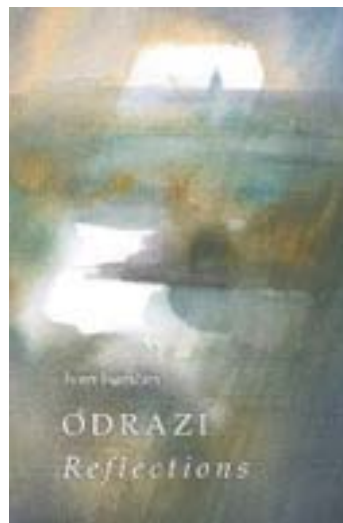


Photo 19. Collection of haiku poetry by Ivan Ivančan, 2020. (private archive of Ivan Ivančan)

Research methodology

The completion of this paper involves a condensed form of secondary research based on information gathered from publicly available sources and in-depth interviews with Ivan Ivančan Jr. Therefore, scientific methods are employed in this work, as defined by the nature of the individual research components. The following scientific methods are used in appropriate combinations in the development of this work: methods of analysis and synthesis, method of description and presentation. Based on the aforementioned, analysis of the folklore heritage of the Ivančan family and the rich and successful career of Ivan Ivančan Jr., a hypothesis emerges, which will be tested through abbreviated research, and it states:

H: Ivan Ivančan Jr. is truly a giant of the folkloric scene!

Research results and discussions

The research results, based on information gathered from publicly available sources, unequivocally and consistently indicate that the contribution of the entire Ivančan family to Croatian traditional culture and folklore is extraordinary and difficult to compare with any other family in Croatian history. Numerous individuals, such as Vinko Žganec, Zvonimir Ljevaković, Vido Bagur, Branko Šegović, and many others, have made significant and invaluable contributions to the recording, care, preservation, and promotion of Croatian traditional culture and folklore. Their remarkable contributions to documenting heritage and folklore material from original narrators, as well as recording dance customs and steps across Croatia, must not be forgotten. Their contribution to the systematic recording of collected material and their pedagogical work in transmitting this knowledge to younger generations is also crucial. Indeed, without the systematic transmission of collected knowledge and material to younger generations, intangible heritage would not have been preserved, and Croatia would not rank first in the world in terms of the number of protected intangible cultural heritage elements on the UNESCO Representative List relative to the population.

No instance has been recorded where such dedicated work and professional contribution span three generations, and even amateur involvement extends through five generations. According to Katarinčić (2006), it is evident that Dr. Ivan Ivančan's contribution as a scientist is immeasurable compared to all other scientists. He documented numerous customs and dances, created 352 kinetograms, published numerous collections, scientific and professional papers, and authored 21 books. He even produced 20 films, numerous audio recordings, photographs, gramophone records, and realized numerous artistic achievements (114 choreographies). He is the founder of the renowned *Zagrebačka škola scenske primjene folkloru* [Zagreb School of Stage Application of Folklore], as noted by Zebec (Zebec, 2005), making Dr. Ivan Ivančan the most prolific Croatian ethnochoreologist. The extensive material he collected is preserved at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research in Zagreb. Ivan Ivančan Jr. assisted his father in leading summer (later also winter) folklore schools organized by the *Hrvatski Sabor kulture – Matica hrvatskih iseljenika* [Croatian Cultural Association – Croatian Heritage Foundation]. Thus, he is also credited with providing basic training on folk songs and dances to several thousand young people from Croatia and the diaspora over 40 years, promoting the rich Croatian traditional culture and folklore heritage.

From the conducted in-depth interview with Ivan Ivančan Jr., it is revealed that with such a “pedigree” of a successful father, Ivan Ivančan Jr. had both an “easy” and a “difficult” path to becoming another offspring of the famous Ivančan family who would continue and further deepen the work on researching, preserving, and promoting traditional culture and folklore. Although one might expect all doors to be open to him and the scientific and professional

community to be favorable due to his well-known father, in real life, it was neither easy nor simple. His path towards serious involvement in folklore was burdened with high expectations from his father and the folklore-scientific and professional community. Because of this, Ivan Ivančan Jr. chose a path that did not solely aim for scientific advancement and theoretical treatment of the rich Croatian folklore heritage. Instead, he actively engaged in practical dance, field research, and pedagogical work. Hence, his exceptional contribution as a dancer, dance and singing pedagogue, and especially as the artistic director of the LADO Ensemble is noteworthy. As previously described, his body of work and achievements with the LADO Ensemble during the 24 years Ivan Ivančan Jr. spent as its artistic director are remarkable. Additionally, it has been previously mentioned that he taught and instructed young folklorists, high school students, and even university students on the basics of stage movement, folk singing, dances, and choreography. From the interview, it is also learned that from an early age, Ivan Ivančan Jr. accompanied his father throughout Croatia, diligently recording narratives from original narrators with a camera and/or tape recorder in hand. He documented long-forgotten folk songs, customs, and dance patterns from each Croatian region. This effort resulted in a multitude of audio and video recordings of narrators from the field, the majority of which were preserved at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, and the rest stored in the LADO Ensemble archive, thanks to Ivan Ivančan Jr. During the interview, it was also noted that Ivan Ivančan Jr., spending time with his father from a young age, embraced the fundamentals of the Zagreb School of Stage Application of Folklore, which promoted an approach to the scenic treatment and adaptation of original material (dances and songs) that, for presentation to a wider audience, needed to undergo a sort of scenic adaptation while strictly ensuring that it remained as close and faithful to the original dance, song, or custom as possible. Since he danced in the LADO Ensemble from an early age and later artistically shaped the ensemble's work, he had the opportunity to actively promote and apply the fundamentals of the Zagreb School of Stage Application of Folklore within the ensemble. Considering that he was the artistic director of the ensemble for 24 years, his influence on the current appearance and presentation of the ensemble's folk treasure (dance and singing) is immeasurable.

Conclusion

Analyzing the data about the Ivančan family, starting from grandmother Eva to Ivan (Andrija's) Ivančan, it is easy to conclude that the love for traditional culture and folklore is the connecting thread that runs through the Ivančan family from the second half of the 19th century to the present day. As a brief reminder, it's worth noting that the grandson of grandmother Eva Ivančan and the son of Andrija Ivančan, Dr. Ivan Ivančan (1st IVAN), is the most prolific ethnochoreologist and ethnochoreographer in the Republic of Croatia. His son, Ivan Ivančan Jr. (2nd IVAN), was the long-time artistic director of the LADO Ensemble, and this work focuses on his contribution to the Croatian folkloric scene. The grandson of Dr. Ivan Ivančan and the son of Andrija Ivančan, Ivan Ivančan (3rd IVAN), is the artistic director of the ZFA "Dr. Ivan Ivančan," considered one of the best amateur folklore ensembles in Croatia. Therefore, it can be concluded that it is indeed not easy to bear the name Ivan Ivančan and not be involved in folklore.

Taking into account all the results of the conducted abbreviated research, as well as the data and facts presented in this work, it is not difficult to conclude that Ivan Ivančan Jr.'s 41 years of uninterrupted service and dedicated work in the LADO Ensemble represent a significant contribution to the quality work and great success of the LADO Ensemble, as well as to Croatian traditional culture and the folkloric scene and profession in the Republic of Croatia in general. It is concluded that through his 24 years of artistic leadership of the ensemble, Ivan

Ivančan Jr. has had a significant impact on the current appearance and mode of operation of the ensemble, placing him among the key figures in shaping the distinctive and remarkable artistic expression of the ensemble, recognized worldwide. It can also be concluded that Ivan Ivančan Jr., during his work, encouraged and facilitated professional collaboration with other collaborative institutions involved in traditional culture and folklore, thereby extending his contribution to Croatian traditional culture and folklore beyond the scope of the LADO Ensemble. Furthermore, it is recognized that his pedagogical and educational contribution to traditional culture and folklore should not be overlooked, as he dedicated some 30 years to transmitting knowledge and a love for traditional arts and folklore to young folklorists, high school students, and university students. He invested many years in summer and winter folklore schools, infecting many young people from Croatia and the diaspora with a love for folklore. Many of them are now either professional dancers or actively engaged in amateur folklore both in Croatia and abroad. Through his work with students at the ballet school, he also had the opportunity to select new members for the LADO Ensemble. Lastly, through his work at the Academy of Dramatic Arts, he had the opportunity to impart to young students, who are now well-known actors, a part of a stage movement imbued with a folkloric “hue”.

The creative contribution and dedicated work of Ivan Ivančan Jr. remain a lasting legacy of the artistic achievements of the LADO Ensemble and the Croatian folkloric scene. Considering all that has been mentioned and listed, especially the respectable number of years dedicated to the professional folkloric ensemble, as well as the overall contribution to traditional culture and heritage, it can undoubtedly be concluded that the hypothesis has been confirmed. Ivan Ivančan Jr. is truly a giant of the folkloric scene.

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List of abbreviations

KUD – cultural and artistic society

ZFA – Zagreb folklore ensemble

IEF – Institute for Ethnology and Folkloristics

FA – folklore ensemble

Republic of Croatia - Republic of Croatia

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Иван Иванчан – породица, традиција и фолклор

Апстракт: Није лако звати се Иван Иванчан, а не бавити се фолклором. Већ у записима из прошлог века, налазимо податке о бака Еви Иванчан, њеном сину Андрији и унуку Ивану Иванчану. Потоњи (др Иван Иванчан) један је од најпознатијих хрватских етнокореографа и етнокореолога. У породици Иванчан фолклор је био основна животна потка, па је било готово немогуће одрастати у таквом окружењу и не бавити се фолклором. Иван Иванчан, којег описује овај рад, син др Ивана Иванчана, рођен је 1953. године у Загребу. Већ од 1975. године започиње каријеру у Ансамблу народних плесова и песама ЛАДО. У Ансамблу је провео 41 годину, од чега чак 24 године као уметнички директор. Током година које је провео као уметнички директор, на репертоар је поставио више од четрдесет нових кореографија, те четиристо музичких тачака световног и сакралног карактера. Осмислио је и на сцену поставио стотинак посебних програма за разне пригоде. Током његовог мандата, Ансамбл је примио чак 24 дискографске награде Порин, од којих је Иван Иванчан лично примио чак њих 9. приредио је репрезентативну музичку монографију *Хрватска традицијска гласбала и састави*. На Школи за класичан балет предавао је фолклорно певање и основе кореографије. Од 1983. године на Школи фолклора Хрватског сабора културе предавао је фолклорно певање и плесове. Све наведено, а шта је само део богате и разнолике фолклорне активности Ивана Иванчана, без двоумљења га сврстава у великане фолклорне сцене, а о чему сведочи и овај прегледни рад

Кључне речи: Иван Иванчан, Ансамбл ЛАДО, фолклор, традицијска култура, баштина

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An Image that Resonates: Yang Liping and the Evolution of Contemporary Chinese Folk Dance

Abstract: Yang Liping 杨丽萍 (b. 1958) is China's most successful contemporary folk dance choreographer. Beyond being famous among dancers, she has achieved the status of a mainstream popular celebrity, balancing her reputation as a fine artist and cultural purist with success in the commercial arena. Drawing on nearly two decades of ethnographic and archival research in China, as well as analysis of Yang's dance performances, interviews, and visual media representations, this article asks how Yang achieved this unprecedented success through contemporary folk dance choreography. The paper examines Yang's rise to fame since the late 1970s through her transformation of an iconic Chinese folk image: the peacock dance. Peacock dance uses elements of a mythological story from Buddhist literature with a type of village dance performed in one particular ethnic group in China and adapts it into a multimedia national image that gets reproduced in film, visual art, and dance choreography. The paper shows how Yang has deftly adapted the peacock dance into her own signature brand through a series of multimedia platforms, while she maintains an emphasis on dance, a charismatic public persona, and a unique yet constantly adapting contemporary folk aesthetic as the core of her appeal.

Keywords: Chinese dance, contemporary folk dance, peacock dance, Yang Liping, Yunnan

Introduction: Folk Dance in China

The history of folk dance in contemporary China largely follows that in other parts of the socialist world. During the 1940s, when the country suffered chaos and violence during the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Chinese Civil War, progressive artists and intellectuals adapted dances of rural communities and ethnic minorities into staged performances to promote communism and national unity. At the end of the Civil War in 1949, when the People's Republic of China was established under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, "national folk dance" (*minzu minjian wu* 民族民间舞) became a symbol of the country's democratic political ethos and commitment to establishing a new national culture grounded in the aesthetics of the common people (Wilcox 2016). From 1949 until the start of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, folk dance companies from across the socialist world, including Kolo, toured China regularly. During this same period, Chinese dance companies also frequently performed their own newly adapted folk dance choreographies abroad. China sent regular delegations to the international folk dance competitions at the World Festivals of Youth and Students held in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. At these competitions, Chinese folk dance works were considered a highlight of the events and frequently won awards, indicating their importance in the international sphere of socialist folk dance culture (Wilcox 2018b).

Films made in China during the 1950s and early 1960s document the visual aesthetics and choreographic approaches employed in staged Chinese folk dances of this period. As shown in the 1959 film *Hundred Phoenixes Face the Sun* (*Bai feng chaoyang* 百凤朝阳) and the 1963 film *Colored Butterflies Fluttering About* (*Caidie fenfei* 彩蝶纷飞), most short-form folk dances of this period employ bright stage lighting and realistic sets in which dancers appear to perform in outdoor landscapes framed by trees, flowers, mountains, ponds, etc. Costumes are often colorful with eye-catching patterns and embroidery; they are designed to resemble clothing worn in the regions and ethnic groups referenced in the dances. In group choreography, dancers often wear identically matching dresses and perform in unison, enacting movements inspired by local performance practices. Stage blocking is highly coordinated, with dancers often maintaining equal distance from one another as they move in and out of rows, lines, circles, grids, and other geometric shapes. Both solo and group dances are found in these choreographies. While many group dances include men and women, some group dances and most solo dances feature women exclusively. Dancers often perform rhythmically complex footwork, bouncing actions and spins, emotive facial expressions, and arm and hand gestures that trace curving and circling pathways close to the upper body. Many dances feature props or musical instruments, and, in some cases, dancers also sing. References to everyday life are frequent in these works. For example, dancers perform motions adapted from agricultural labor such as tea-picking, pounding rice, gathering grapes, and milking cows. Some pieces also stage social interactions, such as courtship, marriage, and community events. Overall, these short dances have a festive and joyful atmosphere and a stable emotional range that focuses on projecting feelings of light-heartedness and cheer. In these works, folk dance embodies the diversity of ethnic and regional identities in China while using a unified choreographic approach and a consistent expressive tone. These dances aimed to present the Chinese Communist Party ideal of the "people" (*renmin*) in a way that was positive, diverse, and unified while also proudly rooted in local and regional cultures.

The widespread popularity of folk dance in China during the 1950s and early 1960s faced a sharp decline after the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, when revolutionary ballets became the preferred choreographic form, a trend that lasted until the mid-1970s. In the late 1970s, folk dance experienced a nation-wide revival as China transitioned out of the Maoist period and into what became known as the Reform Era, a time of market transition and increased cultural engagement with the West officially launched in 1978. During this period, dancers were faced with the challenge of adapting staged folk dances created in the era of high socialism to a new context marked by new aesthetic tastes, desires, and rapidly changing social realities (Wilcox 2018b).

The most famous and successful Chinese folk dance artist to emerge out of this new period was Yang Liping 杨丽萍 (b. 1958), a woman from southwest China whose now more than fifty-year stage career has fundamentally transformed contemporary Chinese folk dance and its place in Chinese society. Yang is from Yunnan, China's most ethnically diverse province, which shares southern borders with modern-day Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar. During the Tang and Song periods of medieval China, Yunnan was home to two independent kingdoms, the Nanzhao kingdom (649-903) and the Dali kingdom (937-1253), whose inhabitants are thought to be the ancestors of the modern-day Bai people, one of fifty-five officially recognized minority groups in the People's Republic of China (Bryson 2020). Yang is a member of the Bai ethnic group and was born in Dali, the ancient capital of the Nanzhao and Dali kingdoms located in what is today northwest Yunnan. When she was around nine years old, Yang's family moved to Xishuangbanna in southern Yunnan. It was there that she began studying dance and became a professional dancer with the local Xishuangbanna Song and Dance Ensemble. Xishuangbanna is dominated by a different ethnic group, the Dai, and thus it was Dai folk dance that had the greatest impact on Yang's folk dance repertoire.

In this paper, I examine how Yang Liping's innovative interpretations of Chinese folk dance, especially the Dai peacock dance and other ethnic minority dances from her home province of Yunnan, have reenergized the folk dance scene in contemporary China since the late 1970s. Yang practices what I call "dynamic inheritance", a mode of choreographic innovation grounded in the combination of cultural research and individual artistic interpretation, which I have argued has been an accepted part of Chinese classical and folk dance choreography since these forms emerged as stage art in the 1940s (Wilcox 2018a). Yang's strategies of dynamic inheritance involve not only innovations in dance choreography itself but also in how the choreography is framed, including lighting and costume design, story and character elements, and how Yang presents herself and her creative process in the public sphere. I argue that Yang employs five major strategies to create a folk image that resonates consistently with contemporary audiences: 1) she employs recognizable folk dance forms in her choreography; 2) she connects these folk dance forms to stories and cultural themes with deeper meaning; 3) she builds on folk materials circulating in multiple media contexts; 4) she constantly updates her work while maintaining a personal aesthetic that is connected to folk material; 5) she herself is a compelling and charismatic figure whose public persona lends authority to her artistic work and, more broadly, to contemporary Chinese folk dance. Based on her enormous success in China and abroad, Yang's work offers a successful example of how folk dances from diverse parts of the globe can maintain their vitality in the twenty-first century.

Methods and Prior Research

As the most famous dancer in contemporary China and a mainstream media celebrity with one of the most commercially successful cultural enterprises in Chinese history, Yang has been the subject of extensive research published in the Chinese language. In English, the late Taiwanese dance scholar Ting-Ting Chang 張婷婷 (1974-2019) conducted the first major studies of Yang's work, first with her 2008 doctoral dissertation "Choreographing the Peacock: Gender, Ethnicity, and National Identity in Chinese Ethnic Dance," on the historical development of modern Dai peacock dance choreography, and later in her 2020 book chapter "Negotiating Chinese Identity through a Double-Minority Voice and the Female Dancing Body: Yang Liping's Spirit of the Peacock and Beyond," which focused specifically on Yang. Chang's research traced the development of the modern Dai peacock dance from non-narrative versions by male choreographers Jin Ming 金明 (b. 1926) and Mao Xiang 毛相 (1923–1986) in the 1950s and female dancer Dao Meilan 刀美兰 (b. 1944) in the 1970s and to Yang Liping's award-winning solo *Spirit of the Peacock* (*Que zhi ling* 雀之灵) in the mid-1980s and finally her first commercially successful large-scale production *Dynamic Yunnan* (*Yunnan yingxiang* 云南映象) in the early 2000s. Chang analyzes the hybrid aesthetics of Yang's peacock dance choreography, especially its incorporation of Western music, costuming, and movement elements, its negotiation of ethnic and national identities, and its feminist appropriation of the male peacock image in the context of changing gender norms in China during the Reform Era. Chang also examines the adoption of Yang's peacock dances as a symbol of Chinese identity among Chinese diaspora communities overseas and Yang's role as a charismatic female role model and entrepreneur who has brought significant resources to her home community in Yunnan through her artistic and cultural work.

In my 2018 book *Revolutionary Bodies: Chinese Dance and the Socialist Legacy*, I expand on Chang's work by tracing the evolution of Yang Liping's Dai peacock dance choreography through a second historical lineage, namely, the Dai epic of *Zhao Shutun* 召树屯, a story about a human who falls in love with a heavenly bird maiden, sometimes portrayed as a peacock, that dates at least to the seventeenth century and is told across China, India, and many parts of Southeast Asia. Drawing extensively on Chinese-language historical primary sources, I document early publications of the *Zhao Shutun* folk narrative in a variety of Chinese media during the mid-1950s, including a 1956 dance drama based on the story that was performed by the Xishuangbanna Nationality Cultural Work Team (*Xishuangbanna minzu gewutuan* 西双版纳民族歌舞团), the same ensemble that Yang later joined. Dance drama was expanded in the early 1960s and then suppressed during the Cultural Revolution, after which it was revived and expanded again in the late 1970s. Yang danced the lead role of the heavenly peacock maiden in the full-length version of this production when it was performed at a provincial-level festival in Yunnan in 1978, a national festival in Beijing in 1979, and then on an international tour to Hong Kong, Singapore, Burma, and Thailand in 1980-1981. This tour launched Yang to national and international stardom and led to her appointment to the position of soloist in the Central Nationalities Song and Dance Ensemble (*Zhongyang minzu gewutuan* 中央民族歌舞团), China's top national professional performance ensemble specializing in ethnic minority folk music and dance. Drawing on historical documentation of these different versions of the dance drama and a 1963 animation film adaptation that also featured dance, I show how Yang's later renditions of the peacock dance built on these earlier renditions of the *Zhao Shutun* legend, which provided much

of both the dance's visual imagery and its rootedness in folk culture. Thus, I argue that even as Yang made drastic changes to the dance choreography and its aesthetics in her later performances, the dance's grounding in folk tradition remained present because of its lasting connection to the Dai epic narrative (Wilcox 2018b, 164-175).

As a dance anthropologist, ethnographer, and historian and a scholar of Chinese studies, I speak, read, and write Mandarin Chinese fluently and have been conducting field and archival research in Chinese national folk dance communities for the past two decades. This includes studying technique, attending concerts, visiting schools and companies, conducting oral histories and interviews, engaging in participant observation, facilitating, and teaching workshops and performances, creating a library archive, and participating in academic exchange in both Chinese and English. Yang Liping has been an important figure in my research, because as the most visible practitioner of Chinese national folk dance both in China and internationally, she is a constant point of reference and source of inspiration both for myself and for many of the dancers I work with. I have seen Yang Liping's productions in China many times, including *Tibetan Riddle* (*Zang mi* 藏谜) in Beijing in 2008, *Echoes of Shangrila* (*Yunnan de xiangsheng* 云南的响声) in Beijing in 2009, *The Peacock* (Kongque 孔雀) in Daqing and Kunming in 2013, and *Dynamic Yunnan* (2013 revised version) in Kunming in 2013. In July 2013, during her national tour of *Peacock*, I met Yang Liping personally, attended a dinner with her, and observed a rehearsal of her company. In December of that year, I also took a delegation of students from the University of Michigan to attend the first Yang Liping International Dance Festival in Kunming. Yang's staff has been extremely responsive to my questions over the years and has given me numerous books, documentaries, and photographs they produce documenting Yang's work. In this essay, I draw on all of the above experiences to engage in a holistic reflection on Yang from the perspective of cultural creative strategy, with a focus on what her experience and success can teach folk dance practitioners in other contexts around the world.

Yang Liping's Creative Strategy

As discussed above, Yang Liping initially gained fame in China's dance scene during the folk dance revival in the late 1970s, when she starred in a dance drama adapted from the Dai *Zhao Shutun* folk legend in which she played the role of a celestial peacock. This work solidified Yang's close association with Dai peacock dance, one of the styles of regional folk dance that became established as part of the Chinese folk dance repertoire during the construction of national folk dance in the 1950s. We can see the importance of this dance style in the film *Hundred Phoenixes Face the Sun*, the first major film documenting Chinese national folk dance, in which Jin Ming's twelve-woman group dance *Peacock Dance* serves as the opening number, performed by the Central Song and Dance Ensemble, at the time China's top national professional folk dance ensemble. In fact, the practice of women's peacock dance was a new development introduced in the early 1950s by a male Dai dancer (prior to this, the peacock dance had traditionally been performed by men). However, by the time of Yang's debut, women's peacock dance was already firmly established as a recognized style of Dai folk dance. Dao Meilan, an influential female dancer of Dai ethnicity from Xishuangbanna who gained fame on the national stage in the 1960s, played an important role in lending authenticity to this newly established dance style. Thus, by the time of Yang's performances, women's peacock dance was regarded by Chinese audiences as a traditional folk form.

In addition to the peacock dance itself, the legend of *Zhao Shutun* and its circulation in a variety of different media prior to Yang's debut also lent cultural depth to the image of the peacock princess that Yang embodied in her dances. As mentioned above, the legend of *Zhao Shutun* dates back hundreds of years. A version of the tale is recorded in the *Pannasa Jataka (Fifty Jataka)*, a collection of folk stories said to recount the lives of previous incarnations of the Buddha. The *Pannasa Jataka* was introduced to Southeast Asia from India, Burma (Myanmar), and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) with the spread of Theravada Buddhism sometime after 500 CE, where it became the basis for extensive poetry, visual art, and performance throughout the region, including among the predominantly Theravada Buddhist Dai communities in southern Yunnan. According to Asian theater expert James Brandon, the story of Zhao Shutun (Prince Suthon) and the peacock princess, known as *Manora*, is “[p]erhaps the most widely dramatized of all *Jataka*... It is performed throughout Burma, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia and is also known in Indonesia” (Brandon 1967, 24). Summarizing the well-known story, Brandon writes:

“Manora is the youngest of seven lovely daughters of the king of the *kinnara*, a mythical race of bird people. One day when she and her sisters are bathing in a mountain lake, a hunter sees them. Struck by Manora's beauty, he steals her wings and tail. The sisters fly away when they see the hunter, but Manora cannot, and the hunter takes her to the palace of his king. There she meets the crown prince and in due time they fall in love and marry. Soon the prince is sent off to war. A minister, who hates Manora, advises the king that she must be burned in order to save the king's life. She is ordered burned and, as the flames rise around her, she asks to have her wings and tail returned. Receiving them, she miraculously ascends from the flames into the heavens. The prince eventually returns from the wars and, finding Manora gone, sets out to look for her. He struggles against all manner of obstacles for seven years, seven months, and seven days, until he achieves what no mortal ever has: he reaches the Kinnara kingdom located on the summit of the Himalayas. Here he is reunited with Manora, and they live happily ever after” (Brandon 1967, 24).

Before Yang's debut in the peacock role, the peacock princess story had already circulated widely in different forms in Chinese popular culture during the 1950s and 1960s, including in oral recitation, published epic poetry, illustrated picture books, and even a 1963 feature film that used puppet animation to portray peacock dances (Wilcox 2018b). The peacock dance had thus accumulated layered meanings in Chinese folk culture—as a recognized folk dance form associated with the Dai culture, the region of Yunnan, and the early development of Chinese national folk dance in the socialist era; as a familiar story whose imagery, plot, characters, and themes audiences felt an emotional connection with and could readily interpret and understand; and a repository of religious and literary allusions that were shared with other folk cultures around the region.

Yang drew on this rich network of aesthetic associations and meanings when she launched her first individual peacock dance choreography in the mid-1980s. As Chang (Chang 2008; 2020) has pointed out, Yang's enormously successful solo dance *Spirit of the Peacock*, which debuted in 1986 and won first place awards for performance and choreography at the Second All-China Dance Competition that year, revised nearly every aspect of the Dai peacock dance as it had previously been performed. In Chang's view, the most notable departure from previous versions was Yang's incorporation of Western dance aesthetics, especially those reminiscent of European classical ballet.

Chang writes:

“Although Yang used a tradition-inspired Dai musical composition in her first version, Yang adopted the song “Pastorale” by European group Secret Garden in her second version of *Spirit of the Peacock* in the 1990s. In this version, her dancing body drew comparisons to the classic Western ballet *The Dying Swan*. In the middle of the dance, Yang faces upstage, waving her arms with her legs in relevé, quickly traveling from stage left to stage right, resembling the internationally renowned Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova (1881–1931) bourréeing en pointe in *The Dying Swan*. Yang’s dancing body highlights extreme femininity through delicate movements, similar to the swan princess in the canonical ballet *Swan Lake*. Her dancing body presents how she, as a female choreographer, expresses her feelings through an exploration of the bird’s movements. In contrast to the traditional Dai costume of a tight skirt with colors and patterns, Yang wears a wide white skirt with many layers, resembling the ballet tutu or even a Western wedding dress” (Chang 2020, 249).

As I demonstrate in my book *Revolutionary Bodies*, the white full-skirted dress had already been introduced to Dai peacock princess choreography much earlier, as we see in both the 1956 dance drama and the 1963 animation film versions (Wilcox 2018, 171–172). Where we see Yang depart most clearly from these earlier designs is in the upper part of the costume, which now employs a low-cut camisole-style bodice that exposes her upper chest, upper back, shoulders, and arms, in place of what had previously been fully covering long-sleeved jackets and capes (Zheng 1989).

Costume designers appear to have been experimenting with this more revealing look as early as 1957, when a published photograph of Jin Ming’s group choreography *Peacock Dance* sent to represent China at the World Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow shows the female dancers wearing a partially see-through pale blue long-sleeved sheer top over a high-cut light colored camisole-style undergarment (Wu and Zheng 1957, 25). By replacing the previously opaque fabrics with this new sheer garment, the costume gives a suggestion of revealing the dancers’ shoulders and arms without exposing them completely. Yang’s version of the costume, by removing the sheer outer layer to reveal the dancer’s upper body, creates a visual look that is indeed similar to the bodices used in many women’s classical ballet costumes. At the same time, because the bottom portion of the dress remains full to the floor, it hides the dancer’s legs completely, making it quite distinct from typical ballet clothing designed to expose and highlight the dancer’s leg actions. This style of costuming, which combines a tight and revealing top with a full floor-length skirt, has remained consistent throughout the many permutations of Yang’s peacock dance choreography over the past three and a half decades. Her full-length dance drama *The Peacock*, premiered in 2012, features several newly designed versions of the costume, now employing a skin-tight sheer bodysuit embossed with pale pink, silver, turquoise, or white iridescent feather-like material over the breasts while allowing Yang’s entire back and parts of her ribcage and abdomen to appear nude. Her lower body remains engulfed in either layers of full floor-length skirts or in one case a giant fluffy peacock tail that tufts out like a Victorian bustle and trails along the floor.

Yang’s newly devised costume makes possible not only an alluring image of her exposed feminine upper body, but also a visual focus on her arms, back and shoulders, which become the main site of innovation in her revised peacock choreography. Discussing this shift, Chang writes:

“Yang’s dance movements combined naturalistic imitations of bird-like actions with a focus on isolated uses of the torso and limbs that especially highlighted muscular dexterity. In Yang’s hand gestures, her fingers expand out with long decorative nails, mimicking a clear outline of the bird’s head. The way she moves her torso corresponds to the energy that flows inside her body, and when her movements reach out, it is as if that energy is flowing out through her limbs. Yang’s peacock dance is different from the traditional Dai dance, because while she keeps many traditional Dai movement elements, she no longer emphasizes the down-and-up rhythm within her body. Unlike traditional Dai music, which has a consistent rhythm, the music in the second section of Yang’s version is soft and mellow, and she dances to the melody rather than to a consistent beat. This is a revelation and a departure from Dai dance, and it gives her freedom to explore new movement possibilities. At the beginning, her arm movements appear segmented with visible curves or angles, but as she picks up speed, her arm movements become so smooth that it looks as if her arms are boneless” (Chang 2020, 248).

One of the most striking aspects of Yang’s reinterpretation of the Dai peacock choreography, which also remains constant throughout her many re-imaginings of the dance over time, is her introduction of arm isolations as a key movement element. Earlier examples of Dai peacock dance feature bent arm lines, undulations of the wrists up and down, and circling and stretching of the arms to create long lines like the neck of a bird (Jin 1959). Yang innovates on these features by adding a style that combines imitation of naturalistic bird movements with the introduction of the “arm wave,” an isolation technique developed by practitioners of popping and locking, a form of hip-hop dance developed on the West Coast of the United States in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Johnson 2023). In *Spirit of the Peacock*, Yang performs a variation of the arm wave in several different positions: seated with her back to the audience, standing on one leg, leaning forward, standing facing the back of the stage, etc. (Yang 2007). Yang’s rendition of this movement is different from the more standard version because instead of transferring energy in a line from one fingertip to the other and back, she instead transfers energy back and forth from fingertip to torso on both sides of the body at the same time. Instead of a pulse from one side of the body to another, Yang’s version instead creates a symmetrical movement that implies a bird’s wings rippling and extending outward. Popping and locking and other forms of early hip hop dance from the United States were just being taken up in major cities in China during the mid-1980s when Yang first introduced *Spirit of the Peacock* (Wilcox 2022). This popular dance movement, known as *piliwu* 霹雳舞, may have been one source of inspiration for Yang’s new arm isolation technique, which gave her choreography a feeling of freshness and contemporaneity while still remaining true to the Dai tradition of the peacock dance theme. As with the other sources of inspiration that she drew on for this dance, Yang did not adopt the arm wave movement technique wholesale but rather developed her own interpretation that fundamentally transformed it and invested it with new meanings and aesthetic qualities.

What is significant about Yang’s creative approach is that she maintains the vitality of a folk form—in this case Dai peacock dance—through a constant process of updating and revision that keeps her work fresh and appealing to contemporary audiences while still remaining rooted in folk material. The visual aesthetic of Yang’s work is central to her success—her costume designs not only reflect current fashion trends in each period but actually drive new trends and styles, positioning her as a standard of excellence for taste-making in and beyond the dance world. The core features of Yang’s innovations in Dai peacock dance costuming and choreography have remained constant since her

debut of *Spirit of the Peacock* in 1986—the basic costume design and the newly introduced movement elements are still present decades later in her 2012 dance drama *The Peacock*. This continuity has allowed Yang’s individual style of peacock dance to become identifiable as a new folk tradition in itself, one that has allowed a folk form that otherwise would likely have gone out of fashion to remain extraordinarily popular. An important aspect of this popularity also has to do with Yang’s public persona and her overall approach to artistic practice and cultural stewardship. This has paradoxically allowed her to balance enormous commercial success and a reputation for artistic individuality with a firm reputation as a champion of traditional folk culture.

Yang Liping as a Champion of Folk Tradition

Apart from her intensely popular peacock dance choreography, Yang is known for her advocacy of folk performers and folk culture, as well as her commitment to promoting what she calls “original ecology” (*yuan shengtai* 原生态) folk performance, which is considered by many to be more authentic than the professionalized folk music and dances created by conservatory-trained stage performers. Yang’s first large-scale production, *Dynamic Yunnan*, was a product of field research Yang personally conducted in remote ethnic minority communities across her home province of Yunnan, and it represented somewhat of a revolution within China’s folk dance field in both its creative approach and its popularity among audiences of all kinds (Mu 2015). Recounting this now well-known story, Li Dingding writes:

“In 2000, Yang Liping to many people’s disappointment left the Central Nationalities Song and Dance Ensemble to travel around Yunnan conducting fieldwork. While doing fieldwork, Yang Liping observed the following: many people in minority communities no longer wore ethnic costumes and instead were dressing in blue jeans; the sacred drums for welcoming spring could only be played by a few elders, and even her own mother no longer wore ethnic clothing. ‘The only thing I could do was go into action... using the method of stage performance to record these precious folk songs and dances.’ In the absence of sufficient external investment, Yang Liping invested all of her own money and served as the executive choreographer and artistic director, selected farmers born and raised in the villages to serve as performers and created this original ecology music and dance filled with humanity, ethnic character, and humanistic spirit. This large-scale original ecology song and dance collection, which took eighteen months to choreograph, incorporated original ethnic life forms from Yi, Wa, Tibetan, Hani, Dai, Naxi, and Bai ethnic groups, used 68 drums, 120 ethnic masks, around 600 lights, and around 600 sets of handmade costumes, was named *Dynamic Yunnan*... As Yang Liping’s most representative work, from its premier on August 8, 2003, to June 30, 2014, *Dynamic Yunnan* was performed 3,926 times in China and toured 248 shows in more than ten countries, including the USA, Brazil, Argentina, Japan, Australia, etc., creating ‘box office miracles’ in many performance markets... Today, *Dynamic Yunnan* is mainly performed as a fixed show at the Yunnan Art Theater, where it is staged 300 times each year with an audience of up to 960 at each show, with a total viewership of more than 100,000 each year” (Li 2015, 56-58).

Dynamic Yunnan set a new standard for folk performance in China insofar as it rejected conservatory-trained musicians and dancers in favor of artists recruited from the countryside who were born and raised in the communities the performance forms repre-

sented. Additionally, Yang's use of handmade costumes and diverse aspects of material culture such as drums and masks that were based directly on items discovered in her field research gave the production a stunning visual aesthetic that departed from that found in other Chinese folk dance productions of the time. Moreover, Yang incorporated her own peacock dance choreography into the show, and this further contextualized her, and her work as rooted within the broader cultural landscape of Yunnan folk arts. As an ethnic minority dancer who herself was born and raised in Yunnan, Yang's personal identity lent credibility to the project as a whole and further reasserted her status as an authoritative voice and legitimate interpreter of the diverse cultures of the region.

Throughout my ongoing field research with professional dancers in China, which has coincided with the two decades since the success of *Dynamic Yunnan*, I have repeatedly heard artists from all backgrounds name Yang Liping as a role model. Practitioners of modern and contemporary dance often cite Yang's independent spirit and her commitment to pure artistic expression as a source of inspiration for their own work. Meanwhile, practitioners of Chinese folk and ethnic dance point to Yang as successful proof that a market for folk dance exists in China and around the world as long as artists connect their work with authentic folk traditions. Yang's personal fashion style, in which she always appears in media interviews, television appearances, photo shoots, etc. dressed in her own creative renditions of ethnic-inspired clothing and accessories, further contributes to her status as a cultural icon. Yang's commitment to her art is legendary and is also a part of her public appeal. Her persistence performing on stage into her mid-sixties has prompted countless personal interest pieces and interviews delving into her eating habits, beauty and fitness regime, rehearsal strategies, decision to not have children, and other subjects, in addition to her strong and often critical professional views related to dance training, choreography, the protection of folk art, and etc. As a result of this complex interweaving of Yang's personal and professional lives in her public persona, Yang has remained at the forefront of Chinese folk dance discourse and artistic practice, and her work continues to inspire new generations of artists both in and beyond China who aspire to make their own meaningful contribution to the reimagination and promotion of folk arts.

Photos:



Image 1- Yang Liping in *Spirit of the Peacock*, 1997, Photographer Ye Jin



Image 2- Yang Liping in *The Peacock*, 2012, Photo courtesy Yunnan Yang Liping Arts & Culture Co., Ltd.



Image 3- Yang Liping in *The Peacock*, 2012, Photo courtesy Yunnan Yang Liping Arts & Culture Co., Ltd.

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Слика која одјекује: Јанг Лијинг и еволуција савремене кинеске народне игре

Сажетак: Јанг Липинг 杨丽萍 (р. 1958) је најуспешнија кинеска кореографкиња савременог традиционалног плеса у Кини. Осим што је позната међу плесачима, она је постигла статус мејнстрим популарне и познате личности, балансирајући своју репутацију ликовне уметнице и културног чистунца са успехом у комерцијалној арени. Ослањајући се на скоро две деценије етнографских и архивских истраживања у Кини, као и на анализу Јангових плесних представа, интервјуа и визуелних медијских репрезентација, овај чланак поставља питање: како је Јанг постигла овај невиђени успех кроз савремену кореографију традиционалног плеса? Рад истражује Јангов успон до славе од касних 1970-их кроз њену трансформацију културне кинеске народне иконе: плес пауна. Паунов плес користи елементе митолошке приче из будистичке књижевности са врстом сеоског плеса који се изводи у једној одређеној етничкој групи у Кини и прилагођава га у мултимедијалну националну слику која се репродукује у филму, визуелној уметности и плесној кореографији. У раду је приказано како је Јанг вешто прилагодила плес пауна у свој препознатљив бренд кроз низ мултимедијалних платформи, док она задржава нагласак на плесу, харизматичној публици и јединственој, али стално адаптирајућој савременој фолк естетици као сржи своје јединствености.

Кључне речи: кинески плес, савремена народна игра, плес пауна, Yang Liping, Yunnan

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Revisiting *Teshkoto* Again. The Process of Signifying the Folk Dance *Teshkoto* with its Artistic Reflections

Abstract: The folk dance called *Teshkoto* has a special meaning for the Macedonians. It does not only belong to the traditional sequence of folk dances, but it is also a form which has accumulated a plethora of meanings. With the aim to research the associations related to this topic, I have included participants who helped me as a researcher to form a full picture about the perception of the dance. The survey results served as a basis to analyze *Teshkoto* not only through its original form but through its art replicas as well. The responses to the question on generated meanings are a result of many decades of “signifying” this folk dance. I have researched the transfer of those signified elements in current art works, but also the expansion of the same and the additional meanings they acquire. In this paper, the focus is on one ballet and one contemporary dance. The phenomenon of the general perception and interpretation of *Teshkoto* folk dance and its popularity not only of its traditional folk dance form, but also because of its specificity regarding esthetics and expression, tells us about its unique value.

Keywords: *Teshkoto*, Macedonia, signifying, acceptance, dance replicas, social reflections

Introduction

In order not to repeat myself because *Teshkoto* has been the focus of my research multiple times, I have decided, for the purposes of this analysis, to research the process of acquiring concrete meanings. In that context, the need has emerged to define and measure the general stance and the interpretations. That will provide us with the consequent observation of the meaning’s formation and their transposition in the various dance styles.

After providing a brief overview of the theoretical positions, I will link them to the process of interpretation, reception, establishing of communication schemes, as well as to the functions of the various performative styles. The question about the changing capacity of

the sign in different arts is one of the main basic parameters which needs to be defined. The greatest ballet reformer in the 18th century, Jean-Georges Noverre, in his book *Lettres sur la danse et les ballets* (Letters of dance and ballet) stated, "Painting and dance have the advantage before other arts to belong to all countries and nations; their language can be understood everywhere, they evoke same feelings everywhere... A beautiful picture is only a copy of nature, while a beautiful dance is the nature itself, decorated with art moves" (Noverre, 1965: 78). The universal value of such art is in the nature of expression. Music must be added to the part described by Noverre (painting is out of my research focus; therefore, it will not be mentioned further). Each of these expressions is associative. It is not linked to precise and clear content i.e. it is not arbitrary types of signs. In other words, it is not necessary to be familiar with the code, to have the key to understand the single meaning because such a meaning does not exist. This way of functioning is specific to non-verbal types of art where the signifying, i.e., the acquiring of meanings is left to the individual understanding of the recipient. Ferdinand de Saussure, the founder of semiotics, did significant research on communication with all its constituent parts and functions. In his theory, the sign is the basic unit and consists of two parts: signifiant (signifier) and signifié (signified) (Saussure 2000). Umberto Eco is another author who interpreted communication relations and the process of assigning meanings, i.e. the process of signifying. He defines the process as: "The signified it should be that which connects the code in the semiologically relation with the signifier" (Eco 1973, 42). Other semioticians have applied this basic matrix in the performative form, trying to define the sign in the performance. That resulted in different definitions. Mukaržovski considered the whole stage text to be an equivalent to one sign (Mukaržovski 1986), while others decomposed it to the level of the performer (actor, dancer), as a carrier of the basic meaning (Aston and Sanova 1996, Zdravkova Djeparoska 2011). Veltruský treated every element/entity on the stage as a sign. He stated, "All that is on the stage is a sign" (Elam 1989, 5). Regarding the fact that performing arts cover multichannel, multi-systemic, multicode arsenal when communicating with the audience, it is extremely difficult to define the scope of the sign. In one of my previous works, the dancer was treated as a basic sign, which provided a possible interpretation of the capacity and the content of the various types of performances (ritual, social and artistic). In this case, the interpretation of the sign will mean that it is equivalent to the whole dance to acquire relevant information about its meaning.

Teshkoto = sign

To sharpen the focus of the folk dance and its meaning, I have provided sublimation or attempted to find a common denominator. This idea of including common opinions has started in a very innocent way. The question was raised which inspired a research strategy aimed at a larger target group. The participants were asked about the associations they get when they see the traditional dance *Teshkoto*. Since it was important for me to remain in the national discourse frames, only the responses of the Macedonian participants were taken into consideration (the majority were ethnic Macedonians, but other national minority groups were included). Seventy-six participants gave their responses. The group consisted of adults, aged 15 to 86. The younger participants took a more active part. The foreign researchers, dancers, ethnochoreologists, ethnomusicologists, choreographers who wrote articles, reviews, gave a statement or expressed their opinion about the folk dance *Teshkoto* were considered as a control/ comparative group.

What is the *Teshkoto*?

The *Teshkoto* is a male folk dance, a part of the non-material cultural heritage of the Reka region in Macedonia (Galichnik, Lazaropole, Gari, Tresonche villages). In terms of its choreography, it consists of two parts (slow-fast) or three parts (slow-fast-slow) depending on the leading dancer who also dictates the tempo. Rubato is performed. Migration for work, i.e., going abroad has initiated performing this dance outside of its domestic area. The connection between the folk dance and migrant workers is not accidental. Groups of males performed this dance before migrating for work and leaving the home country and their families. Blaže Smilevski, who wrote the book “*Teshkoto from Lazaropole*”, highlighted the moment of separation “The families went together with the migrant workers (from Lazaropole, author’s note) to Zhelichka Krasta with great sadness. And on Kras, Teskhkoto was performed. For final farewell. Kras was the place where people were crying, but also dancing” (Smilevski 2006, 51). That moment of separation while dancing the *Teshkoto* was carved in the collective memory.



Figure 1. *Teshkoto*, 1939. Courtesy of Blaže Smilevski personal collection

This dance is one of the first Macedonian dances which gains national (Yugoslavia) and international affirmation because of being performed in new environments where the migrants travelled for temporary work (many of them were located in Belgrade where the first performances occurred). There were many festivals and events registered in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia but also in Europe (Ivančić Dunin, Višinski 1995; Smilevski 2006). During the period of socialism, there were dynamic changes in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia where folklore was valued as one of the basic components of the national identity. Folklore was elevated at the same level as arts; it was a segment of the national recognition strategy and of multiethnic life. On March 29, 1949, a document was signed by Lazar Kolishevski, the President of the People’s Republic of Macedonia and a National ensemble for folk dances and songs “*Tanec*” was founded. “*Tanec* was founded in a period when several professional groups were being established in Yugoslavia and other socialistic influenced European countries” (Ivančić Dunin and Višinski 1995: 8). On the one of the first performances on international stage “*Tanec*” won the first prize at the international festival in Llangollen, Wales in 1950 with the performance of *Teshkoto* and *Lesnoto*. The ensemble performed in the USA, in 1956, as the first folklore ensemble not only from Yugoslavia, but also the first one from all the

socialist countries and presented “the best from Macedonia and Yugoslavia”. The *Teshkoto* became part of the regular repertoire and gradually dominated other folk dances because of the nature of its performance but also because of the meanings it generated, i.e., the perception about it. Another important factor in regard to making *The Teshkoto* popular was the existence of culture-artistic groups in Macedonia. They used the repertoire and the style of *Tanec*, which contributed to its expansion and popularization.

Many authors have approached *Teshkoto* as a symbol of Macedonian dance culture. For example, academician Gjorgji Stardelov concluded that “this particular Macedonian dance is not performed on a mountain, or in a valley or a meadow, but on the real history stage” (Stardelov 2000, 23). Manoil Chuchkov, the first director of “Tanec”, called this folk dance “a prototype of the Macedonian traditional dancing style” (Chuchkov 1951, 65).

The most significant moment in the process of narrativization and the use of the term that is in the focus of this research and serves for assigning meaning to *Teshkoto*, was the same-titled poem by Blazhe Koneski, published in his book “Land and Love” (1948). That process of symbiosis of the two magnificent art works provided me with the opportunity to create concrete content which could be connected with the survey responses. Koneski starts his poem with a description of the folk dance and of the instruments used:

*„O Teshkoto! As the zurla wildly shrieks,
As the tapan roars with deep echo ... “ (Koneski 1965, 12).*

Further, Koneski continues with a description of the dance technique:

*“And the first step on the soft grass,
which is quiet and slow, with retained grief... “ (Koneski 1965, 12).*

Next, he thickens his expression creating a parable of the long slavery and fighting for freedom:

*“And the soul, you think, my people
Tortured in Teshkoto is woven -
century after century gathering darkness
of bloody pain, of slaves,
century after century passed with thought
of a joyful children, for free world...” (Koneski 1965, 12)*

The *Teshkoto* by Koneski has become an epic portraying the Macedonian history and its path to gaining independence. The verses of the poem are meaningful even today, in the 21st century, after all turbulent times. The process of acquiring meanings, signifying has become and continues with the multitude of art work addressing the theme. One of the recent works, created in October 2022 is the sculpture named *Teshkoto* by the young sculptor Ozbek Ajvaz. That work has awakened huge interest not only because

of the idea of the creation techniques and its size (eight figures in natural size), but also because of the material used (cast iron pieces). In an interview, the artist acknowledged the following:

“There are eight metal sculptures used, and that is not done without purpose. Eight is a symbol of infinity, eight because the Macedonian heart beats in a 7/8 rhythm... Locked at home (due to Covid-19) I was watching the dance all day long, then I made some sketches, and I started creating the sculpture...That folk dance is performed in Galichnik. When the locals would migrate for work, everyone would dance in a sorrowful way. And this is because coming back to the home country was really hard” (Ajvaz, online 2022)



Figure 2. **Teshkoto**, sculpture made by Ozbek Ajvaz. Courtesy of Ozbek Ajvaz personal collection

Meaning, stance, opinions, associations – an analysis

„Nomen est omen“, wrote the Roman playwright Plautus in his play “Persa.” Plautus emphasized the connection between the name and the main character in the story. Such a discourse became popular again in the 20th century. Many psychoanalysts have researched the connection between names, surnames with the character features, choice of profession, etc. (Abraham 1911; Jung 1972). The names or the titles are clear and easily noticeable sometimes; however, on the other hand, they can be indirect or hidden. In some languages such as Greek and Albanian, the personal names bear concrete readable meanings. Although the above-mentioned research has been directed towards personal names that does not mean that we cannot find an identical way of naming the character with folk dances such as the exact example of the folk dance tradition in Macedonia.

The process of naming *Teshkoto* has marked its semantic content, which resulted in a concrete perception, connected meanings and associations. But as mentioned previously, the folk dance is treated as a sign which has a complex mechanism and structure. The focus of this research is on defining the sign-meaning spectrum of *Teshkoto*. The aim is to record the perceptions of people about the dance itself, as well as the associations linked with it. This dance has a broad spectrum of interpretations that can oscillate between totally opposite terms and perceptions. The task I have assigned for myself is to discover the most frequent terms, perceptions which are initiated by the folk dance itself in those who observe it.

To a certain group of participants, the following question was posed: “What association comes to your mind when watching the folk dance *Teshkoto*?” As mentioned in the introduction, 76 participants were involved and although one association was required, some participants provided more, such as “Mijaks, tradition, pride, hope”. I did not exclude the multiple responses and in the analysis. All answers were categorized in groups of identical or similar words and meanings; therefore, the number of responses has increased to 118. Some of them presented a unique term but there were also whole sentences which described the concrete phenomenon. Therefore, the classification was done in a meticulous way. The terms/meanings which were used most frequently were selected. In other words, the following positioning, i.e. general visual representation, resulted from the associations and meanings the survey participants provided in relation to the traditional performance of *Teshkoto*.

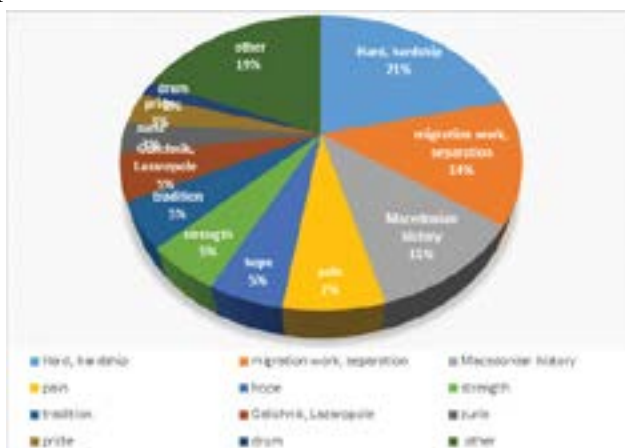


Figure 3. Results from the survey

The most frequent responses were **hard** and **hard(ship)**, terms which have identical meaning but belong to different parts of speech (adjective and noun). They were present in 21% of the responses. It is worth mentioning that the responses most often were related to history, while less often to the technique of performance. I am selecting few as examples: “Hard life of Macedonians,” “Hardship and bitterness piled in Macedonian souls throughout centuries” etc. Ajvaz, Macedonian sculptor, independently from my survey, confirms these associations. In an interview about his sculpture he said, “The name *Teshkoto* itself reminds us of the folk dance, of a hard moment in our life; that is why I have chosen a hard material for the sculpture” (Ajvaz, online 2022). In the survey, just few responses were related to the hardship in connection to the dancing technique. For example, “hard performance,” “a hard and slow step”, etc. was present in only 4 responses out of 24 (16, 6 %).

This seems like a proper moment for a slight digression in order to refer to several research articles written by foreign scholars. Their notes cover different levels. When asked about their first contact with *Teshkoto*, the impressions of the participants were related to the technique of performance or the choreography and content. This is expected because rarely who explored the etymology of the name/title or the understanding of this folk dance as a national symbol. After the first performance of *Teshkoto* in New York, one of the most respected American critics and modern dance theoreticians John Martin in his review of the Tanec’s performance wrote “But nothing is no more thrilling

or more teeming with suspense than their first shepherds' dance, in which a solid line of eight men spends half the dance in a series of slow pliés on one leg, with the other leg off the ground, and with the most impeccable aplomb throughout" (Martin 1965, 11). Martin shared his impression on the concert performance of "Tanec" in Carnegie Hall. Unlike him, another American, Dave Wilson, who stayed in Macedonia longer and researched Macedonian music and dance culture pointed out a different aspect. In his paper, "Teškoto and the national sentiment in Macedonia: Ascribing meaning, experiencing tradition" he addressed the process of signifying, perception, as well as reception of *Teshkoto*. According to Wilson, "With its heavy, complex meanings and the strong sentiment it evokes, Teškoto exemplifies a unique and indisputable Macedonian identity, albeit in a different way than that imagined by nationalists" (Wilson 2014, 247). Apart from the primary focus on the choreography and the nature of performance, there are second level additional meanings which are connected, created, layered, and cannot be accessed instantly but through a process of observation. These new meanings, connotations are popular among the local people and define the significance of *Teshkoto* in a broader cultural and social context.

The second most frequent were the associations related to **migrant workers** including the responses such as **leaving, separation, and family dissolution**. For example, "the hard life of Macedonian migrant workers, farewells" "the suffering and sadness of migrant workers due to separation of migrant workers from the loved ones and the mother land". The scholars researching Macedonian traditional dance emphasize the associations of *Teshkoto* as a scream for the homeland, as a way to feel the warmth of the abandoned home and family. The Russian choreographer Anatol Joukowsky spent a substantial part of his life in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia before emigrating in the USA. He is well-known for his research interest in the traditional dance as well as stylized folk dance. In the USA he held courses and training for traditional dances from various countries among which are the dances from former Yugoslavia and the Balkans. In his book devoted to the methods of teaching ethnic dances titled *The Teaching of Ethnic Dance*, in the description of Macedonian dances, he presented *Teshkoto* and the broken relations with the homeland. „To love Macedonian dance one must go deeply inside the Macedonian life... Their dances do not depict a realistic approach to life... For boys away from home in Paris, Istanbul, or New York, doing the 'Teshkoto' brings the far away Macedonian mountains close to home. The nostalgia engendered when three or four get together to dance with the beat of the tupans, Macedonian drums are overwhelming. These people become transported back to their beloved mountains through their dances" (Joukowsky 1965, 8). Ljubica and Danica Janković portrayed the moment of deep emotional survival while men performed *Teshkoto*. "Each movement is psychologically justified and deeply experienced: Men from Lazaropole through this dance experience the year of migration work emotionally again – a year full of struggles and hard rising again" (Janković 1948, 22). On the website page of the Lazaropole municipality apart from information about the area and well-known people from the region, a significant section is devoted to description of the folk dance *Teshkoto* accompanied with video recordings of its performances in the region. In this section you can read the syntagm "*Teshkoto* as a code for separation and existence through centuries" (lazaropolee.blogspot.com). Separation is closely connected to the dance performance, as a way of existence and it emphasizes the cultural idiom of the Mijaks additionally.

Another significant group of responses was related to the idea of the folk dance as a carrier of meanings related to the *struggles for freedom and against slavery*. This phenomenon presents a fusion of history with *Teshkoto* and integrating the narrative content is a result of the above-mentioned poem by Koneski. The responses from the first group relating to the hard life of Macedonians are closely connected to the responses from this group of respondents who perceive *Teshkoto* as a dancing synonym of the history of the people. The results from the two groups reach 32 %. The main distinguishing parameter was the use of nouns “hardship, heaviness” or the adjective “hard” presents in the responses from the first group but absent in the responses from this group. I would like to add some examples: “A symbol of the Macedonian struggle for freedom, independent country, recognition,” “Endurance of the suffering Macedonian people, the roots of our identity”. Such responses were present with 11 %.

The other responses contained the terms *pain* (7 %), followed by *hope, strength, and tradition* with similar frequency (six responses for each term – 5 %). The well-known villages in the region where *Teshkoto* was performed *Galichnik* and *Lazaropole* were also mentioned in the responses with the similar frequency. *Teshkoto* was used as an equivalent of the instruments which accompany it – *drums* (4 responses), and *zurla* (2 responses). There was one response “traditional folk dancer on drum” which is a visual representation of *Teshkoto*. Painters and sculptors frequently create visual disposition of a *Teshkoto* selected moving sequence most often the moment of the drum dance. This motif represented the logo of “Tanec” from 2014 until 2019.

Process of choreographic transposition – interpreting and broadening meanings

Contemporary culture has popularized the trend of addressing and artistic remake of folklore. Ballet is not deprived of these tendencies, chronologically speaking, as seen in the works created in the 19th century until today. Regarding Macedonian dance culture, of extreme importance are national ballet works which contain integration of elements from the Macedonian folklore at all levels – libretto, music, choreography. On the other hand, the traditional dance *Teshkoto* gained an important place in Macedonian culture and cultural identity. The process of acquiring meanings started and has continued through the sequence of reflections and artistic responses to this dance.

Referring to the starting theoretical position around the sign, meanings, process of signifying, it is very important to pay attention to the second level meanings which broaden the basic ones. Keir Elam in the book titled *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* explained that in performative arts broadening of one sign with new meanings is a crucial feature.

“Beyond this basic denotation, the theatrical sign (although Elam writes specifically about the theatre sign, in the theory we use the performative discourse which covers a broader theoretical area – author’s note) inevitably acquires secondary meanings for the audience, relating it to the social, moral and ideological values operative in the community of which performers and spectators are part... Connotation is a parasitic semantic function, therefore, whereby the sign-vehicle of one sign-relationship provides the basis for a second-order sign relationship (the sign-vehicle of the stage sign ‘crown’ acquires the secondary meanings ‘majesty’, ‘usurpation’, etc.)” (Elam 1980, 7).

As it becomes obvious from the survey results *Teshkoto* has acquired a multitude of meanings. The process of expanding this example is transparent and truly visible. The created meanings are repetitive, transferred and integrated into the shaping of new art works. The analyzed examples show creating and broadening of the basic meaningful composite. The dance replicas give new “readings” through which the connotative meanings are transferred to the scene. In this section, I am presenting two new dance constructs on the topic *Teshkoto*.

Macedonian history:

***Teshkoto* – From migrant work to Macedonian existence hardship**

The first national ballet work written by a Macedonian composer is *Macedonian history* by Gligor Smokvarski. The premiere was on June 21, 1953. The libretto was based on the play by Anton Panov, *Migrant Workers*. As a logical step in structuring the music text, Smokvarski has integrated a part titled *Teshkoto*. The composer in this part of the ballet uses drum (tapan) to put the authentic sound of traditional instruments in the music. The folk dance as a symbol of the moment of separation could be clearly read by the audience and was integrated organically into the scenario addressing migrant work as a phenomenon and faith of the migrant workers. The choreographer Dimitrie Parlić created a performance in which he tried to transfer the folklore of the ballet scene. The critic Makedonski acknowledged that there is domination of the “raw” material regarding the stylization principle (Makedonski 2008). The same observation was presented by one of first female ballet dancers and eminent ballet critic Emilija Dzipunova. She expressed the following:

”The first national Macedonian ballet *Macedonian History* is based on Macedonian male folk dance *Teshkoto* (premiered on 21.6.1953). The choreographer Dimitrie Parlić decided to incorporate the original dance movements” (personal correspondence, 2022).

Unfortunately, apart from Dzipunova’s statement, who is in the role of a performer, no other statement about *Teshkoto* can be found in the seldom reviews. There are no recordings or documented material (choreography notes) about that particular part but also about the ballet in general, because of which any attempt to reconstruct the ballet version of *Teshkoto* is impossible.

The second performance was created in the years after Macedonia gained independence. The premiere was on 17.7.1993 on Samuil’s Fortress in Ohrid, which had a symbolic meaning in the years of founding the independent Macedonian state. For this version, a new script was written by the director Ljubisha Georgievski. What logically followed was a creation of a completely new choreography by Olga Milosavljeva which can be easily accessed for analysis. Georgievski wrote: “To write a libretto of a Macedonian history is very easy but also very hard, because from all world histories, ours is most tragic” (in Zdravkova Djeparoska, 2014: 75). The struggle of the two male protagonists was set in the center of the plot around which the conflict was built. *Teshkoto* occupied the central place in the choreography. It was the choreographic climax. Milosavljeva switched the male performers with female ones. In her work, the music parts had an identical order as in the traditional performance: slow and fast. The most

important typical feature of male performers was taken in consideration and strengthened by dancing on point shoes and focus on specific poses as in the traditional version. Ethnomusicologists and ethnocoreologists in the ballet version note numerous inconsistencies with the stylized elements. They compared it with other traditional dances, especially the segment of the position of arms. Emilija Dzipunova pointed “It is a ballet performance in which Olga Milosavleva did not pay attention to the substantial point of this Macedonian male folk dance *Teshkoto*, but instead she creates an impressive spectacle including female dancers, with all female movements and female elements in its interpretation” (Dzipunova personal correspondence). Yet, apart from these comments, that ballet performance was singled out by its popularity and attractiveness. Ballet version of *Teshkoto* as an independent part, is preformed often on ballet concerts.

The two ballet versions are based on associations which present the main corpora in the survey – migrant work, broken family ties, hardship of separation, etc. Apart from that as a response to all barriers in the creation of the independent Macedonian state (which are still present after more than 30 years from proclaiming the independence), a new scenario was created. That scenario has addressed the history and “the curse” of Macedonian people. *Teshkoto* from an idiom of separation has suddenly become an idiom of history and national identity. Milosavleva, in her choreography, transferred the folklore elements in a new neoclassical lexis” (Dzipunova 2011, 104). *Teshkoto* by Milosavleva has grown into a respected symbol in which the consequently derived meanings related to the history, hardship of existence was transferred and articulated through the language of ballet movements.

Fairies and demons:

***Teshkoto* – Macedonian couch grass**

During the period after independence (after 1991), except Olga Milosavleva, the ballet choreographers did not have any particular interest in the national folklore work. An exception are young choreographers who turned their interest towards this sphere in the previous few years. I would like to point out the choreographic work of Jovana Zajkova and Boban Ruseski who collaborated with the young musician Evgenija Zdravevska (who performs under the pseudonym Zarina Prvosevda). She was responsible for the music, vocals, and percussions, which created “a single breath”. Zdravevska said in an interview: “In essence, without further consideration, this choreography, and the spontaneity of the process of its creation show that the genetics but also the roots which radiate in the creative process are something with which we are blessed existing in this country, Macedonia. That is something that signifies us, something that even unconsciously leaves mark and will be transferred as a decoration of the artist and its work until it exists and creates in any art field” (Zdravevska interview 2022). The work titled *Fairies and Demons* premiered on 1.07.2021 in Zagreb’s Dance Center. The Macedonian premiere was on 9.04.2022, while an extended version was performed on 16.06.2022, both in MKC (Youth Cultural Center). In regard to choreography, music and the concept, the authors referred to tradition and gave their “dancing” opinion on the topic. The new modernized approach created a new dimension to the work. Towards the short description accompanying the performance on YouTube, the following text is integrated:

In this piece the traditional beat and vocal performance intertwine with contemporary dance in order to tell an ancient story hidden by the time, but still pulsating in our pores.

Each step and each note tell the fairytales that traveled from father to son and remained alive until this very day. We invite you to allow them to give you chills, to wake you up... we invite you to find the childlike love and honesty in them, but also the deep wisdom that was left to us as a priceless heritage (YouTube).



Figure 4. *Fairies and Demons* Courtesy of Jovana Zajkova personal collection

A direct connection with the folk dance *Teshkoto* cannot be found neither in the naming process, nor in the description, nor in the choreography (regarding the referencing use of elements). Yet, many people who saw the performance have pointed out the exact connection. To the question how they perceive this phenomenon of connection and if they had the same vision of *Teshkoto*, Zdravevska emphasized:

“*Fairies and Demons* is a unique reflection of a part of everyday life of my people in the past, my roots. Conceptually, the choreography in regard to many elements reminds of *Teshkoto*; firstly, because of its rhythm with which we approach the choreography... and in relation to the movements which we use, the suffering can be sensed, but also the strength and endurance of Macedonian people seen as couch grass surviving through all the storms, managing to see the Sun and to grow profusely” (Zdravevska interview 2022).

This new approach towards the traditional folk dance is rich with various allegories, symbols, but also moving signs reminding the audience of *Teshkoto*. The focus is on hardship, heaviness of life, on the one hand, contrasted with beauty, liveliness, hope, on the other. These contrasted positions hard-light, calmness-euphoria, and male-female lie into the authors life view rooted in this region. The choreographer Zajkova pointed out:

”I often hear people’s opinion that *Teshkoto* represents the sadness, the pain, and the suffering of Macedonian people, but I believe that apart from that, *Teshkoto* is a wonderful symbol of the mutual support, of the rise and fall in life and portraying the same in their real form. The hardship and heaviness as a basic guideline and the dominant signifying are present, but equally present are also the meanings which additionally are layered and create a complex discourse of basic meanings” (Zajkova interview 2022).

And again, I will recall Dzipunova’s view, as the only active ballet critics who wrote the following for this creation of the young choreographers

“Two stylized versions (Dzipunova referred to the version by Milosavleva and the performance by Zajkova and Ruseski – author’s note) of one of the most famous Macedonian folk dances and a synonym of the Macedonian ethno folk dance culture – TESHKOTO. Three young creative people Zajkova, Zdravevska and Ruseski took the liberty and the inspiration to transform a dynamic, poetic vision of the dance in the piece titled *Angels and Demons*, without leaving the substantially recognized moving element of the folk dance, colored in the style and esthetics of the contemporary dance technique. In a spiritual sense, the real and the unreal, as well as the infinite give the work a metaphysical dimension” (Dzipunova personal correspondence).

The layering of meanings in this case opens new horizons for the young choreographers who started the creative process with the traditional folk dance, through the imprinted and established meanings that the folk dance had generated itself in previous periods and managed to give their own perception and creation of *Teshkoto*. The creation oscillates within the frame of what was pointed out in the analysis, and again it is connected with the historical aspects, with the identity of the Macedonian people. However, that discourse is upgraded subtly with a view towards the future that is victorious, optimistic, and probably a result of the view and attitude of these young people.

Conclusion

Constructing meanings, i.e., signifying which creates, carries, accumulates, and condenses content in relation to the traditional folk dance *Teshkoto* and is already integrated in the collective cultural memory. So, we can select a solid monolithic discourse of meanings. Those are the meanings that were confirmed through the analysis presented at the beginning of this paper. The way in which the signified is reflected and projected especially in the artistic versions and it is directly conditioned by the construct of the signified. The formed meanings are connected to the traditional dance as we could observe in the examples showing dance replicas with various performative styles which are transferred and complemented with each other. The artistic replicas in *Teshkoto* no longer address only the choreographic content and structure (partially present in the ballet version, but fully non-existent in the modern version of the dance). Based on assigned/signified meanings, the same re-signify them by their unique expressive style which can be graphically presented as:



Figure 5. Proces of constructing new art works and its signifying

In this work, I have emphasized multiple times the quality and the “physiology” of the dance content, which forms a broad and complex narrative. That characteristic is used for analyses of *Teshkoto* folk dance. That brings it to the level of a national symbol, not only a regional one, in which new meanings have been constantly stored and the associative-discursive content has been broadened by permuting into various performative styles and discourses.

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Поновно иромишљање илеса Тешкоѿо: Процес означавања итрадиционалнои илеса Тешкоѿо својим уметничким рефлесијама

Сажетак: Традиционални плес Тешкото има посебно значење за Македонце. Не само да припада традиционалном репертоару народних игара, већ је и облик који је акумулирао мноштво значења. У циљу истраживања асоцијација на ову тему, укључила сам учеснике који су ми као истраживачу помогли да створим потпуну слику о перцепцији овог плеса. Резултати анкете послужили су као основа да се Тешкото анализира не само кроз његову оригиналну форму, већ и кроз његове уметничке транспозиције. Одговори на питање о генерисаним значењима резултат су вишедеценијског „означавања” овог традиционалног плеса. Истраживала сам преношење тих означених елемената у актуелна уметничка дела, али и проширење истих и додатна значења која добијају. У овом раду фокус је на једном балету и једном савременом плесу. Феномен опште перцепције и интерпретације традиционалног плеса Тешкото и популарности не само традиционалне форме овог плеса, већ и због његове специфичности у погледу естетике и израза, говори о његовој јединственој вредности.

Кључне речи: Тешкото, Македонија, означавање, прихватање, плесне реплике, друштвене рефлесије

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Suzana Ajhner-Starčević graduated from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb, earning the title of Professor of History and Geography. Since 1991, she has worked in various elementary schools and high schools in Croatia. She has completed various courses for children's folklore leaders, participated in numerous projects related to the cultural activities of schools, humanitarian work, and ecology, and organized and led numerous thematic field trips in Croatia and abroad.

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Dr. Joško Ćaleta, a musicologist, music educator, producer, and conductor, is a research associate at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research in Zagreb. In addition to his scientific research related to the musical practices of the Dalmatian coast, islands, and hinterland, his current research focuses on contemporary klapa singing practices, Croatian folk church singing (glagoljaško pjevanje), ojkanje, singing accompanied by gusle, and other musical traditions of the coastal and Dinaric regions. He plays an advisory role in forming the musical and stage expressions of folklore groups as a member of expert, advisory, and judging panels at reviews and festivals throughout Croatia.

He is also a member and artistic director of numerous klapa groups (Trogir, Dišpet, Nostalgija, Jelsa, Petrada) and vocal ensembles (Harmonija disonance, Pučki pivači KBFa). He founded the ensemble Kantaduri in 2008, which has successfully collaborated for many years with the Paris-based early music ensemble Dialogos (led by Katarina Livljanić) on multiple award-winning international music projects such as Dalmatica, Heretical Angels, and Hecuba.

He teaches at the Academy of Music in Zagreb (Traditional Music Ensemble) and at the Catholic Faculty of Theology in Zagreb (Interpretation of *glagoljaško pjevanje*). He has participated in numerous international conferences on traditional music and dance and is the author of scientific and professional articles published in renowned international and domestic scientific publications.

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Krešimir Dabo completed his undergraduate degree in Economics, Management Degree at the Zagreb School of Management, and completed his bachelor's degree in business communications management at Vern University with the topic Analysis of Communication Activities of the LADO Ensemble as a Cultural Brand. He completed his second undergraduate studies at the University Sjever with a degree in Communication Studies, Journalism and Public Relations. He completed his one-year study at the Centre for Peace Studies in Zagreb. He participated in several seminars and workshops in the area of cultural management, presentation skills, mediation, psychotherapy and counselling. He began his professional career in journalism, working in several media outlets, starting with Radio Student to Croatian Radio, Television Z1 and RTL Television. He worked in the Public Relations Department at RTL Television and for six years headed the Public Relations and Marketing Department at the LADO Ensemble. He was appointed Director of the LADO Ensemble on January 1, 2015, for a term of four years. At the Vern University he teaches the course in Marketing at Events at the Tourism department, and at the Public Relations department he teaches the courses Public Relations in Culture and Introduction to Public Relations. He teaches two courses at the Croatian Catholic University at the Communication Studies – Public Relations History and Theories and Public Relations Strategies. He is a full-time employee of the College of Economics, Entrepreneurship and Management Nikola Šubić Zrinski as senior lecturer and course holder in marketing, marketing communication and public relations. He is a PhD candidate at the Department of Communication Studies at the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University in Osijek, a licenced mediator at the Forum for freedom of upbringing and reality therapy psychotherapist.

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Ireland in 2003 and was its first Chair; she was the local Chair for Dance Research Forum Ireland's 1st International Conference, hosted by the University of Limerick in 2006. Catherine is a founding member of Enarta (European Network for Research and Teaching of ethnochoreology).

Catherine has spent many years working as a collector of Irish traditional music, song and dance. She was a member of the board of the Irish Traditional Music Archive for many years, and is a member of many professional organizations, including the Congress of Research on Dance, the International Council for Traditional Music, An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha, the Association of Professional Dancers of Ireland, and the Society of Dance History Scholars. Catherine has taught music and dance studies at all levels within the education system, from primary level to doctorate level, within both an academic and performance capacity. She has presented and published articles internationally within her areas of expertise and has performed, lectured and given dance workshops in different countries in Europe, Scandinavia, and the United States.

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Her doctoral research (EHESS Paris 2004) addressed the role of dance in constructing identities, in the specific context of the creation of a Nation-State (Israel). She was then Research fellow in a collective project exploring transnational networks of musicians between Africa and Europe (TNMundi – U. of Southampton/ AHRC, UK). Working on the articulation between the use of dance and music practices on one hand, and contexts of nationalism, transnational mobility, collective mobilisation, and/or tourism, she became interested on the questions of work and professional identities that emerged from these various researches.

Her publications on the topic of her talk include: «Danse et constructions identitaires» (Catalogue d'exposition. On danse? Paris MUCEM/ Liénart Éditions, 2019), «Was Fourier's "joy in work" so utopic? Researching work and pleasure in the 21st century» (Journal of the Anthropologist Society of Oxford. VIII/2, 2016), «Façonner le corps, régénérer l'individu et danser la Nation» (Parcours Anthropologiques, n 9, 2014), and «The intricacies of being Israeli and Yemenite. An Ethnographic Study of Yemenite "Ethnic" Dance Companies in Israel» (Qualitative Sociology Review. III/ 3, December 2007).

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Daniela Ivanova-Nyberg, PhD, is an ethnochoreologist, choreographer and writer. Her PhD degree was obtained from the Institute of Art Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, BA degree in choreography from the Institute for Music and Choreography, Sofia), MA (Bulgarian Philology with specialization in folkloristics) and MA (Philosophy with a major in Culturology) from St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University). In Bulgaria she taught and lectured at various institutions, including Sofia University,

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Dr. Ivanova-Nyberg is author of the book *The Folk Dance Ensemble as a Cultural Phenomenon in Bulgaria* (2011), and of other publications. Research focuses on Bulgarian folk dance in Bulgaria and in the US.

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Andriy Nahachewsky – University of Alberta, Canada (PhD, 1991) – has been active in the ICTM study group for ethnochoreology since 1986. His research has often focused on relations between participatory and presentational dance, particularly when dance traditions shift along this continuum. He has written on issues of „reflectiveness“ (historical self-consciousness) in communities, and how increasing reflectiveness („heritagization“) can cause profound changes in dance traditions and dance forms, even if the name of the tradition remains. Andriy is trained as a folklorist, centring on Ukrainian dance, based on fieldwork in Canada, Ukraine and 8 other countries.

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Dr. Iva Niemčić is a research associate and the director of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research in Zagreb. She graduated from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb with a double major in Ethnology and Czech Language and Literature. In the same year, she enrolled in postgraduate studies in Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, also at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, which she completed in 2002 with a master's thesis titled "Dance and Gender in the Lastovo Carnival." In 2007, she defended her doctoral dissertation titled "Dance and Gender" and earned a Ph.D. in Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology. Since 1998, she has been employed at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research in Zagreb, initially as a junior researcher and since 2010 as a research associate. During the term of director Tvrtko Zebec from 2011 to 2014, she served as deputy director. She has participated in around thirty national and international scientific conferences and published twenty-seven scientific papers in Croatian and English in professional journals, thematic collections, or book chapters, along with numerous reviews, critiques, and professional reports in various publications. She co-edited an international bibliography of dance research for members of the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) and its Study Group on Ethnochoreology (2003). In 2011, she published her book "The Lastovo Carnival: A Dance-Ethnological Study."

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Dunja Njaradi's field of interest includes dance anthropology, traditional, artistic, and social dances as well as dances in religious contexts. Dunja Njaradi has a wealth of experience as a lecturer, comprising various disciplines such as dance, drama, theatre and anthropology. During her career, Dunja Njaradi was the recipient of numerous scholarships and awards, such as scholarship for doctoral studies in Lancaster, 2007-2010 (ORS); prestigious dance scholarship DanceWed 2009 (ImpulzTanz, Vienna), and studies at the Institute for Advanced Studies at Central European University in Budapest 2016/2017 (IAS CEU). Dunja Njaradi is the editor of reviews in the *Journal of Dance, Movement and Spiritualities*. She published the book *Backstage Economies: Labour and Masculinities in Contemporary European Dance*, Chester University Press, 2014. The book deals with theoretical mapping of European contemporary dance scene, with special focus on the research of regional and Serbian contemporary dance scene. Dunja Njaradi teaches ethnology, anthropology and ethnochoreology at the Department of Ethnomusicology of Faculty of Music in Belgrade.

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Sonja Zdravkova Djeparoska, PhD, is a Full Professor at the Faculty of Music at University “Ss. Cyril and Methodius”. She graduated and obtained a Master’s degree in ballet pedagogy and choreography at the Academy of Theater Arts (GITIS) in Moscow (Russia). She completed her master’s and doctoral studies in teatrology at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Skopje. She participates in international conferences and projects that promote the Macedonian dance culture. She is the author of six books. Zdravkova Djeparoska is the recipient of national awards “Goce Delchev” and “Feniks”.

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Dr. Krešimir Starčević graduated from the Faculty of Law at the University of Zagreb in 1992. He passed the bar exam in 1995, and between 2006 and 2009, he completed the Management Academy's "Top Executive Education" program, organized by Management Zentrum St. Gallen (Switzerland). In 2021, he earned his Ph.D. from the Faculty of Economics at J.J. Strossmayer University of Osijek, obtaining the academic degree of Doctor of Science in the field of Social Sciences and Economics. Dr. Starčević's scientific research interests include management, corporate governance, data protection, tourism, and culture. He is fluent in English and German.